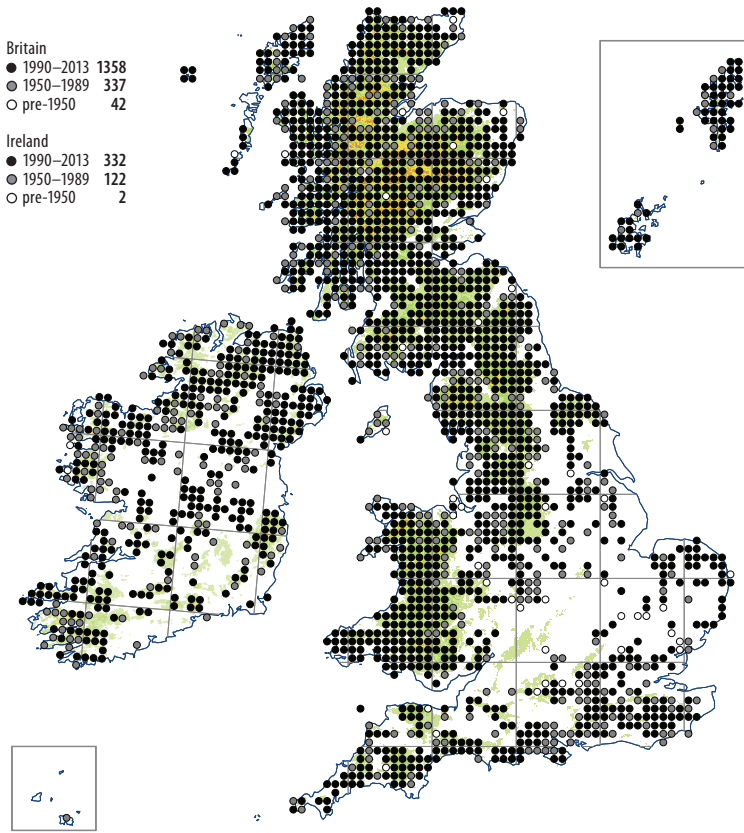


# *Sphagnum palustre*



Loose cushions and patches of *Sphagnum palustre* are found in a wide variety of habitats, including wet woods, boggy grassland, ditches, flushed peaty banks, marshes and streambanks. Unlike *S. papillosum*, it is tolerant of shade and is sometimes abundant in damp conifer plantations and swampy carr. It is one of the less acid-demanding sphagna, growing with *S. fimbriatum*, *S. squarrosum* and *S. subnitens*. It is also common on oceanic blanket bogs, where it occupies small declivities receiving surface flow in wet weather. Altitudinal range: 0–1100 m.

Diocious; capsules are occasional, August.

Plants in our area are mostly var. *palustre*. Var. *centrale* is often treated as a separate species, *S. centrale*, but has proved very difficult to distinguish because some collections

have leaf cross-sections of intermediate and unstable shape, differing between leaves on the same plant. Var. *centrale* has been found in four places in England, two in Wales, two in the Isle of Man, and as two separate gatherings from the Morrone Birkwood near Braemar in eastern Scotland. The Morrone locality is at about 500 m altitude and is the only one that fits with its distribution in Eurasia and North America, where it has a continental distribution, penetrating continental interiors from which var. *palustre* is absent. Genetic analysis in North America (Karlin *et al.*, 2010) indicates that there is a clear distinction between the two taxa. Photos in Flatberg (2013) and Hölzer (2010) show *S. centrale* as remaining greenish or yellowish in autumn, and not turning pinkish as is normal for var. *palustre*.

Circumpolar Boreo-temperate. Widespread in Europe except the south and far north. Northern Asia and N America, mainly as var. *palustre* in coastal areas, mainly as var. *centrale* in continental interiors.

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