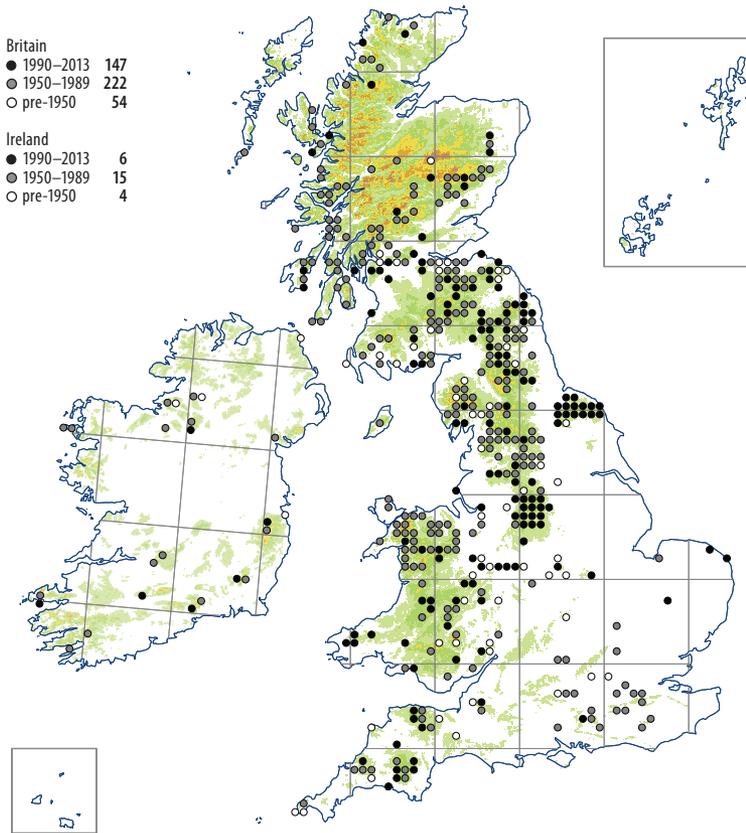


Leptodontium flexifolium

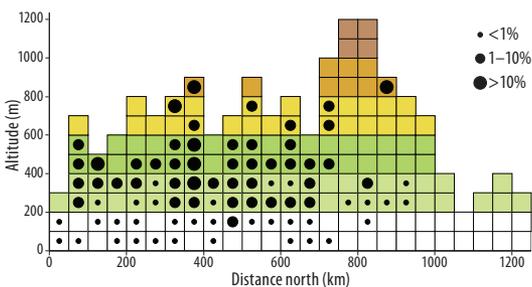


A species of well-drained raw humus, peaty sand and thin, often stony bare peat on heath and moorland, in acid grassland and in open woodland, a characteristic habitat being thin soil on top of gritstone, sandstone and granite rocks, but also on burnt heath and upturned tree bases. It occurs on other decaying organic substrates, including old thatched roofs and wood. Localities are usually well illuminated and the species does not occur in deep shade. Altitudinal range: 0–595 m.

The records show a steadily declining trend, and there is a high proportion of older records. However recent recording in the Peak District and NE Yorkshire indicates stable populations there, with no evidence of significant loss. Some occurrences are transitory, and invasion of heathland by birch may have reduced available habitat in some lowland areas.

Dioicous; capsules are occasional, mature in spring. Vegetative propagation is by deciduous bulbiform branchlets; narrowly flask-shaped gemmae are sometimes produced on protonema in leaf axils, but are apparently rare (Newton & Boyce, 1987). Gemmae of different shape are produced in leaf axils of some continental and exotic populations. The taxonomic implications of this variation require further elucidation.

Oceanic Temperate. W and C Europe, from the Pyrenees and Alps north to Norway, also Romania. Caucasus, Himalaya and C Asia to Japan. Southern USA (Arizona to Texas, Appalachian mountains). Widespread in the tropics. Some of the reports from the Alps and Asia are based on *Leptodontium styriacum* (Jur.) Limpr., which is probably not distinct from *L. flexifolium* (Ignatov *et al.*, 2005; Frahm, 2012).



T.L. Blockeel