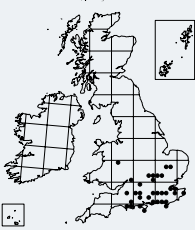


*Weissia sterilis*

Sterile Beardless-moss



**Identification** This inappropriately named moss is distinctive in producing several capsules per plant in clusters of short branches at the end of tall (1–2 cm) branched shoots. The capsules are spherical and do not have a separate lid; they are partly hidden by 2–3 mm long, narrow leaves that arise from beside the base of the seta. When the typical loose patches of *W. sterilis* dry up, the brown inner part becomes visible among young, green branches, and the capsules become hard to find among the curled-up leaves.

**Similar species** *W. longifolia* var. *angustifolia* (p. 427) shares the dry, calcareous habitats of *W. sterilis*. Instead of growing as loose, much-branched clumps, *W. longifolia* var. *angustifolia* has short (less than 1 cm) fertile shoots, each with a single capsule, mixed among non-fertile shoots of similar length.

**Habitat** This is a rare plant of dry, unimproved, calcareous grasslands on chalk and oolitic limestone. At one site in Wales it occurs on dolerite. It usually grows on soil on steep, parched, stony slopes.