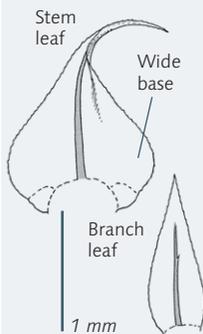


*Kindbergia praelonga**Eurhynchium praelongum*

Common Feather-moss

Key 335, 356



## Identification

*K. praelonga* has regularly branched, pinnate shoots, typically 1–3 cm long, which are more or less triangular. Robust woodland forms have bi- to tripinnate branching patterns and are larger. The most important character is the very marked difference in shape between the stem and branch leaves. Stem leaves are 1–1.5 mm long, triangularly heart-shaped, with a fine, elongated tip which often turns outwards; they are widest just above the base, but narrow abruptly to clasp and run down the stem a little distance in the form of narrow wings. The leaves at the shoot tip are crowded and spread outwards, thus the tip may appear star-shaped from above. Branch leaves are about 1 mm long, egg-shaped, with a shorter tip and without an obviously clasping base. The leaves are finely toothed and have a single nerve. Capsules (about 2 mm long) have a beaked lid and are fairly frequent, especially in woods.

## Similar species

*Oxyrrhynchium hians* (p. 768) may be very similar, but its stem leaves are the same shape as the branch leaves, apart from being a little larger and wider. There are other species with a star-like shoot tip, but none show such a marked divergence in the shape of the stem and branch leaves. Of the species that do have differently shaped stem leaves, the rare *Eurhynchium pulchellum* (p. 766) has bluntly pointed branch leaves and stubby branches, and *Brachythecium reflexum* (p. 750) has a leaf base that more broadly runs down onto the stem, and slender, less neatly branched shoots. *Thuidium tamariscinum* (p. 696) differs in the dense, felt-like covering of tiny outgrowths on the stem, and in having leaves that appear solid rather than translucent.

## Habitat

One of the commonest mosses in lowland Britain. It is found on banks, in turf, on the ground in woodland, on logs, and it ascends the trunks and branches of trees, at least in sheltered places. It is present in many lawns. It is less common in upland areas, but may occur in rush (*Juncus*) flushes and among purple moor-grass (*Molinia*).

Photos Sean Edwards (left) & Des Callaghan (right) Drawings Sean Edwards Text Tom Blockeel