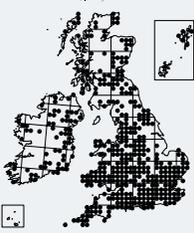


*Ephemerum serratum/ minutissimum**Ephemerum serratum* var. *serratum/ minutissimum*

Serrated earth-moss

Key 229

*E. serratum/ minutissimum*

**Identification** These two minute mosses have tiny (1–2 mm tall) shoots emerging from a persistent, dark green or brownish-tinged protonema. The leaves are about 1 mm long, strongly toothed, and not or only very faintly nerved. Capsules are almost always present, more or less spherical and with a short tip, and surrounded by the leaves. *E. serratum* has coarsely roughened spores, whereas *E. minutissimum* has finely roughened spores, so the two species can only be distinguished by microscopical examination of mature material.

**Similar species** *E. serratum* and *E. minutissimum* are by far the commonest species of *Ephemerum* in Britain. The leaves of *E. recurvifolium* (p. 503) have a nerve, are recurved, and not or hardly toothed. *E. spinulosum* (Smith, p. 394), though similar to *E. serratum*, has a weak nerve and additional spines or bumps on the leaf blade in the upper part of the leaf. It is a rare plant of reservoir margins. Other species with sessile capsules, such as *Aphanorhagma patens* (p. 567) and *Phascum cuspidatum* (p. 486), are much larger. *Micromitrium tenerum* (Smith, p. 391), a very rare relative, is even smaller than *Ephemerum* and has a spherical capsule with no tip. It is our smallest moss and has been seen recently only on a reservoir margin in Devon. The very rare *E. stellatum* (Smith, p. 392) has untoothed margins, but is only doubtfully distinct from *E. serratum*. It requires very careful microscopical checking. *Diselium nudum* (p. 560) is another very small species, but it is not particularly similar to *Ephemerum* as it consists of a persistent protonema with vestigial leaves and a capsule on a long seta.

**Habitat** Finely grained soil in arable fields, mud at the margins of reservoirs and rivers, or as part of the ephemeral community on tracks. *E. serratum* favours very damp ground, especially when it is acidic, whereas *E. minutissimum* is most at home in slightly drier places, such as arable fields.