

Plagiochila exigua

(syn. *P. tridenticulata*)

Petty Featherwort

Section *Rutilantes*

Identification

This is the smallest of our Plagiochilae and the most hygrophilous. It is also very dark-coloured, tending to brown or black, especially when dry. The narrow, cuneate leaves are alternate, about one-and-a-half times longer than wide, with a narrow insertion and with the front margin scarcely decurrent, if at all, on the stem. Leaf apices are mostly with two pointed lobes, but, as indicated by the synonym *P. tridenticulata*, there may sometimes be a third tooth, possibly on the back margin. Dioicous, but female plants are unknown in the British Isles.

Similar species

Depauperate forms of *P. punctata* (q.v.) may be as small as *P. exigua*, but can be distinguished by the broader leaf insertion.

Habitat

This Atlantic species is typically a plant of rock surfaces in humid and shady ravines in the west. It is rare and in many of its locations may be found in small amount and in poor condition, with many bare stems. Nevertheless, in favourable conditions such as above large cascades, it can form conspicuous patches on tree trunks in relatively open situations and display little indication that the leaves are often caducous.