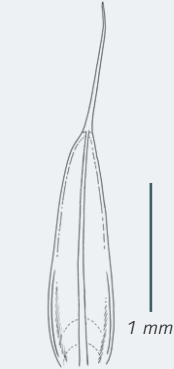
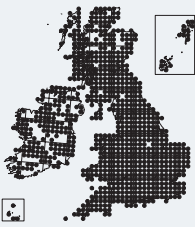


*Grimmia pulvinata*

Grey-cushioned Grimmia

Key 110, 121



## Identification

This is the commonest British *Grimmia*, and forms round, almost furry, grey cushions about 1–2 cm tall. The narrow leaves are 3–4 mm long, nerved to the tip, with recurved margins. An important character is the leaf tip, which is abruptly contracted into a long hair point, which may be almost as long as the leaf blade. Oval capsules usually abound, bending back into the cushion on an arching seta (note, however, that when old and dry, the seta straightens and the capsule is held erect); the lid of the capsule has a long beak. In moist conditions, cushions appear dark green, the densely arranged leaves spread away from the stem and the hair points are only moderately conspicuous. When dry, the leaves fold together, with the result that the long, silvery hair points loosely entwine and are then particularly eye-catching.

## Similar species

*G. pulvinata* most resembles *G. orbicularis* (Smith, p. 446), with which it sometimes grows, but *G. orbicularis* has a rounder capsule and a lid with a blunt, nipple-like tip (see photograph on opposite page). *G. orbicularis* grows on limestone (particularly Carboniferous) rocks and boulders in the lowlands, often in sunny, exposed places. Less often, it grows on the mortar of old walls. It is somewhat susceptible to pollution, and much less frequent than *G. pulvinata*. *G. trichophylla* (p. 529) forms less neat cushions on acidic rocks, has leaves that taper gradually to the tip, and rarely produces capsules. *G. donniana* (p. 522) also forms neat cushions, but is normally found with smooth, oval-shaped capsules on a straight seta. *G. decipiens* (p. 531) has ribbed capsules that are held on a wavy seta that does not bend back into the cushion, and the leaves have a strongly toothed hair point. *Coscinodon cribrosus* (p. 505) occasionally occurs on acidic rocks in coastal districts; its round, light brown capsules are hardly raised above the tip of the leaves and each leaf has longitudinal



folds, making the nerve extremely prominent. *Schistidium* species (pp. 506–518) have goblet-shaped capsules with conspicuous reddish, spreading peristome teeth which are overtopped by the leaves. When non-fertile, they tend to form looser cushions than *G. pulvinata*. *Tortula muralis* (p. 479) also has long hair points and shares the habitats of *G. pulvinata*, but its leaves are broader and tongue-shaped and its cylindrical capsule is held on a long, straight seta.

**Habitat** *G. pulvinata* is a predominantly lowland species of usually base-rich rocks, including walls; rarely it grows on trees and shrubs. *G. pulvinata* tolerates moderate pollution, so is a characteristic urban and suburban species, growing on wall tops, mortar, tombstones, asbestos roofs and concrete, and is a typical member of the wall community alongside *Tortula muralis*, *Schistidium crassipilum* and *Orthotrichum anomalum*. The neat cushions on wall tops have earned it the alternative common name of 'Hedgehog Moss'. In more natural habitats, *G. pulvinata* occurs on cliffs or boulders of limestone or calcareous sandstone. It is also sometimes found on serpentine and on sarsen stones.