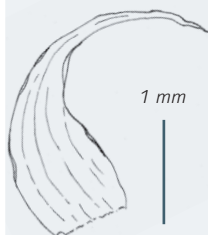
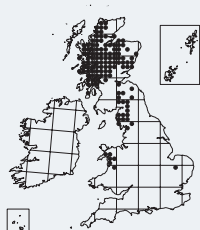


*Ptilium crista-castrensis*

Ostrich-plume Feather-moss



**Identification** The light, bright green, erect or ascending shoots of this moss are large (typically 5 cm or more long) and particularly striking, and are regularly, pinnately branched. The lower branches are all the same length, but branches become shorter towards the tip of the shoot, giving the plant the appearance of a tiny fern frond or feather. The leaves, about 2.5 mm long, taper from a broad base to a long, slender point which curves to one side, giving the whole leaf a rather hooked appearance. The leaf is strongly pleated and sometimes has a short, double nerve. The base of the leaf runs down onto the stem, but is usually torn off when the leaf is removed. Branch leaves are rather smaller than the stem leaves, somewhat less pleated and have a shorter, more curved tip.

**Similar species** *Tenidium molluscum* (p. 812) shares some of the pinnate, feathery appearance of *P. crista-castrensis*. It is, however, rarely as regularly pinnate, looks shiny and golden green, and normally grows only on calcareous substrates.

**Habitat** *P. crista-castrensis* is frequent in upland oak (*Quercus*) and birch (*Betula*) woods throughout the Scottish Highlands, and also occurs in upland oak woods in the Lake District and Snowdonia. It is also frequent in Scottish pine (*Pinus*) woods, and in the Highlands also grows in ancient woods that have been modified by planting. *P. crista-castrensis* also grows on open, heathy hillsides in the Highlands, typically on shady slopes facing north-east, where it may occur up to 600 m altitude. There are also old records from cliffs, ravines and open hillsides in the Lake District.