

Common Haircap Moss

Polytrichum commune

Plants · Present all year · capsules Jun-Sep



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A large, robust moss forming deep dark-green cushions and carpets of upright unbranched stems set with stiff, narrow, spreading leaves that give a starry look from above. Spore capsules are held on long reddish stalks and capped with a shaggy golden hood. Common haircap grows on bogs, wet heath, moorland and damp acid woodland throughout the region.

BEHAVIOUR

Unlike most mosses it has specialised conducting tissue in the stem that moves water internally, which is how it manages to grow so tall — stems can exceed thirty centimetres in wet ground. The hairy cap that gives it its name is a remnant of the female tissue, carried up as the capsule grows. Haircap carpets are an important component of peat-forming bog vegetation.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Haircap mosses (Polytrichaceae)
HEIGHT	5-40 cm · among the tallest mosses
STATUS	Native; abundant on bog and wet acid ground

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