

Buxbaumia aphylla

Brown Shield-moss



Identification This species is unmistakable when in capsule, earning the nickname 'bug-on-a-stick'. It has no green leafy parts, and the disproportionately large capsule arises from a brown filamentous mat. Plants tend to be solitary and often ephemeral, so it may not persist for long in one place. The stout, purplish seta is usually 5–10 mm long, and supports a glossy brown capsule, 5–6 mm long and asymmetrically egg-shaped. The upper surface of the capsule is flattened with angular edges.

Similar species *B. aphylla* could only be confused with the very rare *B. viridis* (q.v.) which is almost restricted to decaying logs. However, capsule characters will quickly separate them. *B. aphylla* has a shiny capsule, whereas that of *B. viridis* is dull. The upper surface of the capsule of *B. viridis* is scarcely angled or flattened.

Habitat It is sparsely but widely distributed across the British Isles, in shady habitats, especially coniferous woods, where it favours rotten wood, or humic well-drained sandy soils. It also occasionally colonizes colliery spoil.