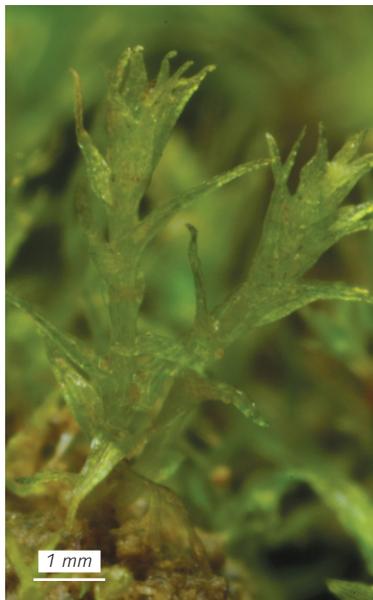
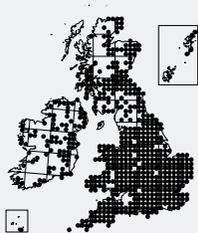


Dicranella staphylina

Field Forklet-moss

Key 154



Identification This small plant usually grows in neat clumps of rather crowded stems about 5 mm tall; it is uniformly mid-green, without a reddish or purplish tinge. The translucent leaves are up to 1 mm long, narrowly triangular, with straight sides which taper from the base to an acute tip. The margins are plane or recurved only at the base. The leaves spread out from the stem when moist, showing no tendency to curl over to one side of the stem. The uppermost leaves of fertile plants are noticeably larger than the leaves below, and taper more abruptly from a broader base to a narrow tip. Sexual organs rarely develop and capsules have not been found in the wild in Britain.

Similar species The outstanding feature of this moss is its featurelessness. *D. rufescens* (p. 367) and *D. varia* (p. 366) have narrower, less translucent leaves that often curve over to one side of the stem. Mature plants of *D. rufescens* also differ in having stems which are reddish, at least near the base. *D. schreberiana* (p. 368) has a broadly sheathing leaf base. *Ceratodon purpureus* (p. 354) is notoriously variable in leaf shape, but its leaf margins are always recurved for almost all their length; the leaves have a distinctive, rather shiny lustre, and they frequently develop a wine-coloured tinge. If in doubt, examination using a binocular microscope will usually show that the characteristic tubers of *D. staphylina* are present in abundance.

Habitat This is often one of the most frequent species in stubble fields. It is especially common on acidic soils, but may be found in more base-rich fields. It also grows in a range of other disturbed sites, including molehills, disturbed roadsides and river banks. In places where disturbance is not repeated, such as set-aside land, plants become rather lank and straggly and cease to produce tubers in quantity before being replaced by species that are characteristic of the later stages of succession.