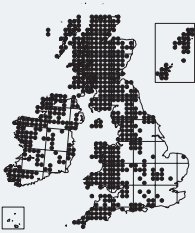


Racomitrium lanuginosum

Woolly Fringe-moss

Key 115

Coarsely
toothed
hair point

Identification Locally abundant in upland Britain, this is one of the few bryophytes familiar to many non-bryologists. It is a large (shoots 2 to several centimetres long), irregularly branched, upright, grey-green plant with a conspicuous hair point at the end of 3–6 mm long leaves that often curve in one direction. Through a hand lens, the toothed edges of the hair point provide a unique character to confirm the identification of atypical or half-dead plants.

Similar species Confusion is only likely when you come across poorly grown plants, which may resemble the *R. canescens* aggregate (p. 540), but *R. lanuginosum* always has toothed margins to the hair point. Curved leaves may make solitary plants buried in turf look like a pleurocarpous moss, such as *Sanionia uncinata* (p. 728), but a hand lens will soon reveal the hair point.

Habitat A common moss of uplands, and especially characteristic of open, stony, wind-swept ridges and plateaux, where it dominates the *Racomitrium* heath, and dry block scree. It grows in many other places as well, including the tops of drystone walls, dry, acidic turf, lowland shingle heath, blanket bogs and raised bogs. It is also present, albeit rarely, in old, chalk grassland in England.