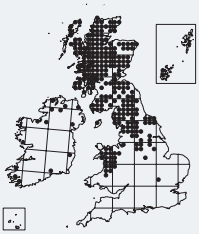
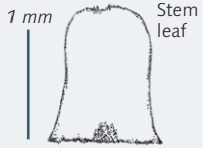
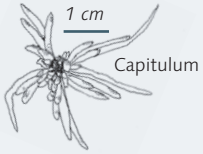
Sphagnum girgensohnii

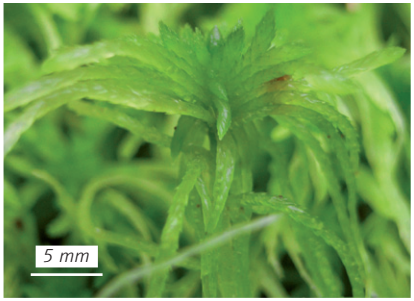
Girgensohn's Bog-moss

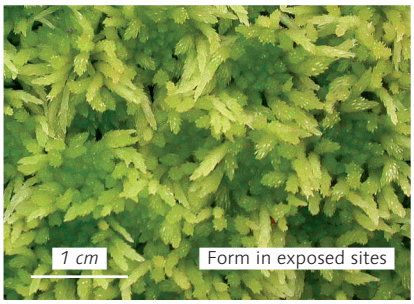
Section Acutifolia











Identification

A medium-sized species, typically found in soft hummocks or extensive carpets. Usually green or yellow-green, occasionally straw-coloured, but never with any trace of red. Capitula are flat-topped and clearly stellate, except in compact forms in exposed locations, and have a medium-sized terminal bud. Spreading branches are at right angles to the stem, with long, drooping ends, and branch leaves are slightly spreading at the tip. The stem is rather stiff and rigid, and usually snaps crisply when bent. The stem leaf is rectangular, widest at the base, sometimes with a slightly narrowed waist. The central part of the tip is fringed, while the shoulders of the leaf are rounded and intact. The central, basal area of the stem leaf has enlarged and distorted cells, which can just be seen as a pale patch against the light with a 20 hand lens. Capsules are rare.

Similar species

The markedly stellate capitula, revealing neat juvenile branches arranged singly, distinguish it from carpets of *S. fallax* (p. 306) that may accompany it. The stem leaf resembles *S. fimbriatum* (p. 283), but only in very compact forms can the difference be hard to see. Rare, green forms of *S. russowii* (p. 285), and to a lesser extent *S. capillifolium* subsp. *rubellum* (p. 288), resemble *S. girgensohnii* in the flat-topped, stellate capitula, but some trace of red colour can almost always be found, ruling out *S. girgensohnii*. Stem leaves of *S. russowii* can be similar to those of *S. girgensohnii*. Green forms of *S. teres* (p. 282) are also similar, but have differently orientated stem leaves and usually occur in wetter, flushed habitats.

Habitat

A shade-demanding species at lower altitudes, in damp woodland, under birch (*Betula*), willow (*Salix*) or Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), in the shade of tall ling heather (*Calluna*) on sheltered banks, or amongst rushes (*Juncus*) in marshes. Also found in marginal parts of mires where there is slight base enrichment.

Photos Andy Amphlett *Drawings* Sharon Pilkington *Text* Andy Amphlett & Sandy Payne