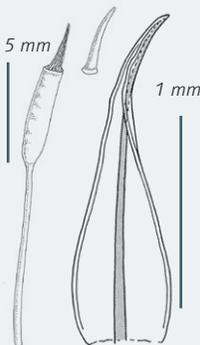
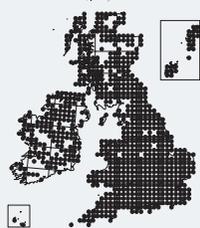


Didymodon fallax

Barbula fallax

False Beard-moss

Key 236, 241



Identification

D. fallax grows in loose tufts, patches or as scattered shoots. Shoots are short (0.75–1.5 cm tall), brownish, often tinged orange, or less frequently dull green. The leaves are 1–2 mm long, rather distantly spaced along the stem, spreading or recurved when moist, and twisted when dry. They vary in the extent to which they taper towards the tip. Cylindrical capsules occasionally form in winter and spring, borne on a red seta 1 cm long, and have a lid with a long beak. The long, twisted peristome teeth are rather like those of a *Tortula* species, looking like a delicately curled, pale orange-red brush.

Similar species

D. acutus (p. 456) has more erect, straight leaves with a longer tip. *D. tomaculosus* (Smith, p. 331) is a small (5 mm tall), dark green moss that occurs as scattered shoots in acidic, clayey arable fields, and can only be identified by microscopical detection of its rhizoidal tubers. *D. insulanus* (p. 463) has longer (3–5 mm) upper leaves which curl and twist in a characteristic manner when dry. *D. ferrugineus* (p. 465) has more strongly recurved leaves than *D. fallax*, and is more restricted to lime-rich ground. *D. spadiceus* (p. 458) is usually taller (1.5–3 cm), and has longer (2–4 mm), straighter leaves. *D. rigidulus* (p. 459) has narrower leaves and grows on stone. *D. luridus* (p. 461) and *D. tophaceus* (p. 466) have leaves more rounded at the tip. *Ceratodon purpureus* (p. 354) may resemble *D. fallax* in height (1–3 cm) and habit (loose tufts or patches), but is often tinged wine red; *D. fallax* is less shiny and often orange. *Cheilothela chloropus* (p. 355) looks spikier and has leaves with plane margins. *Bryoerythrophyllum recurvirostrum* (p. 442) has the lower part of its shoots tinged rusty red, with leaves approximately 3–4 mm long and a distinct change in taper just below the tip.

Habitat

A common, lowland moss of bare, usually base-rich soil on and beside tracks, paths and roadsides, on disturbed ground, in quarries and pits, and by water courses and pools. It may grow in shallow soil over rock and on walls, but never on stone itself.

Photos David Holyoak (left) & Michael Lüth (right) Drawings Sean Edwards & Jonathan Graham (capsule)
Text Mark Lawley