

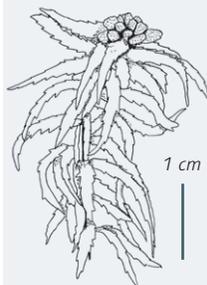
*Sphagnum palustre*

Blunt-leaved Bog-moss

Section Sphagnum



Top of shoot



Winter colours



**Identification** *S. palustre* is rather variable in colour, forming large, untidy mats or loose hummocks that are green to yellow-brown, with or without a contrasting capitulum centre. The most distinctive plants have capitula with the centre arched above the outer part, the centre salmon-pink to brick-red or dark brown (especially in the autumn and winter), contrasting with paler spreading branches. Spreading branches in the outer part of the capitulum and just below are usually elongated and narrowly tapering. Fascicles have 2–3 spreading and up to 4 pendent branches. The basal part of branch leaves is usually held at an angle of less than 45° to the branch stem, though the upper part can be widely spreading to almost recurved. Capsules are occasional.

**Similar species** Well-marked forms are distinctive. Some compact, uniformly coloured forms with rather blunt-tipped spreading branches are virtually indistinguishable in the field from forms of *S. papillosum* (p. 278) and *S. affine* (p. 277), and require confirmation under a microscope. In wet or shaded habitats, *S. palustre* often has branch leaves with a tip that is strongly curved away from the branch, resembling *S. squarrosum* (p. 281), but that species does not have hooded branch leaves, and has a narrow stem cortex. Very dense forms, for example on sand and gravel by streams, can look superficially like *S. compactum* (p. 295). That species has minute stem leaves and a narrow stem cortex. Also see *S. magellanicum* (p. 280). *S. palustre* var. *centrale* (Smith, p. 52) can only be identified by microscopical examination of transverse sections of branch leaves. It is apparently rare or overlooked in Britain.

**Habitat** The most shade-tolerant of the species in this Section, found in sites that are moderately enriched with nutrients, for example wet woodland, ditches, stream margins and flushes.