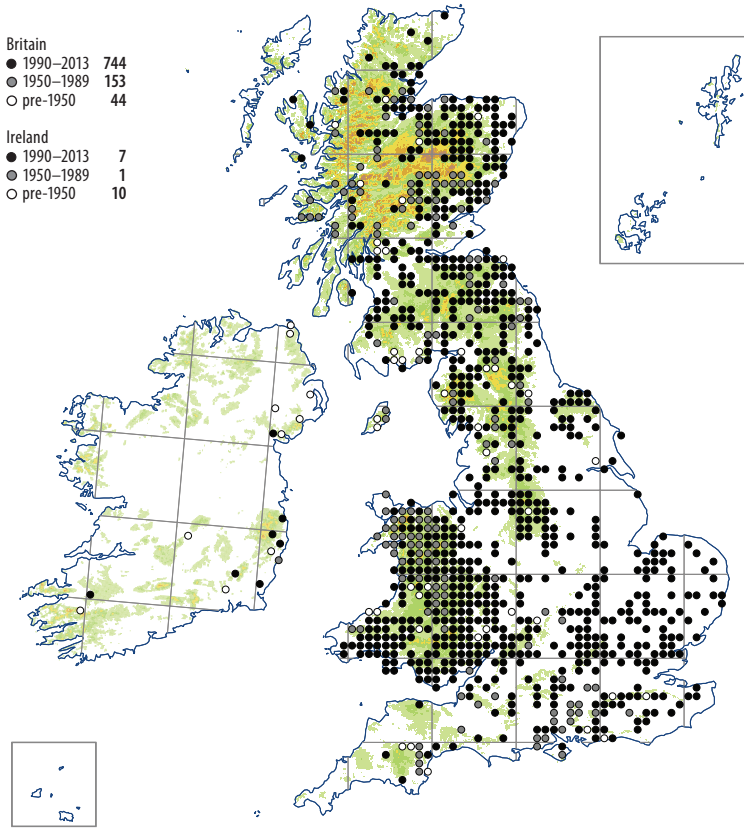


Orthotrichum stramineum

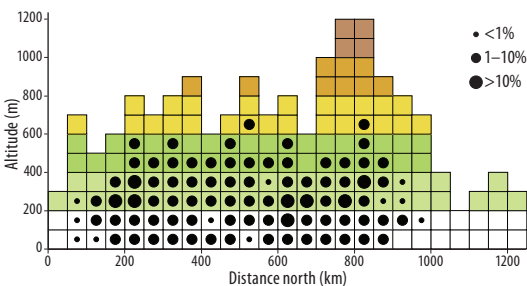


Usually found on vertical or sloping tree trunks or the trunks and branches of shrubs, sometimes persisting on fallen trunks in the early stages of decay. It is particularly frequent in sheltered and humid sites, such as wooded valleys and open ravines, and although it is widespread in the lowlands, it is especially characteristic of upland areas, around the fringes of the hills. Although it shows some preference for the base-rich bark of ash, elder and sycamore it also occurs on a wide range of other species including alder, beech, birch, elm, field maple, hazel, oak and willow. *Amblystegium serpens*, *Bryum capillare*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Orthotrichum affine*, *O. pulchellum*, *Ulota bruchii*, *U. phyllantha* and *Zygodon conoideus* are characteristic associates. It is very rare as an epilith, but has been noted on the shaded sandstone of a bridge parapet. Altitudinal range: 0–450 m.

Autoicous; capsules are abundant, mature in early summer.

Following reductions in SO₂ levels, *O. stramineum* has recolonised areas from which it had been absent during the industrial era, especially in C and N England. The recovery of epiphytes in many regions has stimulated increased interest in and awareness of this habitat, and this has contributed to the number of recent records.

The epiphytic *Orthotrichum* species are somewhat troublesome to identify, and are still under-recorded in some areas. Nevertheless, the near absence of *O. stramineum* from well-worked regions such as Cornwall and Skye is significant. It exemplifies the fact that several *Orthotrichum* species, in marked contrast to most *Ulota* species, decrease in frequency in highly oceanic areas. This is reinforced by the rarity of the species in Ireland.



European Temperate. Widespread in Europe to S Fennoscandia (isolated occurrences in Iceland and NW Norway), the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine, and southwards in the mountains of S Europe. N Africa. Turkey, Caucasus to Kazakhstan. Canada (Newfoundland – possibly introduced).

C.D. Preston, rev. T.L. Blockeel