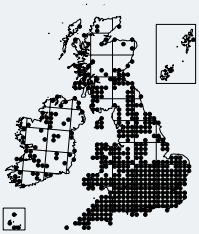
Rhynchostegiella pumila

Oxyrrhynchium pumilum, *Eurhynchium pumilum*

Dwarf Feather-moss

Key 352



Identification *R. pumila* is very slender, and grows in thin, soft, deep green patches. Stems are rarely more than 2 cm long, and generally have divergent to widely spreading, thread-like branches. The stem and branch leaves are similar, very small, only about 0.5 mm long, egg-shaped or narrowly egg-shaped, and often spread outward from the stem. The tip is shortly pointed, never long and tapering. When dry, the leaves become a little shrunken and may then appear to be narrower than they really are. The margins are finely toothed, but this is difficult to appreciate in the field because the plants are so small. The leaves have a single nerve. The oval, curved capsules are 1 mm long and have a beaked lid.

Similar species *R. pumila* is easily mistaken for *Amblystegium serpens* (p. 702), but can be distinguished by its shortly pointed leaves. The leaves of *A. serpens* are narrower in relation to their length, and nearly always have a narrow tip. The more divergent branches and leaves of *R. pumila* are another useful pointer in the field. *R. pumila* sometimes grows in the same habitat as *Heterocladium heteropterum* and *H. flaccidum* (p. 687), and is very similar to these species in size and leaf shape (though very different microscopically). The leaves of *R. pumila* are a little more delicate and translucent, and have a distinct, single nerve. In *Heterocladium* species, the nerve is usually short and indistinct. *Conardia compacta* (p. 708) has a more finely pointed leaf tip and the shoots form lax patches that appear crinkly because of the irregularly spreading leaves.

Habitat A lowland species, most commonly found on soil and over stones in woodland and on sheltered banks. It sometimes occurs in large patches, but may also be found as scattered shoots, mixed with other species. It tolerates dark shade, and may grow in recesses and on ledges in rocky valleys and ravines. Although it usually occurs on dry ground, some of its habitats may be at least seasonally wet, as on rock ledges in ravines.

Photos David Holyoak (left) & Michael Lüth (right) Text Tom Blockeel