

Sphagnum Moss

Regno: flora

Peatbogs

 [sphagnum.jpg](#) [1]

Sphagnum Moss - *Sphagnum sp.*

Graceful moss admirably adapted to living in their thousands on acid soils poor in salts or even suspended in the water along small, nutrient-poor lakes, so forming the soft, green floating carpets known in Tuscany as "aggallati" (floating islands).

The adult plant consists of small, slender branched stems carrying several tiny, tender green imbricated leaves. These consist of large, colourless empty dead cells which serve as miniature water reserves and other, smaller live ones provided with chlorophyll and therefore green.

These and other similar cells give moss its well known capacity to absorb, hold and transport water by means of capillary action. It is not by chance that its name comes from the Greek word meaning "sponge".

This slender Briophyte is more at home in northern Europe where it covers large areas (Sphagnum bogs), the origin of peat. It reached the Italian latitudes long ago during the ice ages and like other relict species has remained in a few favourable places where it can live.

In Italy Sphagnum mosses are still quite frequent near moraine lakes and peat bogs in the Alps and northern Apennines. In Tuscany they occur at Lake Sibolla together with an extraordinary retinue of rare plants, at Massaciuccoli, at the feet of Mount Pisano, on the Cerbaie Hills and in the Chiusi Woods at Fucecchio Marshes.

The most common species of sphagnum in the Tuscan lowland marshes are *Sphagnum palustre*, *S. contortum* and *S. platphyllum*.

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