

Usnea Subg. Usnea Sect. Longissimae

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Thallus with little or no cortex except on branchlets, very elongate, pendulous, regularly fibrillose, pale green to white or straw colored, or sometimes intense or dirty green. Medulla reduced to minute clusters scattered along the solid axis which occupies almost the entire branch and is I+ deep blue. Branches ± terete, not distinctly angular.

This group has been called Sect. Elongatae Subsect. Longissimae, but it seems to be distinctive enough to stand alone as a section. In N. America, the section is usually easily recognized by the sheer length.

A (usually somewhat less) elongated thallus and absence or loss of cortex also occur in Laevigatae sect. Amabiles, which apparently differs mainly in having terete branches and as far as I understand, an I axis (most keys state or imply that the axis of all other sections is I, but the axis is I+ blue in several species in other sections). Sect. Gonioides is also somewhat similar to the Longissimae, but has a persistent cortex, often (always in N. American species) ± distinctly angular main branches, and (again, as far as I know), an I axis.

Thallus pendulous, very elongate, up to several meters, consisting of one or few simple or scarcely branched main strands ca. 0.5-0.8 mm thick, terete or indistinctly flattened, scarcely attenuate towards tips, usually straight, usually not attached at base; surface gray green to paler or whitish straw. Fibrils many, at right angles, corticate, only a little thinner than main strand, simple or sometimes branching, sometimes tuberculate basally. Apothecia very rare. Soredia none or only abnormal when present. Medulla usually K, C, P, but K+ or P+ strains are also known. On trees. Mostly northern US and Canada, Alaska to Newfoundland, south to northern California in the west. U. longissima

Morphological variants

(See Motyka and others for key):

v. contorta

v. corticata

v. perciliata

v. tenuis

Chemical variants:

(no key at present)

1) usnic only. 2) barbatic and barbatolic? acids (var. vulgata and var. robustior). 3) barbatic acid, barbatolic? acid, squamatic acid. 4) diffractaic acid most common chemotype? (ssp. ambigua), 5) evernic acid and unknown (ssp. jesoensis), 6) squamatic acid and unknown, 7) fumarprotocetraric acid and unknown (ssp. persensibilis), 8) salazinic acid (ssp. sensibilis).