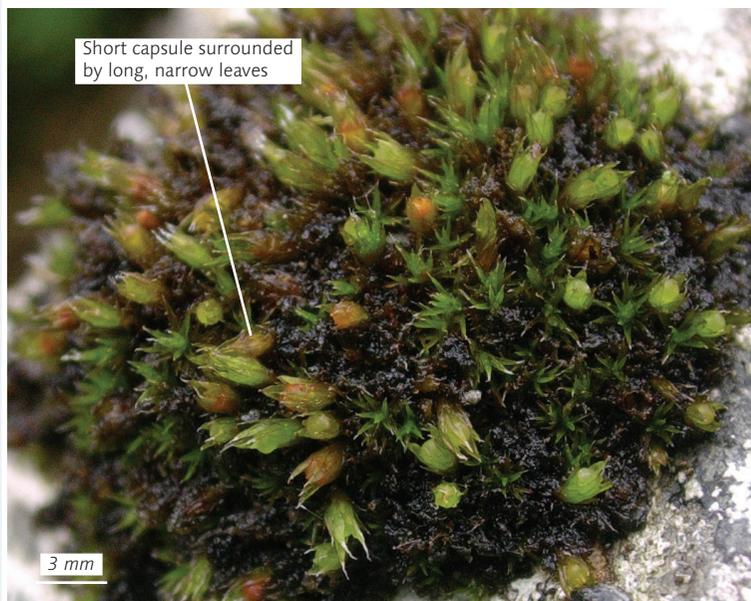


Schistidium confertum

Compact Grimmia



Identification A tiny *Schistidium* that grows in compact cushions up to 1.5 cm tall that look strikingly different from those of our commoner species. Lower leaves are 1.75–2 mm long; those surrounding the capsules are 2.5 mm long. The short, flat hair points are scarcely visible without a hand lens, so the cushions do not look hoary. Capsules often stick out proud from the cushion, sheathed by rather long, narrow leaves, and are relatively short for a species of *Schistidium*, with orange peristome teeth.

Similar species One of those plants that you know is something different when you find it – it looks strikingly different from *S. crassipilum* (p. 511). Short capsules, orange peristome teeth and short, flat hair points help rule out small forms of *S. crassipilum* in the field. *S. frigidum* (Smith, p. 420) is very similar and should be checked for using a microscope; its hair points are not flattened. *S. strictum* (p. 515) has narrower leaves, orange tones, and occasionally grows as compact tufts. The rare, montane calcicole *S. dupretii* (Smith, p. 415) is also small, but the leaves surrounding the capsule do not conceal the capsule. The very rare *S. flaccidum* (Smith, p. 418) has leaves with a longer hair point and capsules which have no peristome. *S. flexipile* (one recent British record; Smith, p. 426) is very rare, and has wide leaves surrounding the capsule that contrast with the narrow lower leaves and usually have a relatively long, wavy hair point. Non-fertile *Grimmia donniana* (p. 522) frequently grows near *S. confertum*, but is hoarier, with incurved leaf margins. *Coscinodon cribrosus* (p. 505) has longitudinally crimped leaves.

Habitat An uncommon but somewhat under-recorded plant of acidic rocks in upland areas, although not usually at high altitudes. Igneous rocks or friable shales and slates are favoured. *S. frigidum* may replace *S. confertum* at higher altitudes, but their British distributions remain unresolved.