

# *Atrichum angustatum*

Lesser Smoothcap



## Identification

A dull yellowish-green, sometimes red-tinged moss, forming lax patches or growing as scattered stems. Individual shoots are usually about 2 cm tall, rarely taller, and are thus less robust than the very much commoner *A. undulatum*. The stiff, patent, narrowly tongue-shaped leaves are about 1 mm wide and up to 6 mm long, more or less broadest at the base, and are dentate from below the middle. They are scarcely undulate when moist and are somewhat curled when dry. The upper leaf surface is partially obscured by 3–7 lamellae, 5–9 (–15) cells tall. Because it is dioicous, *A. angustatum* rarely produces capsules. These mature in winter, are narrowly cylindrical, erect and straight, to inclined and curved, and are borne on a 1.0–2.5 cm yellowish to purplish seta.

## Similar species

Most likely to be confused with other species of *Atrichum*, as few other taxa have lamellae. *A. undulatum* (q.v.), the commonest and most variable member of the genus, is most likely to be misidentified as the much rarer *A. angustatum*. The narrower, stiffer patent leaves of *A. angustatum* have more lamellae, are less undulate when moist and less crisped when dry. Under the microscope it is easily distinguished from the other *Atrichum* species by virtue of its smaller leaf cell size.

## Habitat

This moss typically grows on fairly bare, moderately acid (pH 6.0–6.5), disturbed, damp, shady, loamy or sandy soils. Typical situations where *A. angustatum* grew in the past included rides and path sides in woodland, but in recent years it has only been found in a more exposed, drier habitat in a disused sandpit. There are older records for a wider variety of open acid habitats: roadside banks, open grassy heaths, riverside silts, etc. The reasons for its decline are unclear and it may be being overlooked.