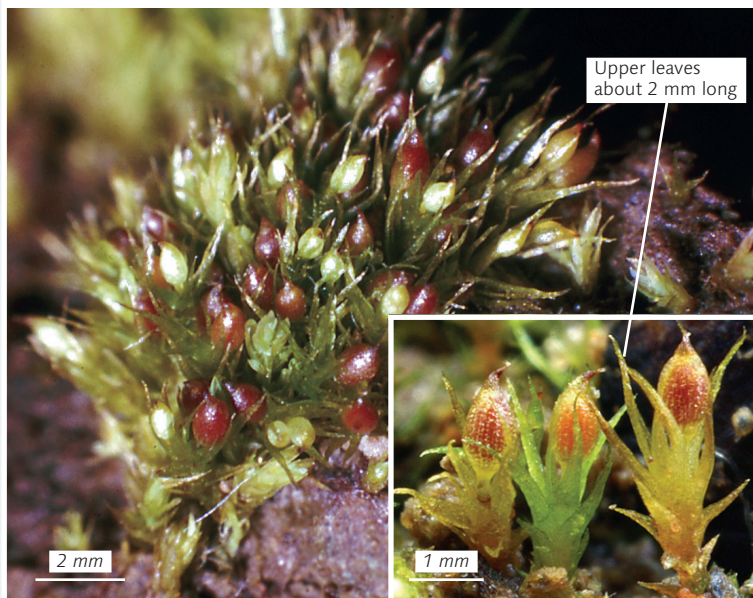
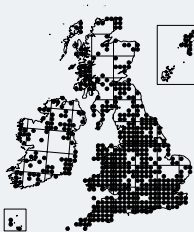


*Pseudephemerum nitidum*

Delicate Earth-moss

Key 229



**Identification** The stems of *P. nitidum* are usually no higher than 5 mm and have narrow, gradually tapering mid-green leaves which increase gradually in length from stem base (about 1 mm) to tip (about 2 mm). The nerve is inconspicuous and does not extend as far as the leaf tip. Vegetative plants are therefore both inconspicuous and featureless, but fortunately the plant is abundantly fertile and its fruits develop very rapidly. The capsules are borne on a very short seta and are overtopped by the leaves that surround the base of the sporophyte; the capsules are rather longer than wide, do not have a lid, and eventually fall away from the stem. Senescent plants can develop an orange-brown colour.

**Similar species** The two *Pleuridium* species (p. 340) are also short plants with capsules that do not shed their lid, but the leaves surrounding the base of the sporophyte are much longer than the stem leaves immediately below and have a more finely tapering tip into which the nerve runs. *Archidium alternifolium* (p. 339) has a more straggly habit and spherical capsules with huge spores. Male plants of *Dicranella heteromalla* (p. 371) and *D. rufescens* (p. 367) have small stems and large inflorescences, and can easily be taken for a puzzling form of *Pseudephemerum*.

**Habitat** *P. nitidum* is often very gregarious, and large numbers can be found on damp ground exposed at the edge of lakes and reservoirs. It is also found on moist, disturbed, neutral or acidic soil in other habitats, including the sides of streams and ditches, muddy pastures, woodland rides, and arable fields in northern and western areas. It is an ephemeral moss which is at its best in summer and autumn, but usually disappears by winter.