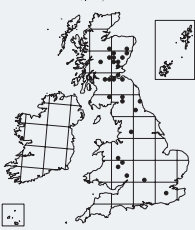


Buxbaumia aphylla

Brown Shield-moss

Key 85

**Identification**

This species is unmistakable when in capsule, earning it the nickname 'bug-on-a-stick'. It has no green leafy parts, and the disproportionately large capsule arises from a brown filamentous mat. Plants tend to be solitary and often ephemeral, so may not persist for long in one place. The stout, purplish seta is usually 5–10 mm long, and supports a glossy, brown capsule, 5–6 mm long and asymmetrically egg-shaped. The upper surface of the capsule is flattened with angular edges.

Similar species

The capsules of *B. aphylla* could only be confused with mature or old capsules of the rare *B. viridis* (p. 337). *B. aphylla* capsules are held more erect than mature (brown) *B. viridis* capsules. At maturity the surface of a *B. viridis* capsule peels away, whilst that of *B. aphylla* does not.

Habitat

It is sparsely but widely distributed across the British Isles, in shady habitats, especially coniferous woods, where it favours rotten wood, or humic well-drained sandy soils. It also occasionally colonises colliery spoil.