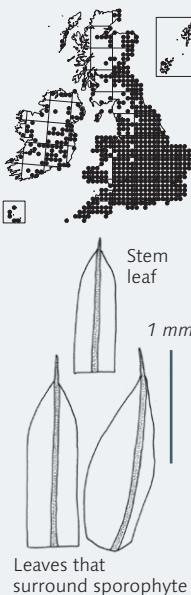


*Phascum cuspidatum**Tortula acaulon*

Cuspidate Earth-moss

Key 259



Identification

Shoots form fresh, green patches 2–6 mm tall. The broad leaves are 1–3 mm long, and surround and partly hide the spherical capsules, which are borne on an extremely short (up to 0.5 mm long) seta and have a small protuberance at the top. *P. cuspidatum* varies considerably, both in size of the plants and in features of the leaves, and several varieties have been described (Smith, pp. 363–365). In *P. cuspidatum* var. *piliferum* the nerve runs out well beyond the leaf tip.

Similar species

Protobryum bryoides (p. 485) may closely resemble *P. cuspidatum* when the capsules of *P. bryoides* are young and have not grown clear of the leaves, but its capsules are longer than wide even when immature. *Microbryum floerkeanum* (Smith, p. 371) is much smaller (0.6–1.2 mm tall), with reddish-brown leaves that are 1.5 mm long or less, and conceal less of the upper part of the capsules; *M. floerkeanum* is normally only found in the autumn and early winter. The 1 mm long seta of *M. curvicolle* (p. 489) is curved so that the capsule hangs to one side. *Acaulon muticum* (p. 492) has fewer, shorter (2 mm long), blunter leaves with margins that are bluntly toothed near the tip. *Aphanorrhema patens* (p. 567) has toothed leaves, distinctly large, lax leaf cells, and grows in wetter places. *Pleuridium* species (p. 340) and *Pseudephemerum nitidum* (p. 341) also have capsules amongst their leaves, but the leaves are much narrower relative to their length. *Ephemerum* species (pp. 503–504) also have hidden capsules, but are much smaller mosses. *Weissia longifolia* (p. 427) has hidden capsules, but its leaves are longer and narrower.

Habitat

P. cuspidatum is a very common, lowland moss of disturbed, bare soil in gardens and fields, woodland rides, tracks and paths, banks, anthills, waste ground and sides of water courses. It does not grow on humus or peat. The variety *piliferum* (Smith, p. 364) occurs on rather base-rich, sandy soil near the sea.