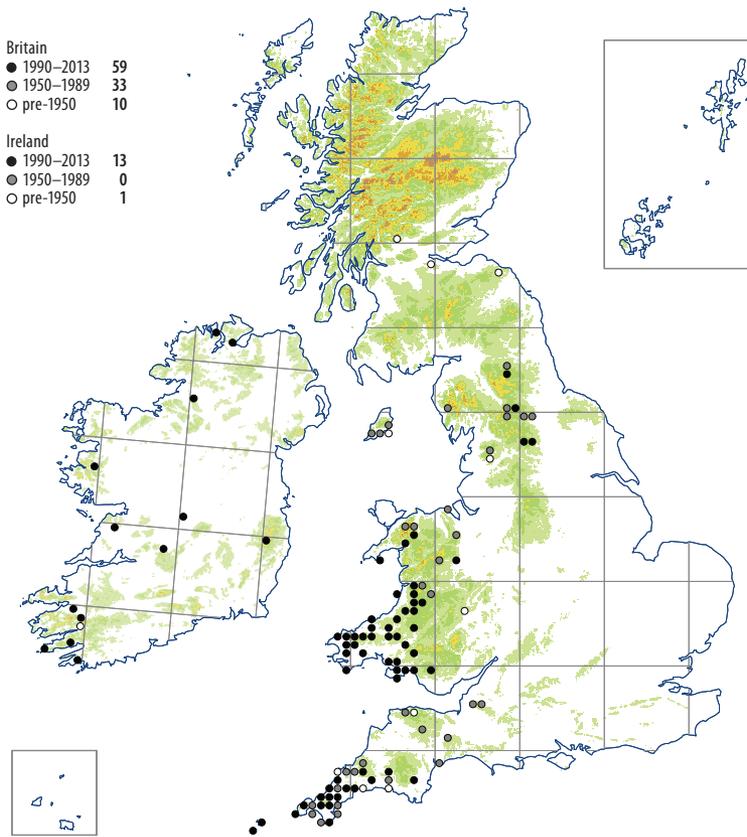


Weissia controversa var. *densifolia*



In coarser tufts and patches than var. *controversa*, typically forming deep turfs, and characteristic of sites rich in heavy metals, especially copper, lead and zinc. Many records are from old lead and copper mines, where it grows on open ground, spoil heaps, old diggings and between the stones and on the mortar of old walls. It is also known from natural habitats, as on rotten rock ledges in the Lake District and river gravels with high levels of zinc in Northumberland. Many recent records have been from substrates where there is run-off from galvanised metals, such as metal sheds, railings, electricity pylons and roadside crash-barriers. However, in Cornwall it has been found in a few places not obviously contaminated with heavy metals (Holyoak, 2012). It is often associated with *Bryum pallescens* and *Dicranella varia*, and with plants apparently belonging to var. *controversa*. Altitudinal range: 5–440 m.

There has been an increase in records recently, primarily due to the recording of populations from sites associated with galvanised metal, although the recording of such forms is sporadic.

Not all plants from heavy-metal sites have the morphology of var. *densifolia*; its apparent occurrence in some non-toxic sites and the variability of its morphological characters lead to some uncertainty about its taxonomy. However Duckett *et al.* (2006) found evidence in the protonema to indicate that it is distinct from all other British *Weissias*.

Autoicous; capsules are usually common, mature in spring and summer, but extensive patches of vegetative plants apparently belonging to this variety sometimes occur.

European Southern-temperate. Widely scattered in C Europe, Germany south to Italy (including reports from Campania and Sicily). Reported from N Africa (Algeria).

T.L. Blockeel

