

Gymnomitrium concinnatum

Braided Frostwort



Identification Plants very small, in lax or dense mats or turfs of upright or prostrate stems, occasionally forming dense cushions; usually greenish or yellow brown, often with reddish tints and frequently silvery because of the hyaline margins to the leaf. The stems are very small, to 15 mm or so, almost terete and only slightly club-shaped. If the stems are at all moist, it is difficult to make out the outline of the leaves. The leaves are densely imbricate and appressed to the stem, bilobed with a short open sinus, to one-third of the leaf length, but usually less, and short acute lobes which are sometimes weakly apiculate.

Similar species *Gymnomitrium* species are easily distinguished from *Marsupella* by the terete stems with imbricate, erect and appressed leaves that completely hide the stem, and the usually hyaline margin to the leaves. *G. concinnatum* is most likely to be confused with *G. obtusum* (q.v.), but that plant has obtuse lobes, an acute sinus which is closed at the base, and it more often occurs in dense, grey-green cushions. Observing the shape of the leaves is made easier if surface moisture is dried and the stem is carefully broken to reveal a leaf apex. *G. apiculatum* (Paton, p. 337) is very similar to small dark forms of *G. concinnatum*, but is often tinted red-green, has apiculate lobes (often eroded) with a thinner hyaline margin and is less densely imbricate so that individual leaves are more easily seen. *G. corallioides* (Paton, p. 333) has grey, club-shaped shoots on which the leaves are soon eroded and very difficult to see, even when the shoots are dry.

Habitat A montane species of rocks and mineral soil in a variety of sites, both exposed and sheltered. It is perhaps most frequent in the hepatic-rich crust with *Salix herbacea* that forms at the margin on areas of very late snow lie or on gravel terraces in fell fields, but it also occurs lower down on crags, in gullies and in scree. Usually high in the hills with sporadic occurrences lower down in the north and west of Scotland.