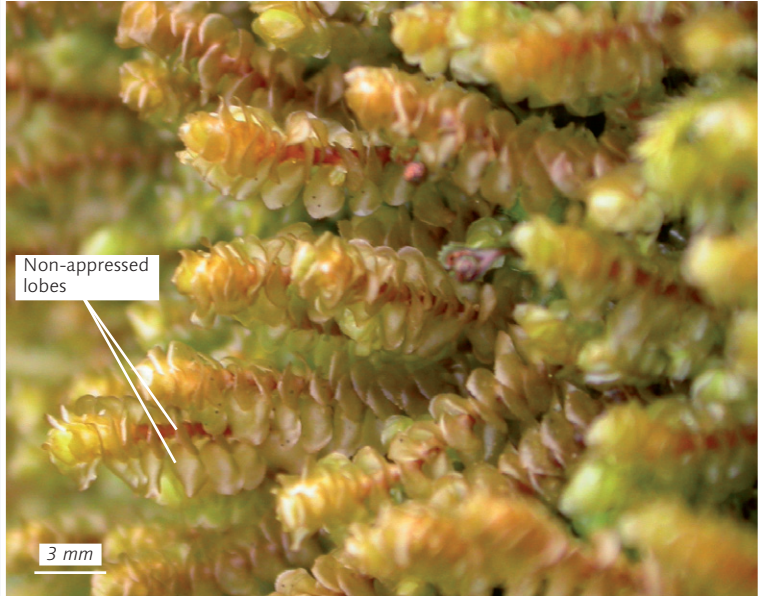
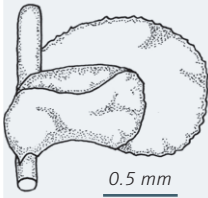
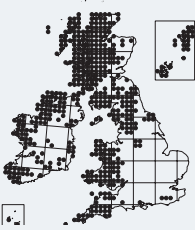


# *Scapania gracilis*

Western Earwort

Key 37



## Identification

One of the most characteristic liverworts of western Britain, this is the first species to rule out when a *Scapania* is found in a dry but humid place in the uplands or in wooded, low-lying valleys. Its pale brownish-green colour is characteristic, as is its generally untidy appearance caused by the non-appressed leaf lobes. Shoots tend to have a more 3-dimensional appearance than most *Scapania* species and they frequently grow together to form large cushions. They are 1–4.5 mm wide, and may grow several centimetres long. Leaves may be more than 2 mm long. Neither the leaf lobes on the front of the shoot nor those on the back extend down onto the stem. The front lobe has small teeth near the base, visible through a hand lens. This combination of features is characteristic and rules out almost all our other *Scapania* species.

## Similar species

*S. ornithopodioides* (p. 181) is the only other species that consistently has teeth at the base of the front lobe, but its lobes are divided to the base. *S. nemorea* (p. 172) very rarely has teeth at the base of the front lobe, but differs in both lobes running down onto the stem, relatively flat shoots and dark brown gemmae. *S. umbrosa* (p. 171) is smaller, pale or brownish green and has very pointed lobes, and shoot tips that curve over.

## Habitat

*S. gracilis* is the most abundant *Scapania* of dry but humid sites in western Britain, especially wooded valleys, humid block screes and acidic crags. *S. gracilis* usually grows on boulders or tree bases, sometimes on peat and rarely on soil. It also often occurs in small quantity on wet heaths and bogs in the west, as well as on coastal cliffs and shady drystone walls. Strongly base-rich ground is generally shunned.