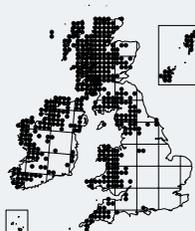


Breutelia chrysocoma

Golden-head Moss

Key 134



Identification This attractive species forms loose, flat patches or grows as scattered, yellowish shoots flecked with red and gold. Each shoot is usually less than 10 cm tall, but occasionally more. *Breutelia*'s red stems are covered with a brown felt of rhizoids from which spiky leaves spread widely from a sheathing base, giving shoots the appearance of a robust bottle-brush. The narrowly triangular leaves are 2.5–4 mm long, have distinct longitudinal folds, and a nerve that ends below the leaf tip. The margins are plane and finely toothed in the upper part of the leaf. Capsules are rare; they are round and hidden amongst the leaves on a short, curved seta.

Similar species The widely spreading leaves and red stem may suggest *Rhytidiadelphus*, particularly *R. loreus* (p. 817), but that genus lacks a felt of rhizoids on the stem. *Breutelia* is closely related to *Philonotis* (pp. 633–639) and can be confused with some of the larger species, such as *Philonotis fontana* (p. 636). *Philonotis* species are typically neater plants, with a characteristic grey-green hue and no trace of the rich, yellow-red colouration of *Breutelia*. Also the leaves of *Philonotis* species are shorter and broader at the insertion on the stem, and the round capsules are held on a long seta. *Breutelia* also somewhat resembles *Aulacomnium palustre* (p. 625), and the two mosses may grow near each other in wet heath. *A. palustre* also has a felt of rhizoids on its stem, but its leaves are blunt and it tends to form tall hummocks.

Habitat *B. chrysocoma* flourishes best in districts of high rainfall, and is characteristic of mountain and moorland on open, normally unshaded, acidic ground, such as flushes, streamsides, flushed heathland, grassy slopes (especially where flushed with slightly base-rich water), damp rock ledges, and open hazel and birch woodland in Scotland. It also grows in bogs in the more oceanic parts of Britain, and on limestone pavements in western Ireland.