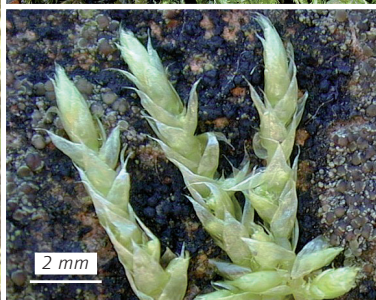
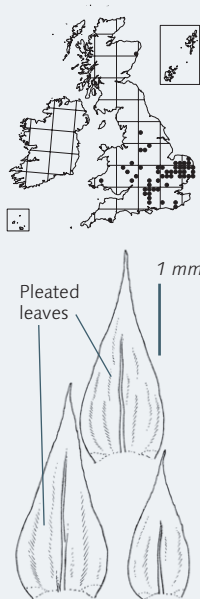


Brachythecium salebrosum

Smooth-stalk Feather-moss



Identification

A medium-sized to fairly robust moss, with prostrate shoots and erect or ascending branches. Stem leaves are 2–3 mm long, narrowly egg-shaped or spearhead-shaped, widest just above the base, tapering gradually to a long, fine tip which may be wavy, but is not normally twisted. Stem leaves are distinctly pleated, and have a single nerve that ceases below the tip. Branch leaves are similar, but a little narrower, and tend to be very finely but distinctly toothed, especially at the tip; this may be hard to detect in the field. The leaves are loosely erect or somewhat spreading when dry, and spread a little more when moist. *B. salebrosum* frequently produces curved, egg-shaped capsules (2–2.5 mm long) with a conical lid and a smooth seta.

Similar species

Readily confused with other *Brachythecium* species that have pleated leaves, but the frequent presence of capsules is a useful character. The lack of a twisted leaf tip normally distinguishes it from *B. glareosum* (p. 742), and it does not have the string-like shoots of *B. albicans* (p. 741). It is often confused with *B. mildeanum* (p. 752), but the latter has scarcely pleated leaves and its leaf margins are entire or almost so. Forms of *B. rutabulum* (p. 746) with slightly pleated leaves will have roughened setae when capsules are present, and normally have wider leaves that more abruptly narrow to the tip. *Homalothecium sericeum* (p. 738) has more strongly pleated leaves, more tightly appressed when dry, and its branches are usually curved. It also has cylindrical capsules. The very rare *B. erythrorrhizon* (Smith, p. 820) has more or less pinnate shoots and curved leaves. The bundles of red rhizoids mentioned by Smith are not now thought to be a reliable character. *Tomentypnum nitens* (p. 725) usually grows in fens and has a dense felt of rhizoids on the stem and leaf bases.

Habitat

B. salebrosum is rather rare and has often been confused with other species. It occurs on logs, tree trunks, and on stones and rubble, in woods and sheltered places. It has been found in a range of other habitats, including humus, leaf litter and wet ground.

Photos Jan-Peter Frahm (left) & Michael Lüth (right) Drawings Sean Edwards Text Tom Blockeel