

Phylum Bryozoa (moss animals) Lower Ordovician – Recent

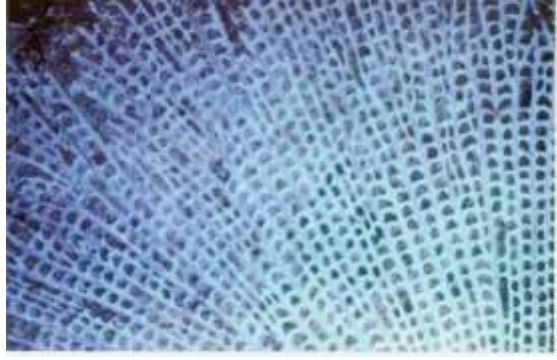
The Bryozoa grow attached to the sea-floor like corals, but they differ significantly from corals in terms of soft-part anatomy. Individuals are tiny, approximately a millimeter or less but grow as colonies. The bryozoa are exclusively colonial and fall into two broad groups: the lacy colonies and the twig-shaped colonies. Individual “houses” (zoeciums) lack the radial partitions found in corals, but they are divided transversely by partitions called diaphragms (*Fossils of Arkansas*). Bryozoans can also grow as incrustations on the shells of other organisms and are commonly associated with reef structures.

*Top picture and excerpt from *Fossils of Arkansas* by Tom Freeman, 1965.

Bryozoans are present in marine and fresh water today. They are sessile benthonic animals (fixed to seabed) that are filter feeders and prefer shallow seas, living fairly close to shore (neritic). One bryozoan called *Archimedes* (see picture below) is abundant in Mississippian age rocks in Arkansas and is so plentiful that one of the rock formations called the Pitkin Limestone was once referred to as the “*Archimedes* Limestone”. Generally, only small pieces of bryozoans that resemble “fronds” are preserved in Mississippian and Pennsylvanian age rocks in the Ozark Plateaus Region and in Cretaceous and early Tertiary age rocks in southwestern Arkansas.



Archimedes bryozoan from the Pitkin Limestone, Richland Creek, Arkansas



Bryozoan "fronds".



Archimedes from the Pitkin Limestone. Scale in centimeters.

References:

Freeman, Tom, 1965, Fossils of Arkansas: Arkansas Geological Commission Bulletin 22, 53 p., 12 pls., 15 figs., 1 map.