

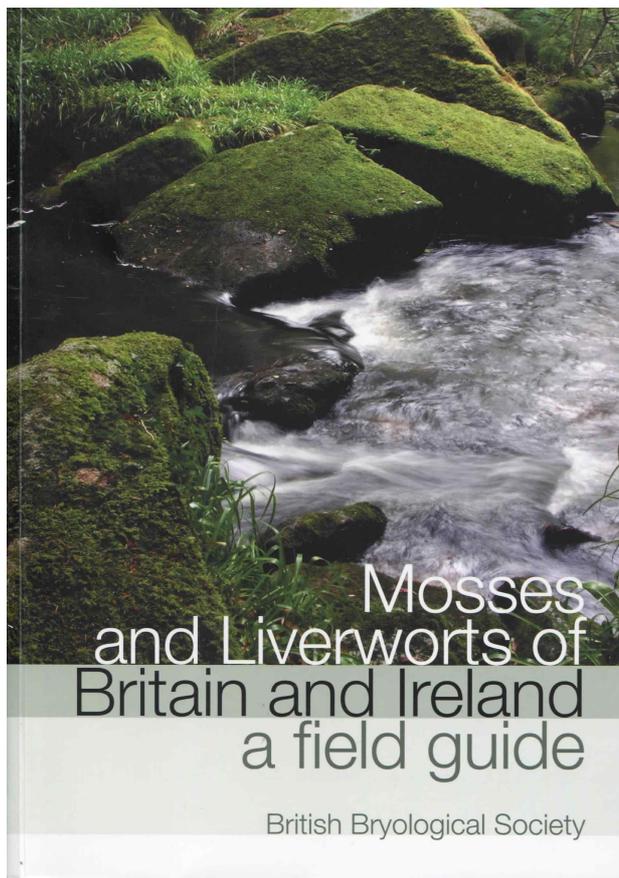
Atherton, I., Bosanquet, S., Lawley, M. (2010) [Eds.]: **Mosses and liverworts of Britain and Ireland: a field guide**. V + 848 pp., British Bryological Society, Plymouth. ISBN 978-0-9561310-1-0 (paperback). Price: 25.95 GBP.

Order from: http://rbg-web2.rbge.org.uk/bbs/Activities/Field_Guide_order.htm.

Bryophytes are a major component of the biodiversity in dry grasslands (e.g. Dengler 2005, Jeschke & Kiehl 2006, Löbel & Dengler 2008, Boch & Dengler 2008), yet they are often not considered in vegetation studies of dry grasslands because researchers deem their determination too complicated. Indeed, getting to know bryophyte species requires the use of a microscope, and some critical taxa can only be determined safely using high magnification. However, after one becomes accustomed to bryophytes, actually many species can be easily recognised in the field with the naked eye or using a hand lens only.

This field guide covers about 750 of the c. 1070 taxa of mosses, liverworts and hornworts occurring on the British Isles, single-page descriptions. These consist in the upper half of one to several colour photos that show the habitus and possibly some details (such as capsules, leaf margins), always with a scale bar, often some additional black-and-white drawings of further relevant determination details, and a gridded distribution map. The photos in most cases are of good quality and really convey how the species look in the field. There are only a few instances where the photo is insufficient, e.g. the completely unsharp representation of *Timmia austriaca*, but this is probably because the authors insisted in using photos from Britain, where this species is extremely rare. The text in the lower part is always structured into “Identification”, “Similar species” and “Habitat”, in which the former gives a helpful description, focussing on characters of the habitus or those recognisable with a 20x hand lens. Under “Similar species”, the differential characters towards other species covered in the book, as well as to those very rare or determination-critical taxa not presented with a full treatment, are given. There is also a dichotomous “field key” to the “commoner and/or distinctive” species (50 pp.) but, except perhaps for *Sphagnum* (not relevant in dry grasslands), it is questionable whether it is effective to key-out a species in the field. Users will more likely compare the photos and descriptions of the best-matching species, and if this does not yield a clear result, the only solution is to take a sample, and identify it at home using a microscope and a comprehensive key.

In conclusion, if a bryologist is to carry a book into the field, this is clearly the best choice, not only in Britain and Ireland, but throughout temperate Europe. Only in the arctic-boreal and Mediterranean zones does the book reach its limits, while even there the majority of the bryoflora is included. The BBS is to be applauded for having produced this full-colour book with water-proof jacket for such a reasonable price.



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- Dengler, J. (2005): Zwischen Estland und Portugal – Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede der Phytodiversitätsmuster europäischer Trockenrasen. *Tuexenia* 25: 387–405.
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