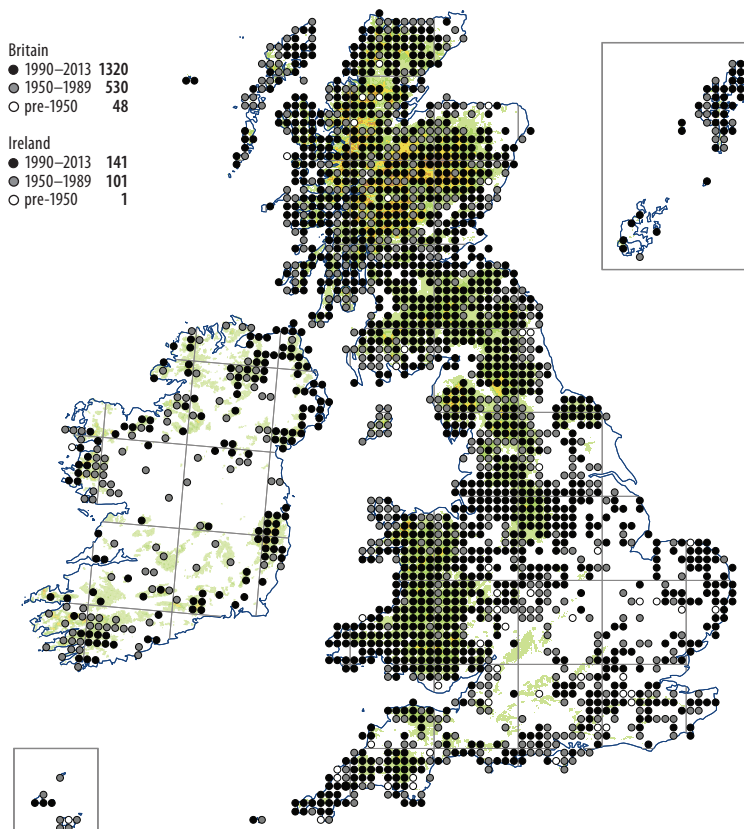


## Polytrichum piliferum



A strictly calcifuge pioneer species of well-drained sandy or gravelly substrates and dry peaty soils. Lowland habitats include dry soil in woodland clearings, dry heaths, fixed dunes, road cuttings, disused sand pits, and old mine and colliery spoil. In the uplands it grows on shingle banks of streams, stony lake margins, dry gravelly screes, block screes, rock outcrops and stony mountain ridge-tops. It often favours large boulders, rocky flats and wall tops where a thin layer of leached peaty soil has developed. On volcanic and other basic rocks it requires a layer of acid humus. It is typical of very infertile soils, sometimes being the only bryophyte present in such places; it does not withstand competition and is rarely found in closed vegetation; sites are almost always well illuminated, though it occasionally persists for a while in shade. Associates include *Ceratodon purpureus*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Polytrichastrum formosum*,

*Polytrichum juniperinum* and *Cladonia* species. Altitudinal range: 0–1150 m.

It is easily identified in the field and there are now likely to be few gaps in its mapped distribution. Its scarcity in some parts of lowland England and Ireland is real.

Dioicous; capsules are occasional, mature in summer.

Circumpolar Wide-boreal. Almost throughout Europe, north to Iceland and Svalbard, but rare or absent in the Mediterranean lowlands. Macaronesia, N Africa (Algeria). Turkey. Widespread across the Northern Hemisphere, south to Caucasus, Himalaya, N China, Japan and California. Scattered localities in C and S Africa, Réunion. Southern S America, Australia, Antarctica.

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