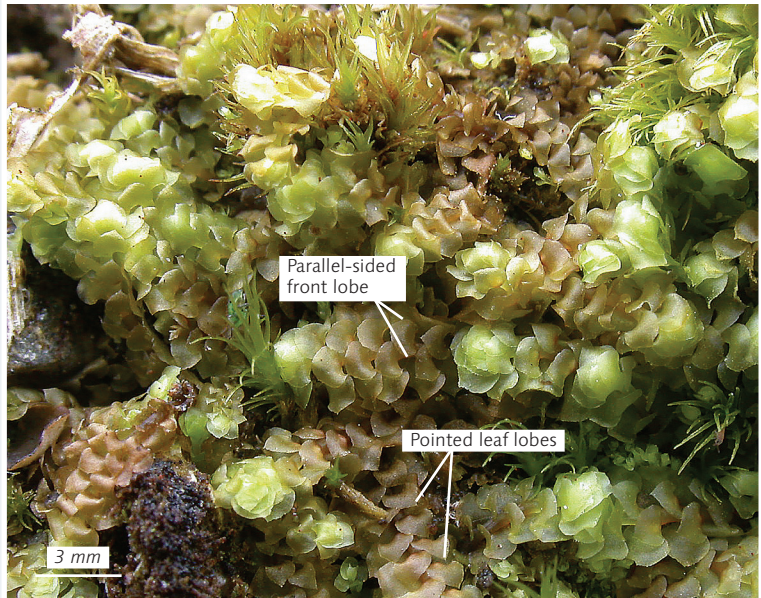
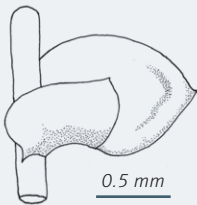
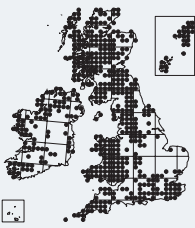


Scapania irrigua

Heath Earwort

Key 36



Identification Less distinctive than some other British *Scapania* species, but still readily identified. *S. irrigua* is usually medium-sized (shoots 1.5–4 mm wide), and pale green or pigmented, with pointed front and back leaf lobes (less than 2 mm long) which are not too closely appressed to each other. Characteristically, the front lobe is parallel-sided before narrowing rapidly to a base that does not run down onto the stem. The gemmae are green, but seldom prominent.

Similar species *S. undulata* (p. 175) and *S. nemorea* (p. 172) are the other common *Scapania* species that grow in the damp habitats favoured by *S. irrigua*. Both tend to be larger and both have back leaf lobes that run down onto the stem. The brown gemmae of *S. nemorea* are immediately distinctive, whilst the 2 leaf lobes of *S. undulata* are usually tightly pressed together. The less common *S. subalpina* (p. 176) differs in its almost equally sized leaf lobes and also has back lobes that run down onto the stem. Small plants might be misidentified as *S. scandica* (p. 170) and its allies, but the gradually narrowing front lobes of that group of species are distinctive. *S. paludicola* (Paton, p. 368) has most of its leaves with a strongly arched keel. It is rare or overlooked in acidic mires, bogs and wet heaths at low altitude. *S. paludosa* (Paton, p. 376) also has a strongly arching keel, and is uncommon in flushes and on wet rocks in the mountains.

Habitat This is Britain's third commonest *Scapania*. It most often grows on damp, gravelly ground, especially on flat ground by upland streams or on little-used forestry tracks, where it can be abundant, forming extensive carpets. Other typical habitats include damp soil in rush (*Juncus*) pasture, on quarry floors or on reservoir margins. More rarely it grows in upland flushes, usually as an atypically large form.