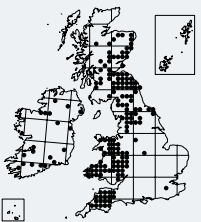
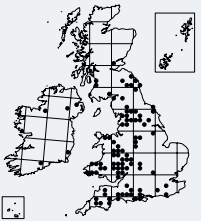


Orthotrichum rivulare/sprucei

River/Spruce's Bristle-moss

Key 275

*O. rivulare**O. sprucei*

5 mm

O. rivulare

3 mm

Blunt leaf tip

O. sprucei

Identification

These two riparian *Orthotrichum* species look alike. Both are dark, almost blackish-green, have a blunt leaf tip, and tend to be encrusted with silt. *O. rivulare* grows as irregularly branched tufts, usually 1–3 cm tall, whereas *O. sprucei* forms patches of less than 1 cm tall shoots. The leaves of both species are 3–4 mm long. With a hand lens it is possible to see that the leaf cells of *O. sprucei* are considerably larger than those of *O. rivulare* or *O. affine*. *O. rivulare* and *O. sprucei* both have dark brown ripe capsules with 8 reflexed outer peristome teeth. Unripe capsules (2 mm long) are partly covered by a hairless, green calyptra.

Similar species

Various other *Orthotrichum* species grow on riverside trees, albeit above the zone of regular inundation. None has the blunt leaf tip of *O. rivulare* and *O. sprucei*. *O. affine* (p. 647) on riparian trees can become dark green, like *O. rivulare* and *O. sprucei*, in which case careful checking of the leaf tip and stomata on the capsules may be necessary. *O. cupulatum* (p. 657) is most like large *O. rivulare*, but differs in its acute leaf tip and 16 erect outer peristome teeth. *Syntrichia latifolia* (p. 501) is another blunt-leaved acrocarp of silty trees; its leaves are much broader and rounder. *Schistidium rivulare* (p. 507) often has curved leaves, and its capsules are not furrowed when dry.

Habitat

O. rivulare and *O. sprucei* both grow on trees by silty rivers; *O. rivulare* is also sometimes found on riverside rocks or masonry. In general, *O. sprucei* is the rarer plant, as it is restricted to very silty zones of large lowland rivers. However, it can be abundant.