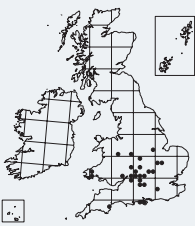


Weissia squarrosa

Spreading-leaved Beardless-moss



Identification

This species shares features with *W. brachycarpa* and *W. rostellata*, and may be difficult to identify. It grows in lax patches made of stems up to 1 cm long that creep along the ground and then rise up at the tip to produce a cluster of 2 or 3 sporophytes. In well-grown colonies, diagnostic, short-leaved branches come out from the same area of the shoot as the sporophytes, often in such abundance that the capsules are almost hidden. Leaves are about 2 mm long. Setae may vary in length, and some patches may have some setae as short as those of *W. rostellata*, with others as long as *W. brachycarpa*. The plane leaf margins and small capsule mouth covered by a membrane are features shared with the latter species. The ripe capsule falls off the seta and breaks down on the soil, leaving bare setae on the plant.

Similar species

W. rostellata (p. 425) has capsules that do not shed their lid and long leaves that arise from beside the base of the seta and almost hide the sporophyte, whereas *W. squarrosa* sheds its lids and has shorter leaves around the base of the sporophyte that are strongly curved away from the stem. *W. rostellata*, *W. rutilans* (p. 421) and *W. brachycarpa* (p. 423) lack short-leaved branches, and do not grow flat along the ground or produce clusters of sporophytes.

Habitat

A specialist of damp, clayey, base-poor stubble fields or leys, but also recorded from woodland rides and flushed pasture. Colonies in cereal stubble fields are at their best after a year of set-aside that allows them to develop their distinctive growth form and short-leaved branches.