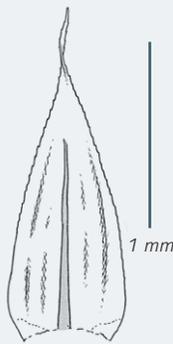
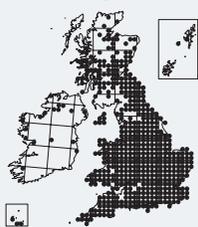


*Brachythecium velutinum**Brachytheciastrum velutinum*

Velvet Feather-moss

Key 299, 369



Identification

B. velutinum is a common moss in lowland Britain. The shoots are slender to medium-sized, and form loose to rather dense, green patches. They are irregularly to more or less pinnately branched, with short branches. The stem leaves are commonly 1–1.5 mm long, and narrowly triangular, i.e. widest just above the base and evenly tapered to an acute or longly tapering tip. However, some forms have narrowly spearhead-shaped leaves. The leaves spread somewhat, and are often slightly curved, particularly near the shoot tip. The single nerve is fairly strong, but ceases below the tip. Branch leaves are smaller and narrowly egg-shaped. Capsules are often present and offer two very useful field characters: the roughened seta, and a conical (not beaked) lid. Capsules are 1.5 mm long, typically curved and egg-shaped like those of other *Brachythecium* species, borne on a seta 1–1.5 cm tall.

Similar species

B. velutinum is most likely to be confused with *B. populeum* and *Rhynchostegium confertum* (p. 761). *B. populeum* (p. 744) is usually larger and silkier in appearance owing to its more closely appressed leaves having a very fine slender tip; it is also distinguished by the long nerve which extends into the leaf tip. The leaves of *R. confertum* are more egg-shaped and somewhat concave. This gives the shoots a rather different, softer, and less rigid appearance than in *B. velutinum*. Like *B. velutinum*, *R. confertum* is often found with capsules, but these have a smooth seta and beaked lid. *B. trachypodium* (*Brachytheciastrum trachypodium*) (Smith, p. 832) is similar to *B. velutinum*, but is known only from calcareous rocks in two localities high on mountains in Scotland. It can only be distinguished by microscopic differences.

Habitat

B. velutinum is common in the south and east, though apparently less so in some areas than it once was, but infrequent in the north and west. It occurs on wood, including the branches, base and roots of trees, and on dead wood, as well as stones and compacted soil.