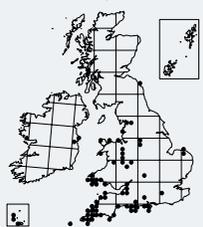
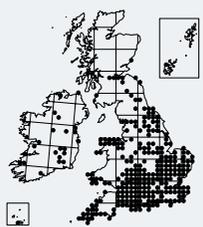


*Pottia starkeana/davalliana**P. starckeana*, *Microbryum star(c)keanum*/*M. davallianum*

Starke's Pottia/Smallest Pottia

Key 264, 266

*P. starkeana**P. davalliana*

Identification

These two very small (shoots 1–2 mm tall), ephemeral mosses occur as scattered or gregarious plants. The leaves are rather less than 1 mm long, broadly spearhead-shaped, with recurved margins and an excurrent nerve. The seta is 1–2.5 mm long and the capsules are narrowly cylindrical to oval. The dark, reddish-brown capsules draw attention to the plants in the field, though careful searching close to the ground is usually necessary. Capsules occur throughout the year, but are relatively rare in the summer. The lid of the capsule is bluntly conical and curved with a short point. These two species can only be distinguished from each other by examining their spores under a compound microscope. In general, plants with peristomes are rarer than those without them, and those with peristomes especially need to be collected for checking.

Similar species

Tortula truncata (p. 482) is similar, but has plane leaf margins, is a larger plant (e.g. setae are 2–3.5 mm long) and has a truncate capsule. *T. lanceola* (p. 481) is larger (shoots up to 5 mm tall) and its capsules have a long-pointed lid. *T. modica* (p. 483) is also larger (shoots up to 1.5 cm tall) with leaves 2–2.5 mm long, and its capsules have a more long-pointed lid. The capsule of *Microbryum rectum* (p. 488) is no longer than wide, and is held on a shorter (less than 1 mm long) seta. *Pottiopsis caespitosa* (p. 437) also has capsules that are hardly longer than wide, and leaves with plane margins.

Habitat

Both species occur on disturbed, lime-rich soil (less so in coastal areas) in a variety of lowland habitats, for example arable fields, calcareous grassland, woodland rides and on cliffs. *P. davalliana* is reasonably frequent in lowland England and Wales, while *P. starkeana* seems to be much rarer and is most often encountered in coastal areas or on metal mine sites.