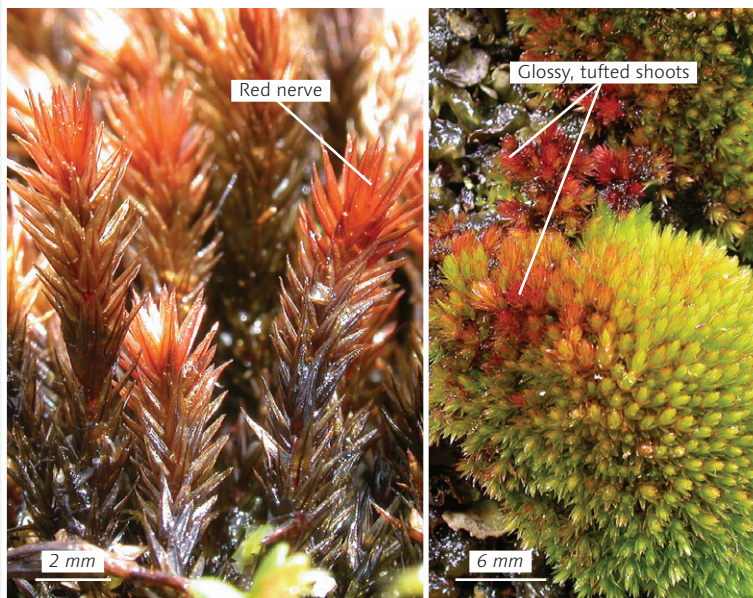
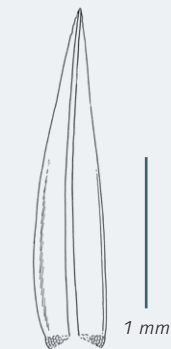
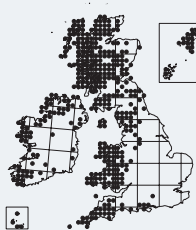


Bryum alpinum

Alpine Thread-moss

Key 215



Identification *B. alpinum* is usually crimson or purple-brown, although green forms may occur, especially in shade. The densely tufted, little-branched, upright stems are usually several centimetres tall, with characteristically glossy and shiny leaves 2–2.5 mm long. In good light and with a 20 hand lens, the narrow mid-leaf cells distinguish this species from all others in the genus. The pear-shaped, pendulous capsules are about 2.5 mm long and deep red when ripe; they appear in summer, but are uncommon.

Similar species *B. alpinum* most resembles *B. gemmiparum*, *B. mildeanum*, *B. muehlenbeckii* and *B. riparium* (Smith, pp. 584–588), all of which also occur in rock crevices beside streams, but are rare. One difficulty lies in distinguishing green forms of *B. alpinum* from *B. mildeanum*, but even green forms of *B. alpinum* nearly always have a trace of redness in the nerve and leaf margins; *B. mildeanum* is bright green and never red. *B. gemmiparum*, *B. mildeanum*, *B. muehlenbeckii* and *B. riparium* all have wider mid-leaf cells than *B. alpinum*. *B. gemmiparum* is shorter, with wider, less pointed leaves, and often has greenish or reddish bulbils in its leaf axils. Small *B. alpinum* can resemble *B. subapiculatum* (Smith, p. 581), but *B. alpinum* is usually larger than *B. subapiculatum*. Reddish forms of *B. pseudotriquetrum* (p. 592) have leaves wider in proportion to their length and wider mid-leaf cells. *B. pallens* (p. 584) has shorter leaves which are often paler, have a border, and cells in the leaf blade are much less elongated.

Habitat *B. alpinum* is typically a plant of unshaded areas, acidic or slightly base-rich rocks subject to intermittent seepage, and particularly favours flushed rocks. It may also occur on damp or wet ground, for example on bare soil by paths and tracks, lakes and on peaty moorland. It is commonest in hilly districts in the north and west, but is not a particularly alpine moss. In western Britain, it often occurs on forestry tracks, and is also frequent on outcrops of rock by the coast.