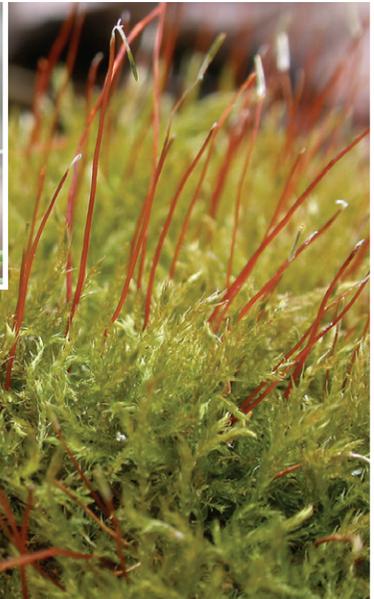
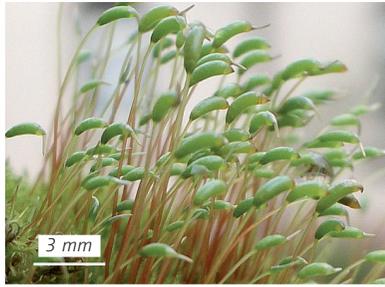
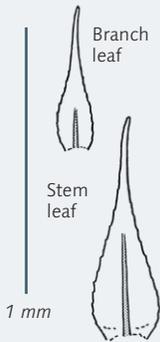


Amblystegium serpens

Creeping Feather-moss

Key 352



Identification The mid- to dark green, irregularly branched, 1–2 cm long shoots may form extensive, intricate patches. Stem leaves are very small (normally only about 0.5 mm long), erect or erect-spreading, narrowly egg-shaped, with a tapering tip, and often rather markedly narrowed at about mid-leaf. The nerve is single, but difficult to see with a hand lens, and does not extend beyond mid-leaf. Branch leaves are very similar, but even smaller. Small forms in saline coastal habitats (var. *salinum*) have a short nerve, but this is difficult to see in the field. Capsules are common, to about 2 mm long, curved and cylindrical, borne on a long seta, and have a conical lid. The calyptra is white.

Similar species *A. varium* (p. 703) is normally a little larger, with a stronger nerve that reaches nearly to the leaf tip. *A. confervoides* (p. 705) and *Platydictya jungermannioides* (p. 778) have nerveless leaves. Slender shoots of *Cratoneuron filicinum* (p. 701) have a stronger nerve. *Conardia compacta* (p. 708) has less regularly spreading leaves, so that patches look rather crinkly; it grows on bare, calcareous soil on rocky ledges and in caves. *Rhynchostegiella tenella* (p. 771) looks silkier with very narrow leaves hardly widened above the base. *R. curviseta* and *R. teneriffae* (p. 772) also have leaves scarcely widened above the base, and a tip that is less slender and drawn out. *R. pumila* (p. 773) has more divergent branches and leaves, and a shortly pointed leaf tip. *Campyliadelphus elodes* (p. 712) has a strong nerve that reaches the leaf tip. *Leskea polycarpa* (p. 689) and *Heterocladium flaccidum* (p. 687) have more shortly pointed leaves. *Habrodon perpusillus* (p. 686) has leaves appressed when dry, but spreading rapidly when moistened. *Anomodon longifolius* (p. 693) has a wiry, opaque texture.

Habitat *A. serpens* favours moist or sheltered places, and grows on both living and dead wood in woods and hedges, where it often abounds on old elders (*Sambucus nigra*). It also occurs on soil and stones on banks, beside streams and rivers, at the base of walls, and sometimes on man-made habitats such as tarmac.

Photos David Holyoak & Michael Lüth (inset) Drawings Sean Edwards Text Tom Blockeel