

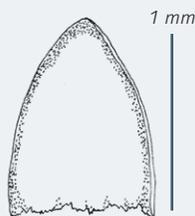
*Sphagnum balticum*

Baltic Bog-moss

Section Cuspidata



Stem leaf



**Identification** Occurs as scattered stems, occasionally in small patches. Small, similar in size to large shoots of *S. tenellum*. The capitula are rarely more than 10 mm wide, pale brown or a bright yellowish-brown. Upper spreading branches rise above the centre of the capitulum, giving it an untidy appearance when viewed from the side. Fascicles have 2 spreading and 1 (rarely 2) pendent branches. Only a single juvenile branch is visible between rays of the capitulum. Spreading branch leaves are in indistinct straight lines, and the pendent branches do not clothe the stem. Stem leaves are usually readily visible, more or less spreading and concave, with a rounded tip, though may look acute owing to inrolled leaf margins, and are relatively large in comparison to the size of the plant and branch leaves. The stem is often flushed pink below the capitulum, pale lower down, contrasting with darker branches. Capsules have not been recorded in Britain.

**Similar species** Superficially like a diminutive *S. fallax* (p. 306) or *S. angustifolium* (p. 307). However, in these species, the upper spreading branches do not grow above the capitulum centre, the juvenile branches visible between capitulum rays are arranged in neat pairs, they usually have 2–3 pendent branches per fascicle, which clothe and obscure the stem, and have stem leaves more or less appressed to the stem and hard to see in the field.

**Habitat** Extant sites for this rare species are amongst *S. magellanicum* and *S. capillifolium* in bogs, growing best at about 5 cm above the water table. Formerly known from slightly nutrient-enriched mires. In Scandinavia the species occupies a wider ecological range, including very wet sites with *S. majus* and *S. cuspidatum*, but has not been found in such sites in Britain.