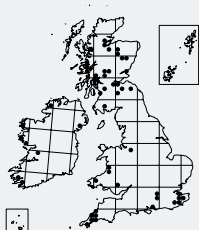


Atrichum tenellum

Slender Smoothcap



Identification The erect, unbranched, less than 2 cm tall shoots of *A. tenellum* form dull or brownish-green, low, open patches. The scarcely undulate leaves are 4.5–5.5 mm long, narrowly egg-shaped, distinctly narrowed to the base and have paired marginal teeth only down to mid-leaf. The leaf has 2–4 well-developed ridges of tissue, (3–) 6–9 cells tall, on the ventral surface of the nerve. The uncommon, shortly cylindrical, inclined capsule of this dioicous species is borne on a yellowish seta and matures in autumn or winter. Brownish, more or less spherical gemmae up to 0.4 mm diameter are present on the rhizoids.

Similar species This subtle plant is likely to be overlooked or confused with other species of *Atrichum* by virtue of the distinctively ridged nerve. Greatest confusion occurs through misidentification of young, or stunted plants of *A. undulatum* (p. 330), which may have shorter shoots, fewer ridges of tissue and leaves rather more egg-shaped, strongly reminiscent of *A. tenellum*. The combination of few but taller many-celled ridges of tissue, the presence of rhizoidal gemmae, and, when present, the shorter and thus squatter capsule, helps to distinguish *A. tenellum*. *A. crispum* (p. 328) also has leaves that distinctly taper to the insertion, but differs in its much shorter, poorly developed and less obvious ridges of tissue. *A. crispum* generally looks broader-leaved than *A. tenellum*.

Habitat A very uncommon plant of unpredictable occurrence, found in a range of disturbed, acidic, open habitats on moist, sandy humus and loams. These include streamsides, lake edges and reservoir margins, as well as woodland rides, ditch banks and open, heathy grasslands.