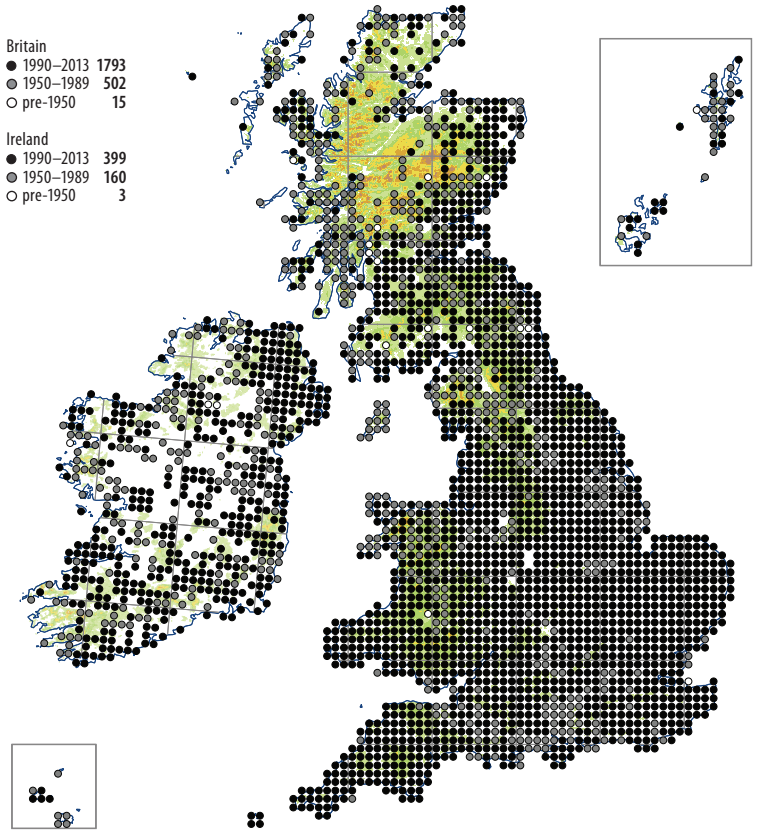
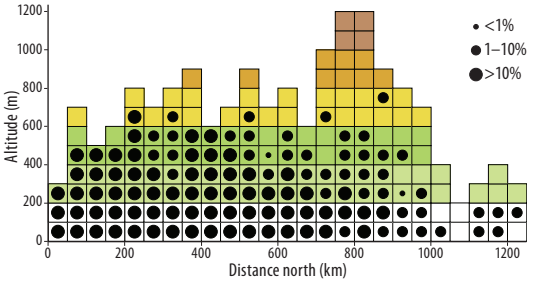
Bryum argenteum



A widespread and often common colonist on open disturbed soils and in rock, wall or pavement crevices, on damp concrete, at edges of tarmac roads, and on hard soil. It is especially characteristic of places receiving nutrients from animal excreta, dust, agricultural fertilisers and other sources, but also occurs away from human influences on montane ledges, sea cliffs, river banks, sand dunes, etc. It is frequent on most types of arable land but rarely occurs in large quantity. It is usually to be found wherever there is human habitation, being absent or scarce mainly on high ground in the mountains or on extensive peatlands. Factors contributing to its wide range apparently include a preference for nutrient-enriched substrates that support few other bryophyte species (e.g. bonfire sites), the potential for rapid colonisation from spores or bulbils, tolerance of both wet and arid sites, and frequent accidental dispersal by man. Indeed, small tufts often grow in crevices of old motor vehicles, providing an obvious but probably insignificant long-distance dispersal mechanism. Altitudinal range: 0–850 m.



Dioicous; capsules are frequent, maturing mainly from autumn to spring. Tubers and axillary gemmae are absent. Axillary bulbils are frequent; these sometimes grade into caducous branchlets or flagelliform branches, which presumably also function as propagules. Gemmae occur on the transient protonema (Pressel *et al.,* 2007).

Longton (1981) studied infraspecific variation in morphology and physiology of *Bryum argenteum* on a global scale; he established that var. *lanatum* is of doubtful taxonomic value because the excurrent nerve was not maintained in cultivation.

Circumpolar Wide-boreal. The broadly defined species occurs almost throughout Europe and in all continents, including Antarctica, extending to remote oceanic islands, and from the Arctic to the tops of high tropical mountains. Hedderson & Longton (1999) found wide variation in DNA sequences, suggesting that several cryptic species may be involved.

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