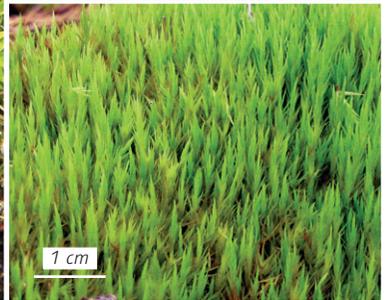


*Dicranum scoparium*

Broom Fork-moss

Key 129, 135, 139



**Identification** A medium- to large-sized plant (up to 10 cm), growing in yellow-green to dark green cushions or large patches. The leaves are 4–7.5 mm long, narrowly spearhead-shaped and taper to a long fine tip composed largely of the strong nerve. They are often somewhat curved, but can also be straight and are hardly altered when dry. The leaf margins are usually strongly toothed near the tip. The back of the nerve has raised lines of cells which are just visible with a hand lens. These are also toothed, making the tip of the leaf appear toothed all round. *D. scoparium* occasionally produces deciduous shoots with smaller leaves at the tip of the stems. The curved, cylindrical capsule is common in the north and west of Britain, and is borne on a long seta that is yellow above and reddish below.

**Similar species** *D. scoparium* is quite variable and confusion is most likely with *D. majus* (p. 379) and *D. fuscescens* (p. 382). *D. majus* is a larger plant with longer, regular, strongly curved leaves showing little variation; if in doubt, your plant is almost certainly *D. scoparium*. *D. fuscescens* is similar in size to *D. scoparium*, but has a finer leaf tip with smaller teeth on the margins and lacks raised lines of cells on the back of the leaves. The leaves in *D. fuscescens* are crisped when dry, and in this state mixed stands of *D. scoparium* and *D. fuscescens* can be distinguished at a glance. *D. bonjeanii* (p. 380) is usually easily distinguished by its undulate leaves, but forms of *D. scoparium* with undulate leaves do occur in boggy places and can be confusing. The rare *D. leioneuron* (Smith, p. 202) may have fragile, small-leaved branches at the tip of normal shoots, but plants lacking this feature are difficult to distinguish from *D. scoparium*.

**Habitat** *D. scoparium* is a very common species which occurs in a wide range of habitats. It is frequent on the ground in woodland, but also occurs on trees and logs, on heathland, in mires, on sand dunes, acidic rocks and in short turf on the mountains.