

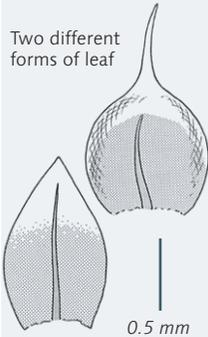
Bryum argenteum

Silver-moss

Key 83



Two different forms of leaf



Almost white, compact, cylindrical tufts



Silvery grey leaf tip

**Identification**

This is the most recognizable of all British mosses. *B. argenteum* forms pale green or almost white, compact tufts or patches which look shiny and silvery grey when dry. The crowded shoots are usually less than 1 cm tall, and the rounded, concave leaves (0.75–1.25 mm long) cause the shoots to look smoothly cylindrical, hardly altered when dry. The nerve ends well below the leaf tip. The shortly oblong, pendulous (or rarely nearly horizontal) capsules are small (about 1.5 mm long, as in *B. dichotomum*, p. 595) and borne on a short seta (about 1 cm long). They are usually produced between autumn and spring.

Similar species

Anomobryum julaceum (p. 579) is yellowish-green rather than silvery grey, while *Plagiobryum zieri* (p. 578) is tinged with pink or red. *A. julaceum* favours streamsides, and *P. zieri* prefers rocks and cliffs at higher altitudes than is typical of *B. argenteum*. Green forms of *B. argenteum* that grow on very wet, nutrient-rich tarmac can look confusingly like *B. dichotomum* (p. 595), and may also have bulbils in the leaf axils. *Stegonia latifolia* (p. 469) is also silvery, but tiny (only about 2 mm tall), and holds its elliptical capsules erect.

Habitat

B. argenteum is widespread and often abundant in disturbed habitats which may become very dry and are usually rich in nutrients such as nitrates. These include soil on and by paths (including cracks between paving slabs), roads, in arable fields, on waste ground and railway lines. It may also be found on stone rather than soil, as on walls, buildings, roofs, and concrete and tarmac. Habitats less influenced by man include sand dunes, eroding banks of streams and rivers, and unstable soil on lowland cliffs.