



STELLARIA

1. *Stellaria nemorum* / *Myosoton aquaticum*

Southern botanists have been known to record *Stellaria nemorum* L. in error as *Myosoton aquaticum* L. Moench in northern England and Scotland. They are easily distinguished as *Stellaria nemorum* has 3 styles and *Myosoton aquaticum* 5 styles.

Both species differ from the *Stellaria media* agg. in having the stem hairy all the way round, especially below the nodes (usually in two lines in *S. media*).

2. *Stellaria nemorum* subsp. *montana*

S. nemorum L. subsp. *montana* (Pierrat) Berher (subsp. *glochidisperma* Murb.) is a Welsh taxon recorded for V.c. 35, 42, 44-48. It is distinguished from the widespread subsp. *nemorum* by bract, seed and petiole characters, the former two being the most reliable (Green 1954).

The inflorescence proper has a flower arising between the two dichotomous branches; ignore the small flowering branches which occur occasionally in the axils of the upper leaves. Immature seeds may have marginal tubercles which seem longer in proportion to breadth than when mature. The petiole character is not diagnostic in itself and is unreliable where the specimen is either a very lush subsp. *nemorum* or a diminutive subsp. *montana*, whilst young growth, vegetative shoots and the lower flowering stems of both subspecies have stalked leaves.

Rarely, intermediate populations (e.g. with prominent tubercles without a barbate cap) have been recorded from V.c. 34 and one or two Welsh vice-counties. Subsp. *montana* and an intermediate plant are clearly illustrated in Holland *et al.* (1986) page 18.

Subsp. *nemorum*: Inflorescence bracts decreasing gradually in size at each dichotomy of the cyme, the second pair 30-85% the length of the first; edge of the ripe seed with \pm hemispherical tubercles; uppermost leaves of flowering stems usually sessile or with petiole 5 mm or less.

Subsp. *montana*: Inflorescence bracts decreasing abruptly in size after the first pair, the second pair 10-27% the length of the first pair, the third pair typically scale-like, 1.5(-2) mm or less in length; edge of ripe seed with long cylindrical papillae 0.15 mm long (under a microscope these have a barbate cap); uppermost leaves of flowering stems with petioles usually at least 10 mm long.

References Green, P. S. (1954). *Watsonia* **3**: 122-126.

Holland, S. C. *et al.* (1986). *Supplement to the Flora of Gloucestershire*. Bristol.

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3. *Stellaria media* / *S. pallida* / *S. neglecta*

The gross morphology of these three species is similar and all three have a single line of hairs (rarely two) on each internode of the stem. This character distinguishes them from *Myosoton* and *S. nemorum*, which both have at least the upper part of the stem hairy all round.

Stellaria neglecta may be under-recorded nationally. *Stellaria neglecta* and *S. media* are both found in hedgebanks and shady places, where the former characteristically uses surrounding vegetation for support; when well-grown *S. media* can approach *S. neglecta* in size and habit (cf. the varieties of *S. neglecta* below). *Stellaria pallida* can be found in cultivated and waste ground and lawns in urban situations as well as more natural sandy habitats but soon dies back and is easily overlooked. It is probably under-recorded; look for small yellowish-green, dense patches in the spring. In exposed or dry habitats, *S. media* produces smaller leaves and prostrate stems. Early in the year the flowers are often cleistogamous with petals absent or vestigial; in this state it can be mistaken for *S. pallida*.

The following Table will serve to separate fresh or herbarium material with flowers and / or ripe seed. *Stellaria neglecta* is unlikely to be confused with *S. pallida*. When assessing seeds it must be remembered that the seeds of all three enlarge and darken in colour as they ripen and that the tubercles on unripe seed of *S. neglecta* are not so distinctive as they are on mature seeds. When counting stamens do not rely on the number of anthers visible as they are sometimes eaten, and are ultimately deciduous but check for filaments too. 90% of all flowers of *S. pallida* have two stamens. The most frequent numbers of stamens in *S. media* are 3 and 5 (0.1% of flowers may have 10 stamens; Sobey 1981).

	<i>Stellaria neglecta</i> Weihe	<i>S. media</i> (L.) Vill.	<i>S. pallida</i> (Dumort.) Crép.
Leaves	Mid-green, lower long-stalked, upper sessile	Mid-green, lower long-stalked, upper sessile	Yellowish-green, all short-stalked, only bracts sessile
Flowering time	April-July	All year	February-May
Sepals	(3.5-)5-6.5 mm	(2.7-)3-5(-5.2) mm	2-3(-3.6) mm
Stamens	10	3-5(-8)(-10)	1-2(-3)
Fruiting pedicels	Sharply reflexed, then erect	Curved downwards or flexuose	Short, not reflexed
Ripe seeds	(1.1-)1.3-1.7 mm, dark reddish- to purplish- brown with conical tubercles, especially on distal margin	0.8-1.4 mm, reddish-brown with rounded or indistinct tubercles	0.6-0.9 mm, pale yellowish-brown, (rarely dark brown), with rounded or indistinct tubercles

Reference Sobey, D. G. (1981). *Journal of Ecology* **69**: 311-335.

Author R. D. Randall, December 1997.

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4. *Stellaria neglecta* varieties

Two varieties of *S. neglecta* Weihe can be recognised. Var. *neglecta* has seeds with acute conical papillae and is widespread in England and Wales and rare in Ireland and Scotland. Var. *decipiens* E. S. Marshall has seeds with obtuse papillae, a habit more like *S. media*, and the flowers are said to be usually less showy. Its distribution is not known with certainty; it is scarce in Somerset but more frequent than var. *neglecta* in Surrey and Sussex (according to E. S. Marshall).

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