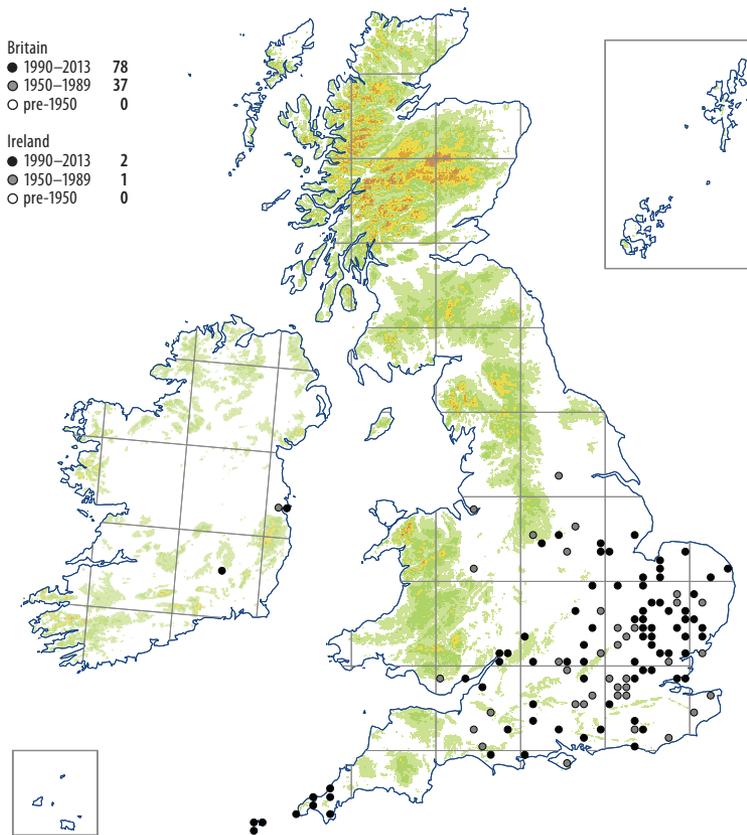


Didymodon umbrosus

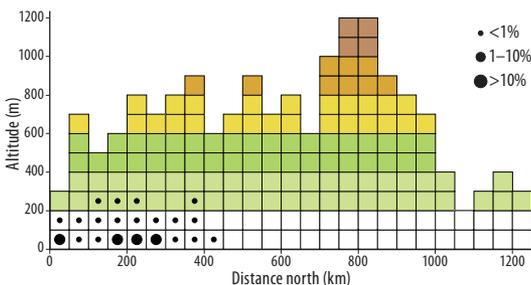


A plant of damp shady, usually calcareous places. A favourite habitat is on wall mortar and brickwork, often at the base of walls that are backed by earth such as railway arches, and likewise on walls of porous sandstone. Other substrates include an ornamental limestone fountain and a limestone tomb. Many records are from churchyards. It is also recorded from shaded soil in old chalk or limestone quarries and on banks near chalk springs, from compacted soil on tracks and driveways, sandy soil and shingle banks by the coast, and even in bulb fields on the Isles of Scilly. Associates on walls include *Didymodon tophaceus*, *Leptobarbula berica* and *Tortula muralis*, and on soil *Barbula convoluta*, *B. unguiculata*, *Bryum dichotomum*, *Didymodon fallax* and *Pseudocrossidium hornschurchianum*. Altitudinal range: 0–180 m.

Records peaked in the 1980s, probably due in part to the expertise of H.L.K. Whitehouse. There are no other obvious reasons for the subsequent decline in records.

Dioicous; only female plants have been found in Britain and Ireland. Tubers occur on the rhizoids.

It is probably an introduction, and was first discovered in Britain near Winchester in 1958 but not published till 20 years later (Crundwell & Whitehouse, 1978). The European population is entirely female. *D. umbrosus* is a rather inconspicuous species and is likely to be under-recorded from lack of awareness among bryologists and because of its small size. It belongs to a variable and taxonomically difficult complex of species that is not yet fully understood, and *D. umbrosus* is sometimes treated as a variety of *D. australasiae* (Hook. & Grev.) R.H. Zander. Some British material of *D. umbrosus* s.s. has been confirmed from molecular sequencing, but plants from the Isles of Scilly, Cornwall and probably elsewhere belong to *D. australasiae* s.s. (Holyoak, 2012; J. Kučera, pers. comm.).



Oceanic Southern-temperate. Scattered localities in W and S Europe north to the Czech Republic. Macaronesia, N Africa. SW Asia. Elsewhere known from N, C and S America and southern Africa but not always clearly distinguished from *D. australasiae*, which has a wider range, extending to C Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

H.L.K. Whitehouse, rev. T.L. Blockeel