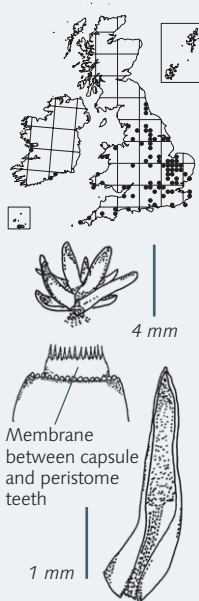


# *Aloina ambigua*

Tall Aloe-moss

Key 89



## Identification

In size, and habit, *A. ambigua* is very similar to *A. aloides*. Plants occur as scattered individuals or in dark green to reddish-brown patches, and are typically 2–5 mm tall. The leaves are also very similar to *A. aloides*, although the nerve usually ends in the leaf tip and rarely extends beyond it. Capsules are common in winter and spring, and they are essential for distinguishing *A. ambigua* from *A. aloides*. Without capsules, identification using field characters alone is not normally possible. Ripe capsules are usually erect or only slightly inclined, and bear a visible membrane between the mouth of the capsule and the peristome teeth. The calyptra is hairless.

## Similar species

*A. aloides* (p. 472) does not have a basal membrane on the peristome. *A. ambigua* may also superficially resemble smaller species of *Pogonatum* (pp. 316–317), but *Pogonatum* species have coarsely toothed leaves and a hairy calyptra. Newcomers to *Aloina* could possibly confuse *A. ambigua* with small *Polytrichum juniperinum* (p. 325) or *P. piliferum* (p. 324). Both of these *Polytrichum* species have long, drawn-out leaf points, which are red-tipped in *P. juniperinum*, and elongated into a colourless hair point in *P. piliferum*.

## Habitat

*A. ambigua* is a lowland species, and prefers thin, lime-rich soils such as chalk and limestone on exposed banks, rock ledges and cliffs, and in quarries, chalk pits and sand pits. Unlike *A. aloides*, it rarely grows on mortar on walls.