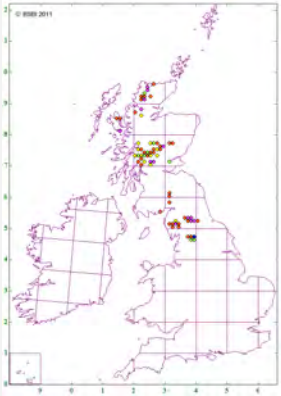


Alchemilla wichurae

Rock Lady's-mantle



Distribution

There are recent records for 17 vice-counties (VCs 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 72, 79, 87, 88, 89, 90, 98, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108) and older records for VCs 85, 96, 97, 103.

Identification

A small to medium-sized plant. The lowest stem internodes and petioles have **appressed** hairs; the middle and upper parts of the stem and inflorescences are **glabrous**. Leaves rounded with 7-11 lobes, often described as 'saucer-shaped' and 'paper thin', glabrous except for veins on lower surface. Leaf lobes rounded with **clear incisions** between them and with teeth tending to **point towards leaf-lobe apex** (connivent). The sinus at the base of the leaf can be open (up to 100°) or closed and overlapping.

Similar species

This is usually a distinctive plant, but some populations are less easily distinguished from *A. glabra* and whose taxonomic status is unclear. If in doubt collect a voucher specimen of 1 or 2 radical leaves and send them to Dr Margaret Bradshaw (see details below).

Habitat

This is a montane plant of basic soils. It grows on herb-rich ledges on outcrops and cliffs as shown in the photograph to the right, recurring in upland grasslands where grazing keeps the vegetation suitably short. In both habitats it seems to prefer damper soils, and indeed is common by waterfalls or seepages on cliffs. However, it tolerates immersion or splashing less well than *A. glabra* with which it often grows (see bottom right). It may also colonise bare cracks in hard limestones and basalt, and scree where this is well-vegetated and moist. In the Yorkshire Dales, tracksides are a favoured habitat, where it often grows with *A. glaucescens*. It grows from sea level to at least 990 metres on Ben Lawers.



Request for specimens

A Norwegian key suggests the angle between the leaf veins is important in identifying *A. wichurae* (45°). Dr Margaret Bradshaw would like to investigate whether this is a useful character and would welcome a well grown leaf either pressed or sent fresh in a plastic bag (no water) from a single plant or leaves from a population, with date, location, population size and collector's name. Please send specimens to: Dr Margaret Bradshaw, 'Lady's Mantle', Hill Top, Eggleston, Barnard Castle, Co Durham, DL12 0AU.



Photographs

Top left, Glencoyndale, v.c.70, Jeremy Roberts; **top right**, Small Water Crag, v.c.69, Jeremy Roberts; **right centre**; growing on rock face above a stream, Dorthgill, Tynehead, Linda Robinson; **right bottom**, *A. wichurae* (centre) growing with *A. glabra* and *A. alpina*, Ruddy Gill, Great End, v.c.70, Jeremy Roberts.