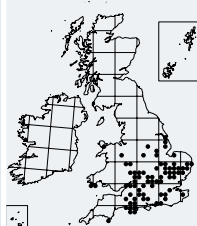


Ephemerum recurvifolium

Strap-leaved earth-moss



Identification A minute plant, the tiny, short (up to 2 mm tall) shoots emerging from a persistent dark green or brownish protonema. The recurved, 1.5 mm long leaves have a strong nerve, and are not or only very weakly toothed. Capsules are common in winter; they are surrounded by the leaves, and have an obliquely pointed tip.

Similar species The much commoner *E. serratum* and *E. minutissimum* (p. 504) have more strongly toothed leaves, and no (or only a very faint) nerve. Of rare members of the genus (Smith, pp. 391–397), *E. cohaerens* most resembles *E. recurvifolium*, but has more strongly toothed leaves. *E. sessile* has narrow leaves which are erect or held at an angle to the stem, and a capsule with a straight tip; *E. hibernicum* (*Journal of Bryology* 27, 89–95) is similar to *E. sessile*, but has wider leaves with a few large, marginal teeth. All these three rarities are principally species of silty mud on reservoir margins and muddy tracks. Other species with sessile capsules, such as *Aphanorhagma patens* (p. 567) and *Phascum cuspidatum* (p. 486), are much larger. *Microbryum rectum* (p. 488) is similar in size to *E. recurvifolium*, and occurs in similar habitats, but holds its capsules above the leaves. *Discelium nudum* (p. 560) is another very small species, but does not particularly resemble *Ephemerum* as it consists of a persistent protonema with vestigial leaves and a capsule on a long seta.

Habitat *E. recurvifolium* grows on bare, mildly calcareous earth, particularly in arable fields and on molehills in pastures. It may also occur on shallow soil over calcareous rock, for example in disused quarries and churchyards.