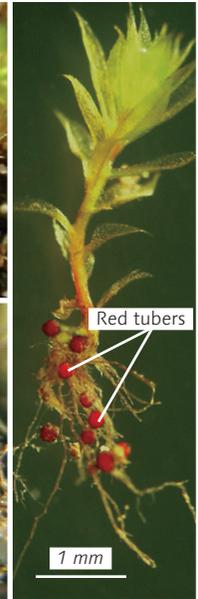
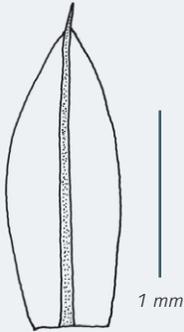


*Bryum rubens*

Crimson-tuber Thread-moss

Key 257



## Identification

*B. rubens* is quite small and delicate for a *Bryum*. Shoots are usually no more than 1 cm tall; occasionally up to 1.5 cm. Stems are often reddish, and the leaves (about 2 mm long) may be slightly tinged red. Rhizoids are reddish-brown. Capsules are 2 mm long and frequent. The bright red tubers (white when young) are the best clue to identifying this moss in the field, and usually occur at the base of the lower leaves. Tubers also grow on the longer rhizoids (especially in plants not found in arable fields), and can be seen by crumbling the soil in which the plants are growing. These tubers are about 0.25 mm across, bright enough to be just visible to the naked eye, and become very obvious when viewed through a hand lens.

## Similar species

*B. rubens* is the commonest of several tuberous *Bryum* species (Smith, pp. 537–538, 576–583), and the most likely to have tubers against the stem at the base of its lower leaves. Apart from having tubers above ground as well as below, *B. rubens* also differs from other tuberous species in the following respects: *B. subapiculatum* has leaves without a border of narrow cells; *B. ruderale* and *B. violaceum* have mauve or violet rhizoids; the tubers of *B. violaceum*, *B. klinggraeffii* and *B. sauteri* are smaller (less than 1 mm); *B. radiculosum* (p. 597) has a prominent nerve which extends beyond the leaf tip, making the leaves look very straight, grows in dense cushions on mortared walls, limestone rocks and hard, calcareous soil, and frequently produces capsules; *B. bornholmense* has a thicker nerve than *B. rubens*, and its tubers are usually honey-coloured, or red. It grows in more acidic soils than *B. rubens*. *B. tenuisetum* has yellowish tubers. *B. dichotomum* (p. 595) has green bulbils in the leaf axils.

## Habitat

This moss grows on bare soil in a wide variety of places – arable fields, waste ground, patches of soil amongst grass in fields and gardens, and beside roads and paths.

Photos David Holyoak (left) & Dan Wrench (right) Drawing Jonathan Graham Text Mark Lawley