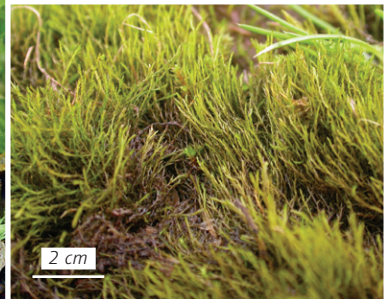
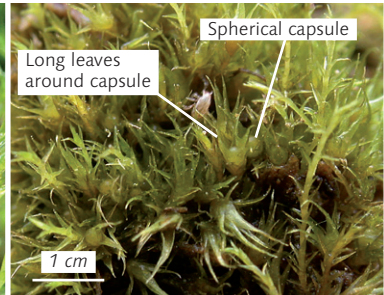
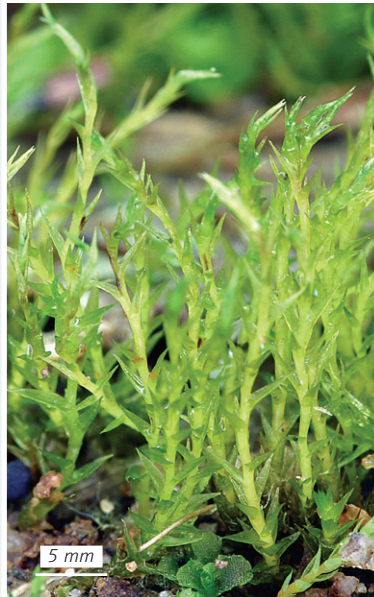
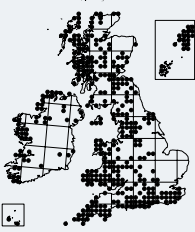


Archidium alternifolium

Clay Earth-moss

Key 240



Identification This small moss grows in dark or mid-green patches or loose mats with stems to 2 cm long, often formed of more or less prostrate, non-fertile shoots with short, widely spaced leaves. Unusually for a moss, the leaves do not increase in size towards the top of the shoots. The leaves are erect or held away from the stem when moist, and are narrowly triangular; the nerve ends in the tip. The occasional, short, fertile shoots have crowded leaves with much larger (2 mm long) leaves surrounding the capsule (see top right photograph) that are more spearhead-shaped, and have a longer, tapering tip. The hidden, spherical capsule is easily overlooked, and does not have a separate lid.

Similar species The loose mats of non-fertile stems are quite distinctive, but fertile stems are likely to be confused with *Pleuridium* species (p. 340) where capsules are more frequent. In those species, however, the leaves surrounding the capsule are much longer and have a more drawn-out, tapering tip consisting almost entirely of the excurrent nerve, and the capsule is more egg-shaped.

Habitat Grows in open, moist, rather acidic sites on soil often kept bare by disturbance or frequent immersion. It commonly occurs by lakes and reservoirs, but also on tracks, ditch-sides, quarries and disturbed ground in woodland.