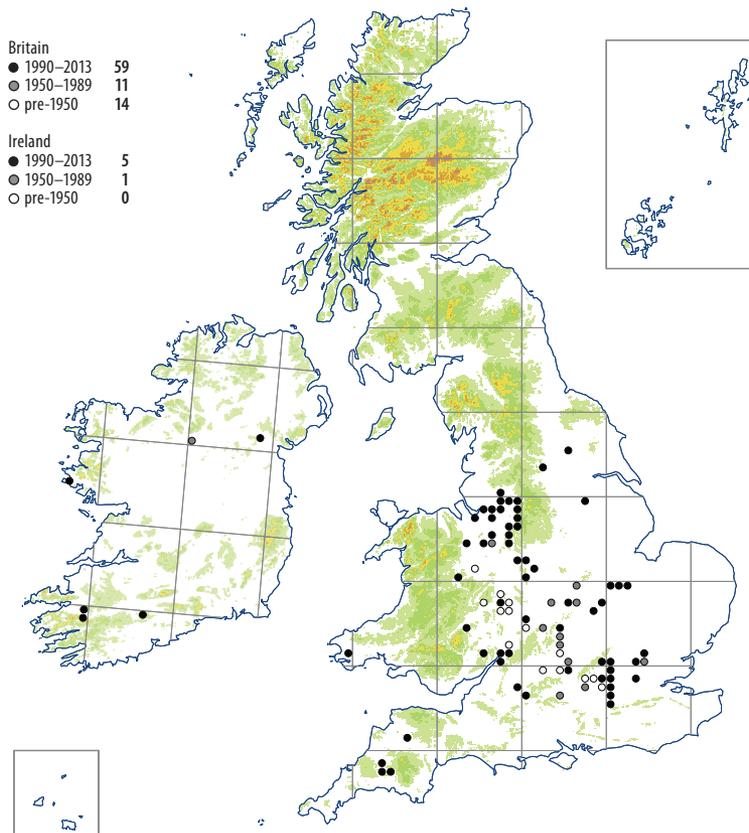


# Fissidens fontanus



An aquatic moss which grows submersed in clean or somewhat polluted water from near the surface to a depth of 80 cm; sluggish rivers and canals are its principal habitat, but it is also recorded from lakes, as at Lough Leane in Co. Kerry. It is indiscriminating in its choice of substrate, colonising wood, stones, rocks, concrete embankments, lock gates, iron girders, floating pontoons and even the surface of freshwater sponges (Sowter, 1972). It has also been recorded from stones in reed swamp. *Fissidens crassipes*, *Fontinalis antipyretica* and *Platyhypnidium riparioides* are sometimes mixed with it. It may benefit from some shade as it is often found under bridges while being absent from open stretches of water nearby. Altitudinal range: 0–160 m.

*Fissidens fontanus* has declined or become extinct at some localities, possibly because of increased pollution, but it has

also been found in recent years at many new sites. It is easily transported to new localities by boat traffic and there is no evidence of significant overall decline. However, Godfrey (2005) reports that it may be outcompeted by filamentous algae in eutrophic conditions, and it may be particularly palatable to freshwater snails; Lohammar (1954) found that in the aquarium it was eaten in preference to *Drepanocladus aduncus* and *Fontinalis antipyretica* and in the wild it was absent from water-bodies where snails were numerous.

Autoicous; capsules have been observed in C Europe but not in Britain or Ireland. Vegetative propagation by detached leafy branches, long known in C Europe, has recently been observed in Britain (Preston & Hill, 2009).

European Temperate. Europe, north to S Scandinavia, with scattered localities in N Sweden, Finland and NW Russia, east to Ukraine. Madeira, N Africa. Turkey, Israel. N and C America. E and S Africa. Reported from Australia and New Zealand but these populations apparently belong to *F. berterii* (Mont.) Müll. Hal.

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