**Cratoneuron filicinum**
Fern-leaved Hook-moss

Key 313, 317, 327

The pinnate shoots of this very variable moss are typically 1–3 cm long, with a rather pale tip. The leaves are rigid, with a stout nerve prominent all the way to the tip, making the shoots look spiky. Leaves are 1 mm long, and straight or slightly or strongly curved; in the latter case the branches may look hooked. Stem leaves are triangular, broadest just above the base, and taper evenly to a fine, acute tip. With a good hand lens, it is possible to see patches of enlarged cells in the leaf base. Branch leaves are narrower: broadly spearhead-shaped to egg-shaped. The stem bears red-brown rhizoids, and may also have tiny leaf-like structures, but the latter can be sparse and confined to upper parts of shoots. Capsules are uncommon.

Palustriella species (pp. 698–700) are larger, with leaves pleated and usually more strongly curved into a half-circle or more, and do not have pale-tipped shoots and branches. Amblystegium varium (p. 703), A. humile (p. 704) and Hygroamblystegium species (p. 706), especially H. tenax have more egg-shaped leaves, but some plants can only be distinguished microscopically. Campyliadelphus elodes (p. 712) can look very like C. filicinum, but is less regularly pinnate and more loosely branched, has narrower stem leaves with a very long, fine tip, and lacks red-brown rhizoids on the lower part of the stem. Small, compact forms of Drepanocladus aduncus (p. 714) have a weaker nerve that ends below the leaf tip. Ctenidium molluscum (p. 812) has more crowded branches, with more strongly curved and almost nerveless leaves. Soft, montane specimens of C. filicinum with egg-shaped leaves are worth collecting to check for the very rare C. curvicaule (Smith, p. 760).

Habitat: C. filicinum occurs naturally in moist or wet, base-rich habitats, including springs, flushes, rock ledges and stony ground. It is also a common species of weedy habitats, especially in gravelly gateways and tracksides, and on old tarmac.

Photos Des Callaghan (top), Sharon Pilkington (bottom left) & Robert Goodison (bottom right)
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