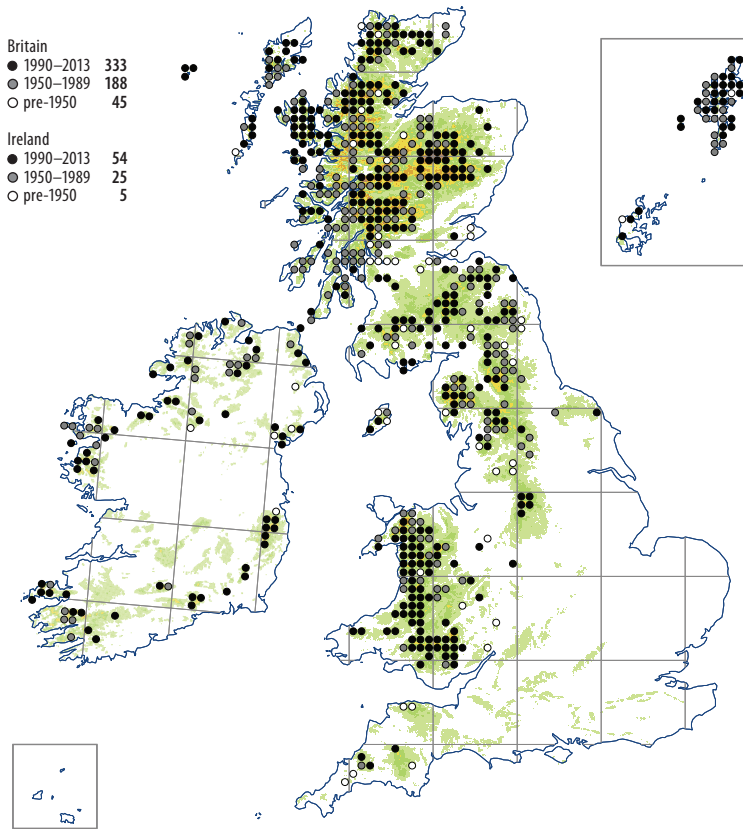


Polytrichastrum alpinum



A calcifuge pioneer species found on upland heaths, moorlands and most commonly in montane habitats, including peaty banks, mossy banks of streams and gullies, rocky slopes, screes, cliff ledges, earth-covered rocks and rock crevices, and areas of late snow-lie. It is usually commoner on north- to east-facing slopes, generally in well-drained and relatively stable habitats, on gritty, sandy and peaty soils, often in thin turf. It occasionally colonises bare ground and banks in old quarries. In the north-west it is not unusual at sea level in turf below and among coastal rocks. Common associates include a wide range of other calcifuge species, such as *Diplophyllum albicans*, *Dicranella heteromalla*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Hylocomium splendens*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Mnium hornum*, *Polytrichastrum formosum*, *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*. Altitudinal range: 5–1340 m.

Dioicous; capsules are occasional to common, mature in summer. Fragile leaf laminae function as a dispersal mechanism in some Arctic populations, but have not been recorded in Britain and Ireland.

Circumpolar Boreo-arctic montane. Common throughout Arctic and boreal Europe, south to the mountains of the Mediterranean region. N Africa (Algeria), Turkey. A bipolar species with a very wide distribution across the Northern Hemisphere, south to the Himalaya, China and Taiwan in Asia, and on mountains in Mexico and Guatemala in the Neotropics. In the Southern Hemisphere in Patagonia, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, subantarctic islands and Antarctica.

D.G. Long, rev. T.L. Blockeel

