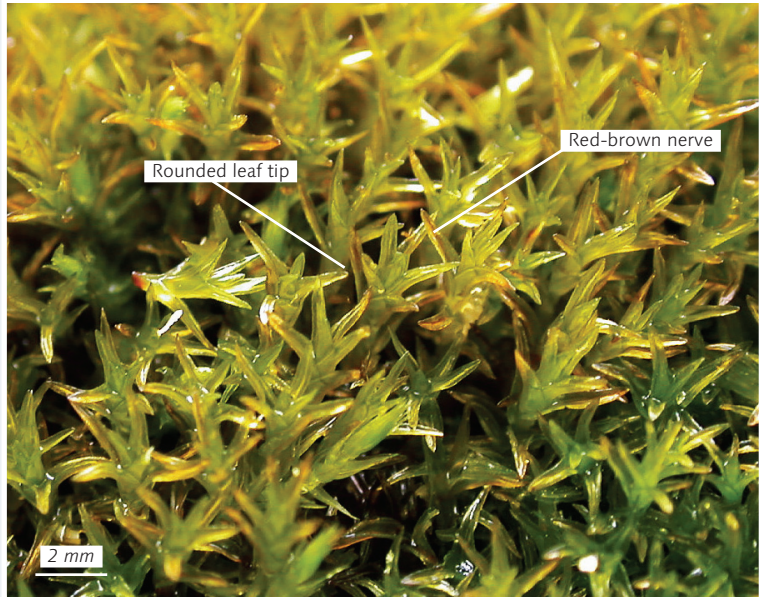
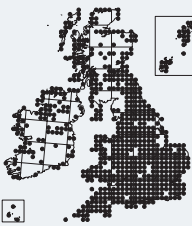


*Didymodon tophaceus**Barbula tophacea*

Olive Beard-moss

Key 192, 237

**Identification**

Both the shoots and leaves of this species vary considerably in size, according to the conditions in which the moss has been living. It forms olive-brown or brownish tufts or mats, with shoots often only 0.5–1 cm tall, although some populations can grow as much as 3–5 cm in height. Leaves are typically about 2 mm long and quite narrow (less than 1 mm wide), but are tongue-shaped, with nearly parallel sides, so that the tip is usually broadly rounded. The prominent, often reddish nerve ceases below the leaf tip. Dark brown, rather wide-mouthed capsules often form in winter and spring. The peristome teeth are short and thin.

Similar species

D. luridus (p. 461) may also have a rounded leaf tip, but its leaf margins taper gradually from well down the short, triangular leaf. Also, when dry, the leaves of *D. tophaceus* become slightly twisted and incurled, and do not lie appressed to the stem like those of *D. luridus*. *D. fallax* (p. 457) has leaves less rounded at the tip. *Pseudocrossidium revolutum* (p. 441) has a blunt leaf tip too, but its leaves have widely recurved leaf margins. *Gymnostomum aeruginosum* (p. 451) has shorter (about 1.75 mm long) leaves with a rather narrower tip. *G. calcareum* (p. 450) has leaves less than 1 mm long, and is typically bright green. *Scopelophila cataractae* (p. 468) has keeled leaves that taper from the base to a sharp tip.

Habitat

A lowland moss of damp, calcareous or base-rich stones, tufa, wet retaining walls, coastal cliffs and banks, rocks in woodland, or on shallow soil by tracks, on bare ground, and in pits and quarries. *D. tophaceus* may also grow on the clayey banks of lowland lakes and rivers.