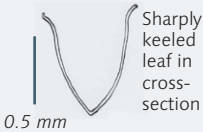
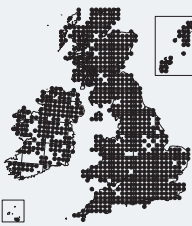


*Fontinalis antipyretica*

Greater Water-moss

Key 324



**Identification** This is our largest aquatic moss, with shoots (1.5–) 5–8 mm wide and often exceeding 15 cm in length. The leaves are 4–5 mm long and strongly folded inwards along the midline, with the fold-line forming a prominent keel. The shoots are usually 3-sided, with the keels forming the angles and the overlapping halves of adjacent leaves forming the sides. The leaf lacks a nerve (though it is not easy to unfold the keel and demonstrate this) and its tip is bluntly pointed and untoothed. Capsules are very uncommon, and almost hidden amongst the leaves, occurring only on plants which have undergone a period of exposure above the water.

**Similar species** No other aquatic mosses have strongly keeled leaves like those of *F. antipyretica*. Like many aquatics, however, the species is very variable and not all plants have shoots which are as neatly 3-sided as the illustrated plants. However, even slender forms and those with more distantly spaced leaves have at least a moderately well-developed keel.

**Habitat** *F. antipyretica* grows in a wide range of still, slowly or rapidly flowing water bodies, including lakes and ponds, canals, streams and rivers. Plants are usually attached to stones, rocks or waterside trees, but sometimes occur in loose masses on the bottom of shallow, still waters. It tolerates a wide range of water quality, but is usually replaced by *F. squamosa* (p. 671) in the most acidic and nutrient-poor waters. It tolerates periods of emersion and may be found above the water at times when levels are low; it is also frequent around turloughs (seasonal lakes over limestone) in Ireland.