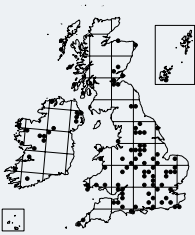


*Riccia cavernosa*

Cavernous Crystalwort

Key 12



**Identification** *R. cavernosa* grows in rounded rosettes up to 3 cm diameter, composed of many lobes that are oblong or rounded, and widest above the middle. Lobes are up to 2.5 mm wide with a more or less truncate tip. Plants are usually yellow-green, without reddish pigment, and retain their yellowish colour when dry. The upper surface has a very short, inconspicuous groove only at the tip, and perforations almost to the branch tips. These perforations rapidly disintegrate further away from the tip to leave the older parts towards the centre of the rosette distinctly spongy. Dark spores are found in the older spongy tissue and may become visible as the thallus disintegrates.

**Similar species** *R. crystallina* (p. 262) is a much rarer species where thalli have few, rather broader branches that become almost white or bluish-green when dry. The surface is less perforated, especially towards the tips, and the older parts are less spongy; however, *R. crystallina* and *R. cavernosa* can sometimes only be reliably distinguished microscopically by examining the ornamentation of their spores. *R. huebeneriana* (p. 264) is similar, but smaller (up to 1 cm diameter), often violet or reddish, and with a prominent groove on its branches. The upper thallus surface has more conspicuous air pores, but is perforated or spongy only in the older parts. *R. canaliculata* (p. 265) is also smaller with narrow (up to 1 mm), linear, often grooved branches. Terrestrial forms of *Riccio carpos natans* (p. 260) lack the spongy older parts of the thallus.

**Habitat** *R. cavernosa* typically grows on moist, exposed, neutral to base-rich mud by reservoirs, lakes and ponds, sometimes also in damp hollows in arable fields, gravel pits and sand dunes.