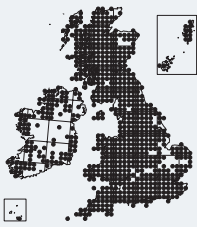


*Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans**Isopterygium elegans*

Elegant Silk-moss

Key 296

**Identification**

This very common moss forms sleek mats on shady, acidic banks. The shoots grow up to 3 cm long, are sparingly branched and rather slender, commonly about 2 mm wide, and are flattened in one plane. The leaves are just over 1 mm long, and gradually taper to a fine point. The nerve is very short and double, or absent. *P. elegans* has vegetative propagules in the form of very slender, easily detached branchlets that form in the leaf axils; these are often abundant enough to give a fuzzy appearance to the plant, but at other times they are sparse and easily overlooked. Capsules are very rare.

Similar species

Most *Plagiothecium* species (pp. 779–785) also have flattened shoots, but they lack the very slender branchlets, and are often slightly more robust or have less tapering leaves. If in doubt, pull a few leaves off a shoot and use a hand lens to examine the leaf bases that remain attached to the stem. All *Plagiothecium* species have a leaf base that runs down onto the stem, whereas *P. elegans* does not have these strips of cells running down the stem from the leaf base. *Taxiphyllum wiszgrillii* (p. 789) differs in the less tapering leaves, more glossy shoots, and its calcareous habitat.

Habitat

A calcifuge species of shady, acidic soil, rock, logs and tree roots; in woodland or in shady rock crevices. It tolerates shade and acidity, and is often abundant in species-poor and rather unpromising habitats such as conifer plantations or amongst dense shrubs.