

Weissia controversa

Green-tufted Stubble-moss

Key 247



Identification A variable moss usually less than 1 cm tall, recognized as a *Weissia* by its shortly oblong, rounded capsules on a relatively long seta, combined with inrolled leaf margins and strongly crisped leaves when dry. Leaves are a little over 2 mm long. All four varieties of *W. controversa* have relatively wide-mouthed capsules and possess peristome teeth, although careful checking with a hand lens may be needed to find teeth on some plants. Var. *controversa* grows as open, short patches on soil; var. *crispata* forms denser, taller patches in crevices of limestone; var. *densifolia* grows in dense cushions or patches (sometimes forming moss-balls) on toxic metal substrates; var. *wimmeriana* is very rare and only identifiable microscopically.

Similar species Frequently confused with *W. brachycarpa* (p. 423) and the two should not be named in the absence of ripe capsules. The narrow mouth sealed by a membrane identifies *W. brachycarpa*: the apparent lack of a peristome is not enough. All four varieties of *W. controversa* have inrolled leaf margins, so a *Weissia* with plane margins will be a different species. The coastal *W. perssonii* (Smith, p. 267) looks identical, and cannot be distinguished from *W. controversa* without microscopical examination, so *Weissia* on coastal slopes and salt-sprayed rocks should be checked for *W. perssonii*. *W. condensata* (Smith, p. 269) forms less compact patches than other members of the genus, which are up to 1.5 cm tall and reddish below. The nerve is thick and often reddish. *W. condensata* is a rare moss of bare, dry, calcareous ground.

Habitat Var. *controversa* is common on soil in a wide range of open habitats, especially hedge banks, coastal banks and steep pasture. Var. *crispata* is very locally abundant on limestone and rarer on chalk. Var. *densifolia* is typically found on lead mines, but has also been noted under galvanized roadside barriers and dripping galvanized roofs. Var. *wimmeriana* has been recorded once on a montane ledge.