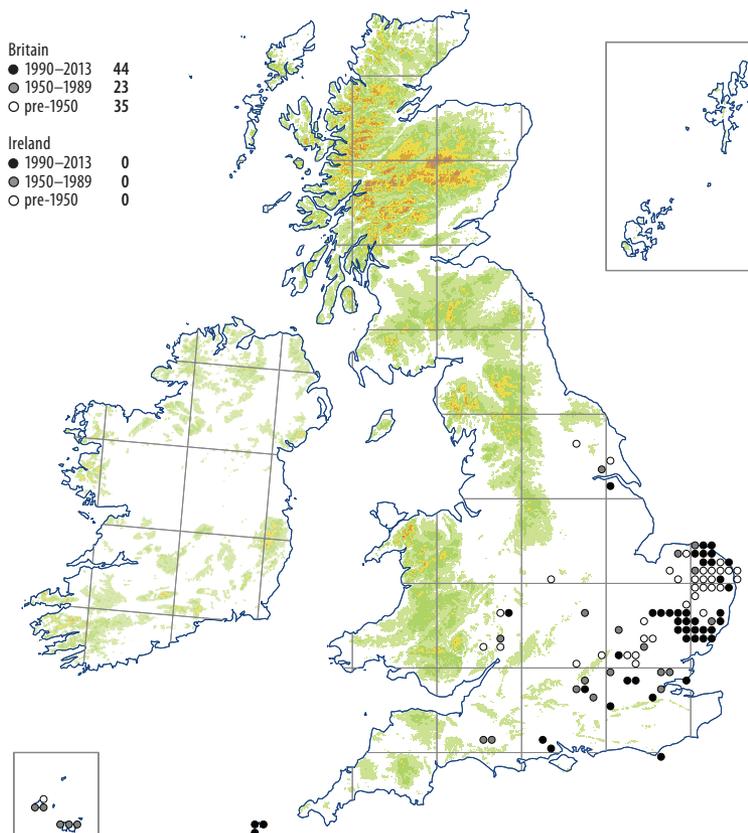


## Sphaerocarpos michelii



Most frequent as a weed of cultivated ground, recorded from non-calcareous clay, loam or sandy soil in neglected gardens, nurseries, fallow land and cereal stubble, in fields of cabbages, carrots, maize, rape, rhubarb, sugar beet, turnips and newly sown clover and in strips of game-cover. It is frequent in flower fields in the Isles of Scilly. It is also recorded on roadside banks, paths, tracks and waste ground. Associates include *Riccia glauca*, *R. sorocarpa*, *Bryum dichotomum*, *B. rubens*, *Dicranella staphylina*, *Phascum cuspidatum*, *Tortula truncata* and *Trichodon cylindricus*. *Sphaerocarpos michelii* might be a long established introduction rather than a native species. Altitudinal range: 5–95 m.

It is likely that *S. michelii* is in overall decline on arable land because of the widespread switch from spring to autumn

cultivation, which does not allow this late winter- or spring-fruiting species to produce spores. However, since the 1991–1994 Atlas it has been found in other habitats for the first time in mainland England, including sandy ground in car parks and caravan sites, soil between paving stones and made-up paths.

Dioicous. Sporophytes are abundant, maturing from late November to June. A single thallus can produce a succession of capsules over a period of six months (W.H. Burrell, unpublished letter in CGE). Spores are shed in tetrads of two males and two females.

Probably slightly under-recorded because of the need for mature sporophytes for identification. DNA Barcoding suggests that there are five European races of *S. michelii* and that plants from the Isles of Scilly are genetically distinct from Norfolk plants (Bell *et al.*, 2013).

Mediterranean-Atlantic. C and S Europe, as far north as Britain. Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan; N Africa; southern N America north to Illinois; Argentina, Chile.

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