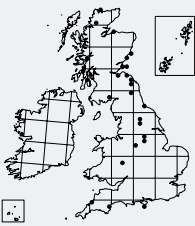


*Conardia compacta**Amblystegium compactum*

Compact Feather-moss



Identification

C. compacta is very slender and irregularly branched, with narrow leaves that are spearhead-shaped or broadly spearhead-shaped. It forms soft, thin patches. The leaves are little more than 0.5 mm long, and have a long, slender tip which is variously curved or spreading, sometimes in different directions, thereby often giving patches a rather crinkly appearance. The nerve extends nearly to the leaf tip, but this is not easy to see in the field because the plants are so small. A particularly useful character when present is the growth of rhizoids from the back of the nerve. Pale, elongated gemmae sometimes grow from the back of the leaf tip, but these are rarely detectable in the field. Capsules are never found in Britain (or Europe), so plants with capsules will belong to other species.

Similar species

Perhaps the most similar species is *Campylophyllum calcareum* (p. 795), but that species has leaves that quickly narrow above the base and are more constantly spreading or curved away from the stem. Small *Amblystegium* species (pp. 702–705) of similar size to *C. compacta* generally have less spreading and more regularly arranged leaves. Likewise *Rhynchostegiella* species (pp. 771–773) have erect or erect-spreading leaves. *R. tenella* (p. 771) is always closely attached to the substrate (usually rock) and has a distinctly silky appearance, whereas *C. compacta* is less adherent and tends to occur on soil over rock.

Habitat

It is rather rare in Britain, occurring on calcareous rock ledges, at entrances to caves, and on underhangs, often where there is little competition from other bryophytes. Some of its localities are on coasts, but it does not have strong coastal tendencies in Britain.