

Sphagnum cuspidatum

Feathery Bog-moss

Section Cuspidata



Stem leaf



Identification Medium or large shoots, occurring in carpets or as a scattered submerged aquatic. Shoots are dull to bright green, yellowish, or very pale or almost white in dried-out bog pools. Plants can have reddish tints at the base of branches; male plants have a darker end to the capitulum branches and look different from accompanying female or non-fertile plants. Capitula are not or only moderately stellate, and no terminal bud is visible. Stellate forms have only a single juvenile branch visible between the capitulum rays, or none is distinct. Branch leaves are not or are hardly in straight lines, and branches are not obviously differentiated into spreading and pendent, except in terrestrial forms. Leaves are short near the branch base (3 times as long as wide), but long, narrow and curved towards the tip (10 times as long as wide). Feathery, long-leaved, aquatic forms and those in hollows on bogs are distinctive; when removed from water they are matted and lack structure, like sodden fur. In some terrestrial forms, the long leaves near the branch tip are rolled together into a narrow, tubular point. Stem leaves are pendent or slightly spreading, always longer than wide, (isosceles-triangular) and sharply pointed. Capsules are frequent.

Similar species Terrestrial and emergent forms, or those where the water table fluctuates markedly have somewhat stellate capitula and shorter branch leaves, and hence resemble *S. fallax* (p. 306). The shape of the stem leaf, a single juvenile branch between the capitulum rays, and the curved, drawn-out, pointed branch tip are the most reliable distinguishing features of *S. cuspidatum*. Also see *S. majus* (p. 303).

Habitat The most aquatic of the British species of *Sphagnum*. A moss of pools and depressions in bogs, including old peat diggings. Also found in runnels and ditches on moorland. Normally found in very acidic habitats.