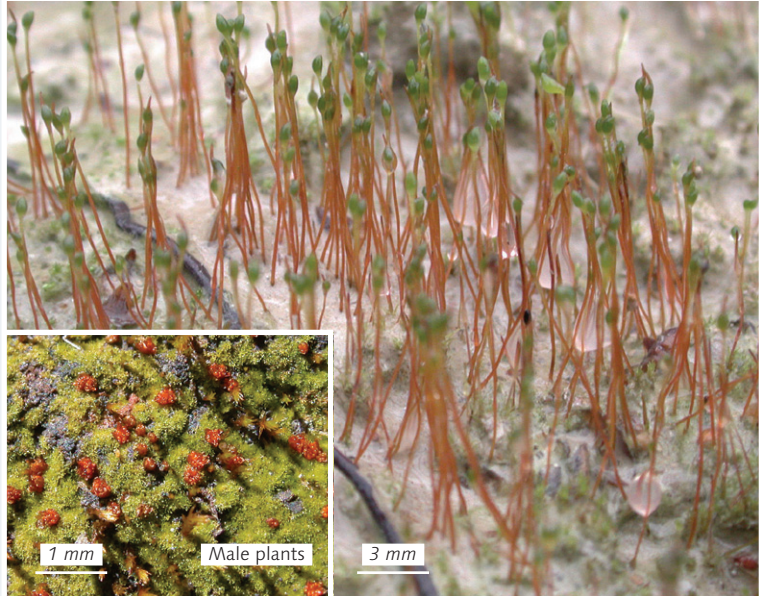
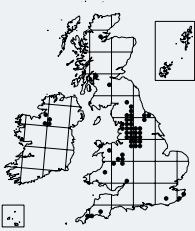


Discelium nudum

Flag-moss



Identification At first sight, this moss seems to consist only of a capsule on a seta coming directly out of the substrate. On closer examination, the base of the seta is seen to emerge from a few tiny (less than 1 mm long) leaves which grow up from an extensive, green, alga-like mat. This is a persistent protonema, which uniquely forms the main photosynthetic organ of the moss. The nearly spherical capsule (about 1 mm long) is produced on a long seta (up to 2.5 cm); it is initially erect, and becomes horizontal on maturity. Male plants appear as clusters of orange male sex organs surrounded by a few tiny leaves.

Similar species Instantly recognizable by the seta apparently emerging directly from a thin, alga-like protonemal mat. Other very small mosses, such as species of *Ephemerum* (pp. 503–504) always have distinct leafy shoots, and most have the capsule hidden in the leaves, rather than on a long seta.

Habitat Silty, often vertical banks, usually by rivers, lakes and other water bodies. Grey clays are often favoured, especially where frost-heaving keeps the ground bare.