



Discovering Mosses

Is that a moss?



Connect with nature
Promote microscopy
Inspire STEM

✓ What is a moss?

Do you know what mosses look like? Use this guide to help you decide what is a moss and what is not.



Mosses are **plants** in the group called **Bryophytes**, along with liverworts and hornworts.

Key visual characteristics of mosses:

- Grow in clumps, cushions, or carpets
- No flowers, seeds, or fruits. Instead, they make spores
- Shoots with spirally arranged leaves
- Leaves have no veins, but usually a central “nerve” for support
- No roots, instead rhizoids (tiny brownish threads)
- Texture: soft, velvety, sponge-like

✓ Where to find moss

Shady, damp places: soil, rocks, bark, roofs. Mosses grow in towns and cities as well as in the countryside. Some even thrive in sunny or drier spots.

⊘ Things that look like moss (but aren't!)



Irish moss / Sea moss is actually **red algae**



Spanish moss is a **flowering plant** (bromeliad)



Reindeer moss, Oak moss, Iceland moss are all actually **lichens**



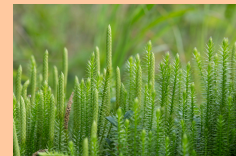
Slimy mats found in the sea and fresh water are **algae**



Marimo moss balls are **green algae** rolled into spheres



Clubmosses & Spike-mosses are **vascular plants**, closer to ferns

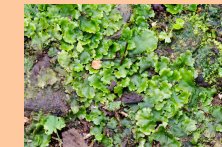


⊘ Bryophyte cousins



Liverworts

Thallose: flat, ribbon-like
Leafy: look like moss but different leaf arrangements



Hornworts

Flat green thallus (leaf)
Long horn-shaped sporophytes

✓ Quick ID checklist:

- ✓ Green leafy shoots
- ✓ Spore capsules on thin stalks
- ✓ Soft to the touch
- ✓ Found in shady or damp spots

✓ How many species of moss?

Globally about 12,000 to 13,000.
Britain and Ireland about 760.

Take part and share

Share your ‘moss’ and ‘not a moss’ photos on social media. Use hashtag #iseemoss

www.mosssafari.com

Tag @mosssafari



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