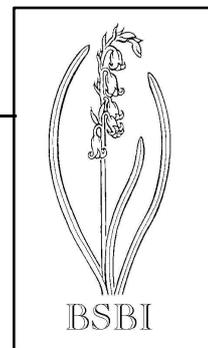


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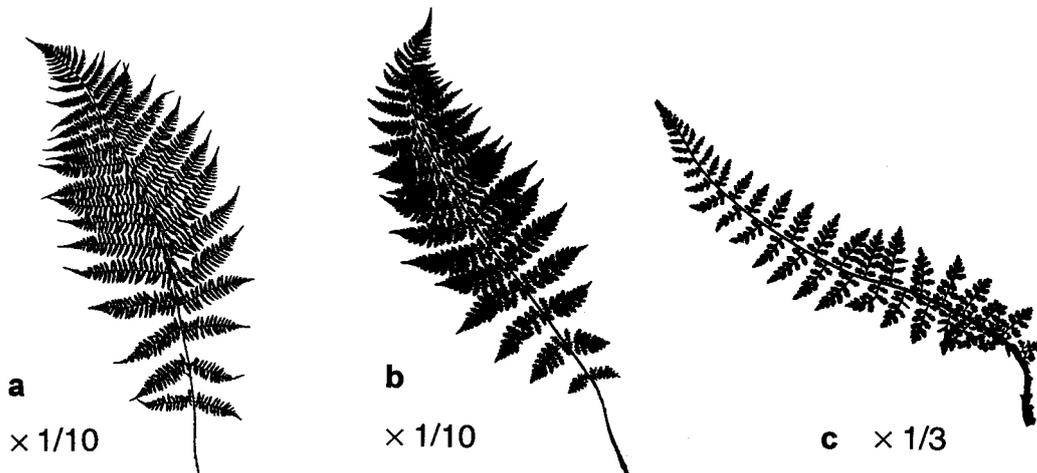
ATHYRIUM DISTENTIFOLIUM*, *A. DISTENTIFOLIUM* VAR. *FLEXILE* AND *A. FILIX-FEMINA

Athyrium distentifolium is a plant of higher mountains in Scotland where snow lies late into the season and on north-facing ledges on the more acid range of rock types. *A. filix-femina* can also be found on adjacent ledges especially if exposed to the south. *A. distentifolium* var. *flexile* (*A. flexile* Newman) is a rare endemic form usually found within populations of the type variety on skeletal soils over medium-sized block scree, or where spring melt-water percolates, at c. 750m or above (McHaffie 1997). Regarded by some (e.g. Stace's *New Flora*; Page 1997) as a species, and a detailed study is being carried out by H. McHaffie.

	<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> (L.) Roth	<i>A. distentifolium</i> Tausch ex Opiz var. <i>distentifolium</i>	<i>A. distentifolium</i> var. <i>flexile</i> (Newman) Jermy
Leaves	Up to 120 cm; dull, mid- to somewhat blue-green; elliptic-lanceolate, tapered \pm abruptly to an acuminate apex; 2- or 3-pinnate (Fig. a)	Up to 75 cm; pale to yellowish green; elliptic-lanceolate, tapered to an acuminate apex; 2- or almost 3-pinnate, margins of the ultimate segments touching giving a less lacy appearance than in <i>A. filix-femina</i> (Fig. b)	Up to 35 cm; pale to blue green; \pm elliptic, tapered gradually to an acute apex, 2-pinnate (Fig. c)
Petiole	1/4 - 1/2 length of leaf, green, or purplish red	About 1/4 length of leaf, pale yellow-green, almost translucent, often pinkish or straw-coloured at base	1/5 or less length of leaf, yellow-green or reddish, markedly deflexed just below the blade
Pinnae	Linear-lanceolate, tapered to a fine apex; decrescent (decreasing in length downwards) and \pm opposite and remote below	Linear-lanceolate, tapered to a fine apex; decrescent and \pm opposite and remote below	Linear-lanceolate to sub-triangular, abruptly tapered to a subacute or obtuse apex; lower pinnae alternate, usually contiguous, often deflexed, not markedly decrescent
Pinnules	Linear-lanceolate, apex obtuse-acute, pinnatisect, or pinnate-pinnatifid, \pm contiguous, touching the rachis	Linear-lanceolate, apex obtuse to acute, pinnatisect, \pm contiguous, touching the rachis	Ovate-oblong, apex obtuse, often tridentate, pinnatifid or coarsely toothed, well-spaced throughout
Sorus	Oblong to linear, close to vein, those on larger pinnules often J-shaped,	\pm round and appearing more uniformly arranged on the pinnule than in var. <i>flexile</i>	\pm round, frequently in the lower 1/2 of the leaf only and often with fewer sporangia and less uniformly

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	straddling the vein		arranged on the pinnule than in var. <i>distentifolium</i>
Indusium	Linear, oblong or J-shaped, membranous	Imperfectly formed and soon lost or absent entirely	Imperfectly formed and soon lost or absent entirely
Spores	Minutely scabrid	Finely ridged	Finely ridged



Silhouettes of leaves of *Athyrium* (a) *A. filix-femina*, (b) *A. distentifolium* var. *distentifolium*, (c) *A. distentifolium* var. *flexile*.

References McHaffie, H. (1997). *Pteridologist* 3: 88-91.
Page, C. N. (1997). *Ferns of Britain and Ireland*. (ed. 2). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

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