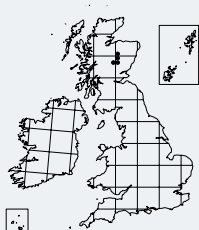


Stegonia latifolia

Hood-leaved Screw-moss



Identification This tiny moss forms small, loose clusters (or rarely short, open tufts) of pale whitish-green, bud-like plants, about 2 mm tall. The very strongly concave leaves are 1–1.25 mm long, closely appress and overlap each other when moist, and alter little when dry. From a narrow base they become broadly egg-shaped, with plane margins that are somewhat notched below the tip. The weak, single nerve usually ends some distance below the leaf tip, which is shortly pointed or rounded, although rarely the nerve may be longly excurrent and colourless. The narrowly elliptically shaped capsules, which are commonly produced, and mature to a brownish colour in summer, are erect and borne on a seta about 5 mm tall. The peristome is well-developed, with the teeth cleft at the tip.

Similar species There are few plants that one could mistake for this extremely uncommon montane species. Its small, pale, bud-like shoots are very distinctive. Superficially the pale, almost white colour recalls *Bryum argenteum* (p. 596), or more plausibly in the mountains *Plagiobryum zieri* (p. 578). *P. zieri* differs in its more tufted, elongated, cylindrical shoots, more strongly red-brown nerve and in its larger, markedly asymmetrical capsule.

Habitat *S. latifolia* grows on exposed to partly shaded, shallow, calcareous soils in rock crevices, on narrow ledges and where erosion of soft, calcareous rock substrates, such as the sugar limestones of the Cairnwell in east Perthshire, offer minimal competition. It is often accompanied by a range of other small, rare, northern species, such as *Tortula leucostoma*.