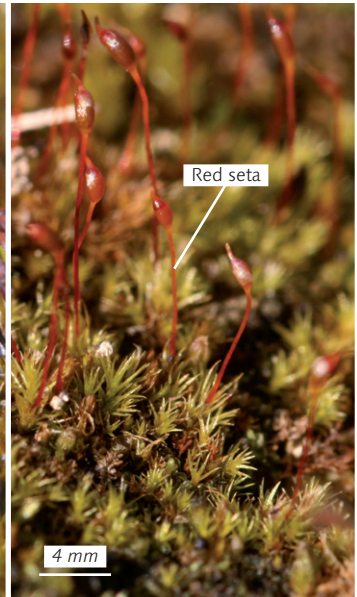
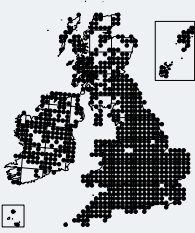


Dicranella varia

Variable Forklet-moss

Key 145, 154



Identification The short (2–10 mm), erect shoots of *D. varia* bear narrow, rather stiff, bright green or yellowish-green leaves, just less than 2 mm long, which are sometimes curved to one side of the stem. They lack an expanded base, have recurved margins and taper to an acute tip. The leaves surrounding the base of the seta are similar to the leaves below. The species fruits freely in damp habitats, having a reddish seta and purplish-red capsules which are inclined at an angle to the vertical; the bright red lid is conspicuous.

Similar species *D. rufescens* (p. 367) is similar, but has shorter stems with a marked reddish tinge towards the base when mature. Its yellowish-green leaves are more markedly curved over to one side of the stem and have plane rather than recurved margins, and its capsules are more or less erect. *D. staphylina* (p. 369) has narrowly triangular, translucent leaves which do not tend to curve over to one side of the stem. Very immature material of *D. heteromalla* (p. 371) and *Ditrichum heteromallum* (p. 346) may also be confused with this species, but is dark green and occurs on acidic ground.

Habitat *D. varia* requires open, moist, base-rich ground and may be the most abundant bryophyte in suitable sites, such as the flat floors of chalk and limestone quarries. It is frequent, although rarely as abundant, in places such as riversides and lakesides, tracks and forest rides and soft sea cliffs. It is rather uncommon in arable fields. It tolerates heavy-metal pollution and may abound on mine spoil.