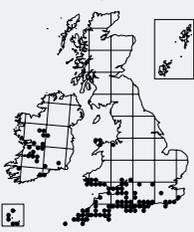


Scorpiurium circinatum

Curving Feather-moss



Identification This green to yellow-green moss is rather small to medium-sized, although it may form extensive patches. It has short, crowded branches which arch and curve downwards; this is a very useful field character. The shoots differ greatly when moist and dry. When dry, the leaves are closely appressed and rounded, making the branches look wiry and rounded in cross-section. When moist, the leaves rapidly take up a spreading position. Stem leaves are about 1 mm long, more or less triangular with a tapering tip, but sometimes bluntly pointed. Branch leaves are a little shorter, egg-shaped, with a bluntly pointed or acute tip. An important character of the branch leaves, observable with a hand lens, is the strong, single nerve reaching nearly to the tip. It may be less easy to observe the strongly (but finely) toothed margins. Poorly developed forms may need to be checked microscopically to confirm the short, narrowly rhomboidal leaf cells, and frequent presence of projecting end-walls on the cells at the back of the leaf.

Similar species *Pterogonium gracile* (p. 677), although not closely related, may appear very similar to *S. circinatum*, with crowded branches that are curved, and rounded in cross-section when dry. *P. gracile*, however, is pale green to brown, and sometimes (though not always) has a more bushy growth form. Its leaves lack a distinct nerve.

Habitat A rather rare, southern species of warm habitats, especially on base-rich rocks, rarely on the roots and base of adjacent trees, and in turf. It occurs both in unshaded habitats and in light to medium shade. In south-western parts of Britain it may occur on and around base-poor rocks, but normally where there is some external base enrichment, for example from shell-sand.