

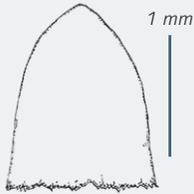
Sphagnum skyense

Skye Bog-moss

Section Acutifolia



Stem leaf



Identification

A large to robust plant, vividly pinkish-red throughout, although the capitula can be partly green. Capitula are usually slightly convex. Shoots look shaggy and top-heavy, with long intertwined branches. Stems are pink and red, often very pale, but occasionally pink and green, or rarely all green. Upper branch stems are the same vivid pinkish-red as the leaves. Fascicles frequently have 2 pendent and 2 or 3 spreading branches. Leaves are usually in straight lines in the proximal half of spreading branches. Stem leaves are large, rounded-triangular and broad relative to their length. Capsules are unknown.

Similar species

S. skyense combines features of *S. quinquefarium* (p. 286) and *S. subnitens* (p. 291), but it is larger than both and may prove to be a hybrid of the two. *S. quinquefarium* has fascicles with 3 spreading and 1–2 pendent branches, with leaves usually strikingly in straight lines, hemispherical capitula and fascicles neatly arranged down the stem, making the whole shoot parallel-sided. Its stems are green, or with a few red patches, and its stem leaves, though similar in shape, are smaller and not as broad relative to their length. *S. subnitens* is salmon or dingy-pink, not vividly red. The outer capitulum branches turn upwards and in hummocks grow over the capitulum centre. Fascicles usually have only 1 pendent and 2 spreading branches and the stem is brown or brownish-red. Stem leaves are narrower relative to their length, with a pinched, sharply pointed tip.

Habitat

Occurs on humid, north-east- to north-west-facing heather-dominated banks, in western districts with high rainfall. The most frequently associated species are heather (*Calluna*), purple moor-grass (*Molinia*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), bell heather (*Erica cinerea*), *S. capillifolium*, *S. quinquefarium*, *Hylocomium splendens* and *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*. It is not found on bogs or wet heath, and is almost certainly under-recorded.

Photos Andy Amphlett (left) & Gordon Rothero (right) Drawing Sharon Pilkington
Text Sandy Payne & Andy Amphlett