**Didymodon insulanus**

*Barbula cylindrica*

Cylindric Beard-moss

This very common moss grows in patches or loose tufts on soil. Typical shoots are 0.5–3 cm tall, olive-green, and often brownish on the lower part. The narrow upper leaves average 3–4 mm in length (longer than the lower leaves), with a long, tapering tip. Each one curves to the side, giving shoots a spiralled appearance when viewed from above, and they curl and twist into a characteristic shape (see inset photograph) when dry. Erect, cylindrical capsules are very rare in spring, and are borne on a wavy seta.

**Similar species**

The very similar *D. vinealis* (p. 462) has straighter, shorter (1–3 mm) upper leaves which only twist slightly and become closely appressed to the stem when dry. *D. vinealis* also favours drier places than *D. insulanus*, and grows in more compact tufts. *D. fallax* (p. 457) is normally browner, with shorter (1–2 mm) leaves held at a wider angle (often about 90°) to the stem. *D. rigidulus* (p. 459) has shorter (1.5–3 mm long) leaves that do not form a spiral when dry. *Bryoerythrophyllum recurvirostrum* (p. 442) has red-brown lower leaves and stem. Compared with *D. insulanus*, the upper leaves of *B. recurvirostrum* are darker green, and do not taper gradually, but narrow suddenly near the tip.

**Habitat**

*D. insulanus* is a lowland moss, usually growing on soil, but may also occur on stone or brick walls, concrete, tarmac, pavements, damp rocks and wood. It also grows on silty soil, tree bases and wooden posts in the flood zone of rivers and streams. It is rarer than *D. vinealis* in the south and east, but commoner in the north and west.