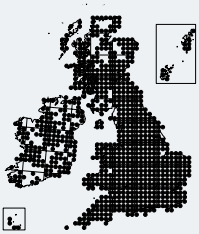
Oxyrrhynchium hians

Eurhynchium hians, *E. swartzii*

Swartz's Feather-moss

Key 365



Identification *O. hians* varies greatly. Some forms are yellow-green, prostrate, with straggling main stems and widely spaced side branches. It also occurs in denser, dull or dark green patches. More rarely the branches are crowded and erect. Plants are medium-sized and have branches that usually spread widely from the main stems, which are usually about 1–4 cm long. Stem leaves are a little larger than branch leaves, but similar in shape, broadly egg-shaped with a broadly pointed to tapering tip, 1–1.5 mm long. They have a single nerve and finely toothed margins, spread away from the stem, and alter little when dry. Branch leaves are narrower and acutely pointed, but not drawn out to a fine point, and are occasionally arranged more or less in one plane. Curved, oblong capsules occur rarely and have a beaked lid, and a roughened seta.

Similar species Typical plants of *O. hians* have prostrate shoots, widely spaced branches, and spreading, broadly pointed leaves. *O. speciosum* (p. 769) is similar, but may be suspected by its frequently produced capsules and its occurrence in wet places. It is usually larger than *O. hians*, and its branches more often appear flattened because the leaves are arranged loosely in one plane. *O. schleicheri* (p. 770) has short, crowded branches, but is best distinguished by the presence of creeping underground stems, and a leaf tip that is frequently half twisted. *Kindbergia praelonga* (p. 767) has stem leaves that spread in a star-like manner at the shoot tip and has finer branches. Similarly sized *Brachythecium* species (pp. 741–752) have branch leaves with a narrower tip. The rare *Rhynchostegium rotundifolium* (p. 763) has broad leaves that become strongly twisted and shrunken when dry and the shoots are irregularly branched.

Habitat *O. hians* grows on bare soil in a wide range of habitats. These include stream banks, woodland, hedge banks, grassland on chalk, clay and other base-rich soils, arable fields, parks and gardens. On muddy stream banks it is often rather scruffy. It also occurs in wet seepages and on wet rock ledges.

Photos David Holyoak & Des Callaghan (inset) Text Tom Blockeel