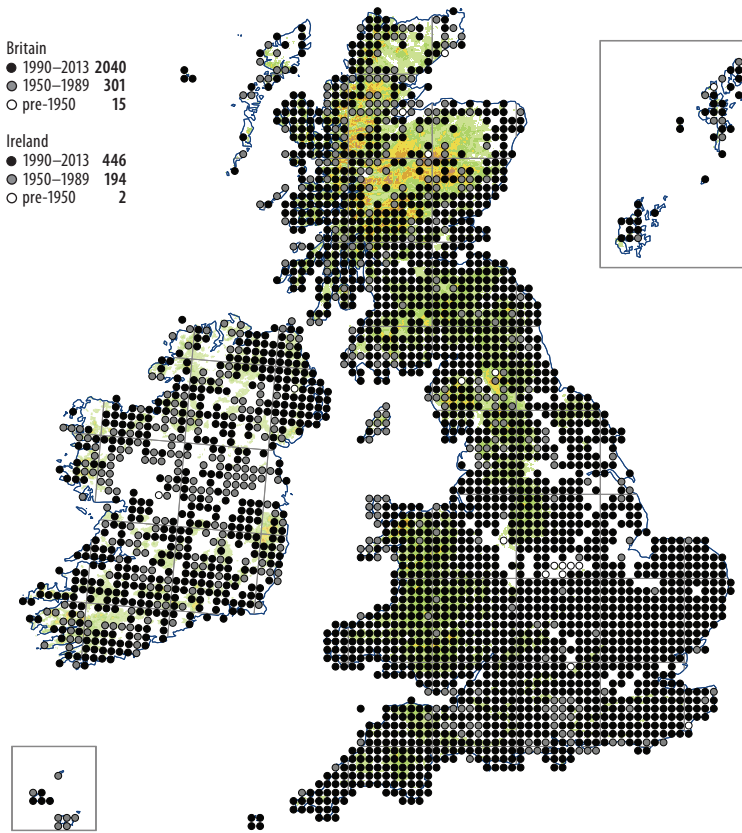


Metzgeria furcata



This species has a wide ecological range, occurring on all but the most acid trees and rocks and being tolerant of drought, although it is seldom found on limestone or decaying wood. On trees it often grows alongside *Frullania dilatata*, *Cryphaea heteromalla*, *Orthotrichum affine*, *Ulota phyllantha* and *Zygodon viridissimus*, and is typically a pioneer on the middle part of tree trunks (c. 1.5 to 2.5 m above ground level). It is found on many broadleaved trees, especially ash, sycamore and willow, and there are also records from spruce and other conifers. The rocks on which *M. furcata* grows are often rather sparsely colonised by bryophytes, but may support *Diplophyllum albicans*, *Hypnum* species, *Trichostomum brachydontium* or *T. tenuirostre*. Saxicolous populations of *M. furcata* are especially frequent near the coast, alongside *H. cupressiforme* var. *resupinatum*, and it sometimes extends on to dry soil on coastal slopes.

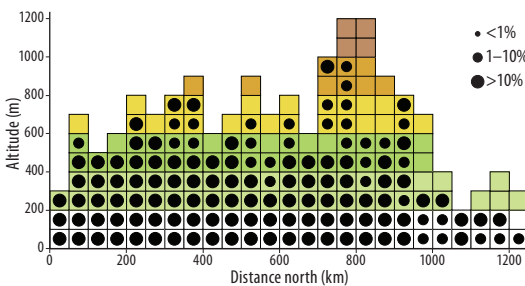
Several records come from anthropogenic habitats, including walls, bridges, concrete gutters and grave stones. Altitudinal range: 0–1000 m.

There has been a distinct upturn in the frequency of *Metzgeria furcata* during the early 21st century, including expansion into much of the English Midlands and along the east coast of England.

Dioicous; female plants are common, male plants less so; capsules are occasional. The frequency of gemmae is uncertain: Paton (1999) reports them as frequent, but recent searching for var. *ulvula*, which is characterised by the presence of gemmae, has revealed very few British colonies.

Phylogenetic analysis has revealed two distinct lineages in European *M. furcata*, only one of which was represented by British and Irish plants in the analysis (Fuselier *et al.*, 2009). The British and Irish clade has a more south-western distribution in Europe than the other clade. The study did not find any morphological differences between the clades.

European Boreo-temperate. All of Europe but rare in the far north. Cosmopolitan: from Siberia south to Arabia, Sri Lanka, New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand; in tropical Africa and South Africa; and from eastern Canada south to Argentina and Chile; also on several Pacific and subantarctic islands.



N.G. Hodgetts, rev. S.D.S. Bosanquet