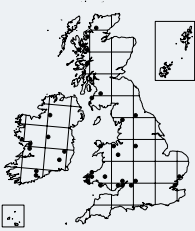


Schistidium elegantulum

Elegant Grimmia



Identification A hoary *Schistidium* that looks similar to the much commoner *S. crassipilum*. When well-grown, it forms flat patches of sprawling, branched plants up to 3 cm long, on sloping limestone rocks, but some colonies are made up of rounded cushions 1.5 cm tall. The lower leaves are 2–2.5 mm long, narrower than those of *S. crassipilum* and have a spiky look, similar to *Grimmia trichophylla*. The leaves surrounding the capsules are 3.5–4 mm long. Long, rigid, very white hair points contrast strongly with the dark green leaves.

Similar species Definite separation from *S. crassipilum* (p. 511) requires a microscope, but good candidates for *S. elegantulum* can be spotted in the field as the narrow, dark green leaves, white hair points and spiky appearance are characteristic. Non-fruiting plants can be confused with *Grimmia trichophylla* (p. 529), which is a lighter, more yellow-green rather than dark green.

Habitat Shaded limestone in open woodland is the classic habitat of *S. elegantulum*. Sloping limestone rocks are favoured, but it may also grow on vertical rock faces. Colonies have also been found on the shaded sides of roadside walls and bridges, and in churchyards. It appears to have a southern and western distribution in Britain and the rest of Europe.