

Amblystegium humile

Constricted Feather-moss

Identification

A. humile occurs as scattered stems or in lax, untidy patches of medium size, the stem leaves reaching about 1.5 mm long. The leaves have the usual ovate-lanceolate shape of other *Amblystegium* species, but they are noticeably narrowed at the base, and not or hardly decurrent. Useful field pointers are the widely spreading position of the leaves, and the single long nerve which ceases below the leaf apex. When capsules are present, they are borne on a strikingly long flexuose seta, and this is a particularly useful field character.

Similar species

A. radicale (Smith, p. 767) differs from *A. humile* in the distinctly decurrent leaf bases which form a narrow strip of tissue down the stem. These are usually discernible on at least some of the leaves of the main stems. *Leptodictyum riparium* (q.v.) is normally a larger plant and frequently has sporophytes, which differ in the seta being straight (not flexuose) and not strikingly long. In *A. varium* (q.v.) the leaf nerve reaches the apex, but this may need to be checked under the microscope. *Drepanocladus polygamus* (q.v.) has finely acuminate leaf apices.

Habitat

A. humile is typical of marshes and muddy places, especially by pools, occurring on soil and tree bases, but it appears to be uncommon. It also occurs on stones and silty banks by streams. Until recently, *A. radicale* was thought to be an exceptionally rare species in Britain, but it has been found in a number of new localities and may have been overlooked. Recent finds have been at the bases of dead reed stems in reed beds, and as occasional stems in arable fields (where their occurrence is presumably casual). Earlier finds were among rushes and on rotten *Salix* branches in an old china clay pit in Cornwall, and among tussocks of *Molinia* in a bog in Wales.