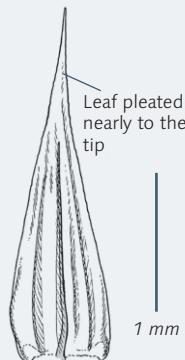
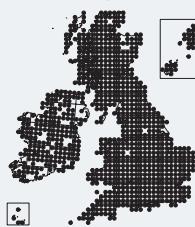


Homalothecium sericeum

Silky Wall Feather-moss

Key 360



Identification

The green or golden green main shoots grow closely appressed to the substrate, sometimes reaching many centimetres in length. They have short (less than 1 cm), crowded side branches that curve upwards and inwards when dry, with leaves closely appressed. On wetting, the branches rapidly straighten and the leaves spread outwards. Leaves are 2.5–3 mm long, strongly pleated, narrowly spearhead-shaped, widest at the base, and taper evenly to a finely pointed tip. The margins are weakly toothed. Capsules are fairly frequent, 2–3 mm long, straight and cylindrical.

Similar species

H. lutescens (p. 739) has similar leaves, but is larger, bushier, with longer, ascending branches which are hardly curved and not so densely packed as in *H. sericeum*. In some districts, however, *H. lutescens* grows appressed to limestone rocks and boulders, and then closely resembles *H. sericeum*, though with longer, stouter, straighter branches. Fertile *H. lutescens* can be distinguished by its slightly curved capsules, but these are rare. *Leucodon sciuroides* (p. 675) has broader leaves, and when dry feels hard and rigid, whereas *H. sericeum* is soft and yielding. Weak forms of *H. sericeum* with almost straight branches can be confused with *Brachythecium* species, especially *B. populeum* (p. 744), which has prostrate shoots and grows in similar habitats, but does not have pleated leaves, and is usually dark green. *Eurhynchium striatum* (p. 764) and *Ptychodium plicatum* (p. 692) have leaves with longitudinal folds – for differences, see the comments under *H. lutescens*.

Habitat

H. sericeum grows on hard surfaces, both on rocks and tree bark. It favours base-rich rocks and may be abundant on limestone walls and crags. It is also common on trees with base-rich bark, e.g. ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*), preferring the trunks and larger branches. It is also widespread on brick walls, concrete and other man-made structures.