

*Orthotrichum striatum*

Smooth Bristle-moss



## Identification

There is a window of opportunity from late winter to early summer during which *O. striatum* can be identified, thanks to its distinctively smooth dehisced sporophytes. These are topped by a set of 16 recurved white outer peristome teeth, as well as 16 straight inner teeth. Unripe capsules are relatively broader than those of *O. affine* and sit under short, light green, hairy calyptrae; their stomata are superficial. Capsules are also partly obscured by perichaetial leaves that are, like all the leaves of *O. striatum*, strongly acuminate; their margins are recurved. Although they may be mid-green, the loose, branched tufts of *O. striatum* are more often dingy brownish green.

## Similar species

Almost all our other *Orthotrichum* species have strongly furrowed dehisced capsules. The most frequent ones with relatively smooth capsules are *O. rupestre* (q.v.), which tends to grow on rocks, rather than epiphytically, and has 8 erect outer peristome teeth, and the very scarce *O. speciosum* (Smith, p. 670), which has exserted capsules. It is also important to get used to checking *O. striatum* for two Mediterranean species: *O. shawii* (Smith, p. 669) lacks an inner peristome, whilst *O. acuminatum* has almost no outer peristome. Both are spreading northwards through Europe and may soon turn up in England.

## Habitat

This is a fairly frequent species in western parts of Britain, and in some places is almost as common as *O. affine*. However, it declined dramatically in polluted areas, and is only just starting to reappear in most of lowland Britain. It tends to grow in small quantity on twigs of hazel or willow, or on the trunks of ash or sycamore. It favours sheltered places.