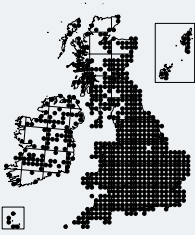


*Orthotrichum diaphanum*

White-tipped Bristle-moss

Key 111, 118



**Identification** The white leaf tip of *O. diaphanum* is immediately diagnostic within the genus and makes this very common species look more like a *Schistidium* than an *Orthotrichum*. It grows in small tufts of narrow, upright shoots, up to 1 cm tall, usually with abundant capsules. Leaves are 2.5–4 mm long, and capsules are 1.5 mm long. Unripe capsules are covered by a hairless, light green calyptra, whilst ripe capsules are light brown and slightly furrowed when old and dry. The 16 light brown outer peristome teeth are reflexed when dry.

**Similar species** Confusion with other *Orthotrichum* species is unlikely because of the white leaf tip. Most other mosses with hair points have their capsules on a relatively long seta, so confusion is only really likely with *Schistidium* species (pp. 506–518). These are usually taller, straggly, branched plants, which have a small calyptra that scarcely sheathes the capsule, and red or orange peristome teeth.

**Habitat** Very common on trees and shrubs in lowland Britain, especially on elders (*Sambucus nigra*), but also on willows (*Salix*) (particularly by streams) and other trees. Nutrient-rich bark is favoured, so *O. diaphanum* is rather scarce in parts of the country without intensive agriculture. This is a particularly common plant in town centres, where it is just as much at home on concrete, rocks, brick walls and other inorganic structures. It grows in similar situations in farmyards in the open countryside. Even on remote moorland it is possible to find *O. diaphanum* on concrete gate posts, probably because birds frequently perch on them.