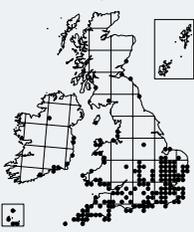


Rhynchostegium megapolitanum

Indian Feather-moss



Identification *R. megapolitanum* looks unlike other *Rhynchostegium* species. It could be overlooked as a species of *Brachythecium*, being medium-sized, sometimes rather large (to 6 cm or more), loosely branched, and not closely attached to the substrate. The stem leaves are rather longer and wider than the branch leaves, and may reach 2.5 mm long. The lower half is broadly egg-shaped, and rather quickly narrowed, both at the base and above mid-leaf. Although the plants lack any very distinctive features, the shape of the stem leaves, widely narrowed both at the base and above mid-leaf, is characteristic. Stem leaves have a slender, tapering tip, and a single nerve. Branch leaves are narrower, broadly spearhead-shaped, and little altered when dry. The lax branching and the habitat of dry, often sandy ground in open places are useful pointers in the field. Curved, egg-shaped capsules are not uncommon, and have a beaked lid, the latter immediately separating it from *Brachythecium* species. The seta is long (reaching 2 cm or more) and smooth.

Similar species Compact forms may approach *R. confertum* (p. 761) in appearance, but remain distinct in the wider stem leaves. In the field, non-fertile plants may be difficult to distinguish from *Brachythecium* species (pp. 741–752) growing in open, grassy places, but these tend to have at least slightly pleated leaves or have more spearhead-shaped leaves.

Habitat *R. megapolitanum* grows in open places and is most often encountered on sand dunes and chalk, but also occurs rarely on light, well-drained soil on banks, cliff tops, and accumulated soil on walls.