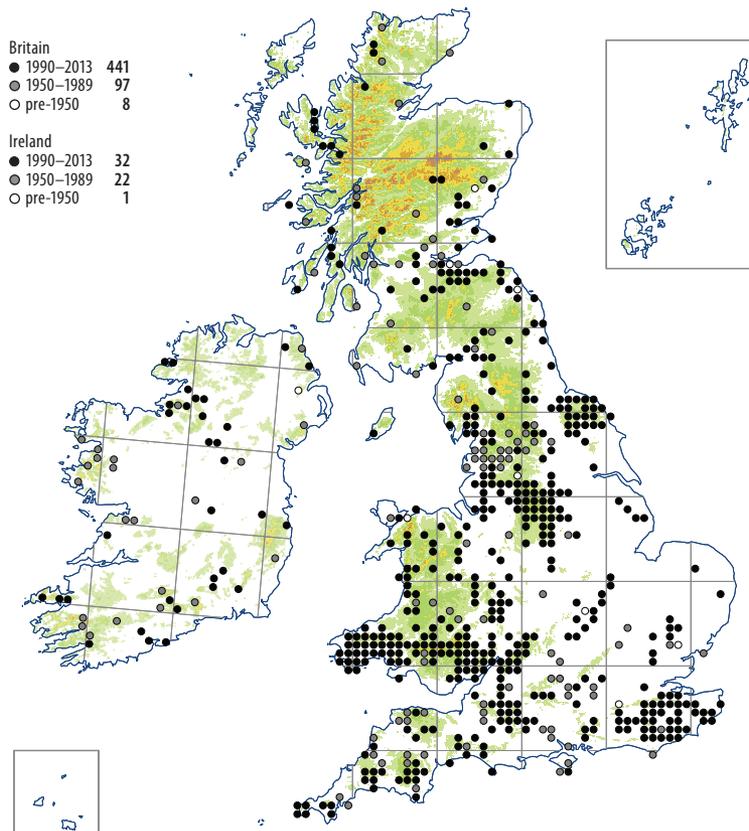


Fissidens pusillus



The most characteristic habitat of this species is on the vertical or inclined surfaces of moist or periodically submerged rocks, typically at the edge of clear, fast-flowing streams, but also on stones and rock in damp places, normally in woodland or in shade. In these habitats it occurs both on basic rocks such as limestone, and others that are neutral to mildly acid, like sandstone and granite. *Chiloscyphus polyanthos* and *Platyhypnidium riparioides* are common associates, and it may occur with other subaquatic *Fissidens* species, especially *F. crassipes* and *F. rufulus*. Occasionally it is found on built structures such as stone steps and the bases of damp church walls. On limestone and other base-rich rocks it extends to much drier habitats, on shaded crags, stones and the sides of boulders, where it shares the typical habitats of *F. gracilifolius*. Plants with the morphology of *F. pusillus*

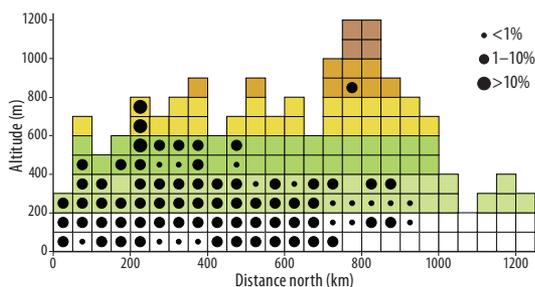
are sometimes found on soil in similar habitats to *F. viridulus*. Altitudinal range: 5–920 m.

Its distribution is probably stable, but historical trends are difficult to interpret because it was included in *F. viridulus* by Smith (1978). Its mapped distribution largely reflects counties that have been intensively surveyed over the past two decades.

Diocious or autoicous. Capsules are usually abundant, mature from late summer to spring.

Fissidens pusillus was reinstated as a distinct species by Corley (1980), who used the shape of the leaf apex as a diagnostic character. However this is a variable character and *F. pusillus* is often identified as much by its habitat as by its morphology. *F. pusillus*-like plants on soil are particularly problematic. In its typical habitat by streams it can be confused with small forms of *F. crassipes* and this may have resulted in some erroneous records. Small plants with weakly bordered leaves from sandstone rocks in the beds of streams were previously recognised as *F. exiguus*, but appear to intergrade with *F. pusillus*.

European Southern-temperate. Most of Europe north to Iceland and C Finland. Macaronesia (Madeira), N Africa. Near East and Iran. N and C America. Its wider distribution is unclear because of taxonomic uncertainties.



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