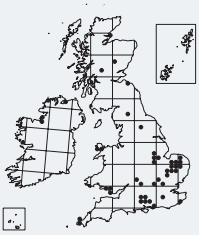
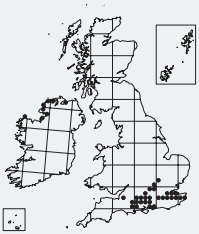
Abietinella abietina var. *abietina/histricosa*

Thuidium abietinum/T. histricosum

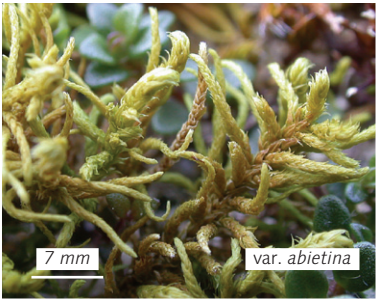
Fir/Prickly Tamarisk-moss

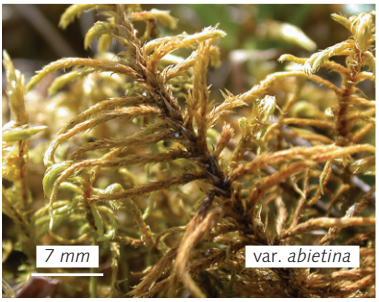


var. *abietina*



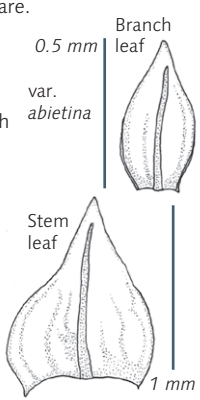
var. *histricosa*





Identification Shoots are green, or dark brown with a yellow or green tip, once-pinnate, with branches in 4 rows (2 on each side of the stem) in 2 planes. Secondary stems are 5–10 cm long. Stem leaves are broadly oval, longitudinally ridged, with a broad base and tapering to a long tip. The nerve reaches about three-quarters of the way towards the tip. In var. *abietina*, the stem leaves are 1–1.4 mm long, whereas in var. *histricosa* they are 1.5–2 mm long, tapering to a finer tip, more markedly ridged longitudinally and loosely folded in towards the stem (rather than appressed to it). In both varieties, the branch leaves are much smaller than the stem leaves, concave, and broadly oval to spear-shaped. They have a blunt or sharp tip and the nerve extends about two-thirds of the way towards the tip. Var. *histricosa* has denser, stouter branches than var. *abietina*, and its stems and branches do not look smoothly cylindrical, as they do in var. *abietina*. Cylindrical, curved capsules are extremely rare.

Similar species *Thuidium tamariscinum* (p. 696) is tripinnate and arranged more or less in one plane, so looks much more feathery than *A. abietina*. *Helodium blandowii* (Smith, p. 754) is considered to now be extinct in Britain; it grows in marshes, and its branch leaves are not held close to the stem. *Palustriella decipiens* (p. 700) has all its leaves curved in the same direction.



Habitat Var. *abietina* favours shallow soil in unimproved grassland overlying chalk or limestone, calcareous sandy soil, dune slacks, banks in quarries, and rarely occurs on base-rich slopes and rock ledges in the mountains. Var. *histricosa* grows on shallow soils in ancient, unimproved, closely grazed grassland overlying chalk or limestone; it also occurs on banks, in quarries and in calcareous sand dunes.

Photos David Holyoak *Drawings* Jonathan Graham *Text* Mark Lawley