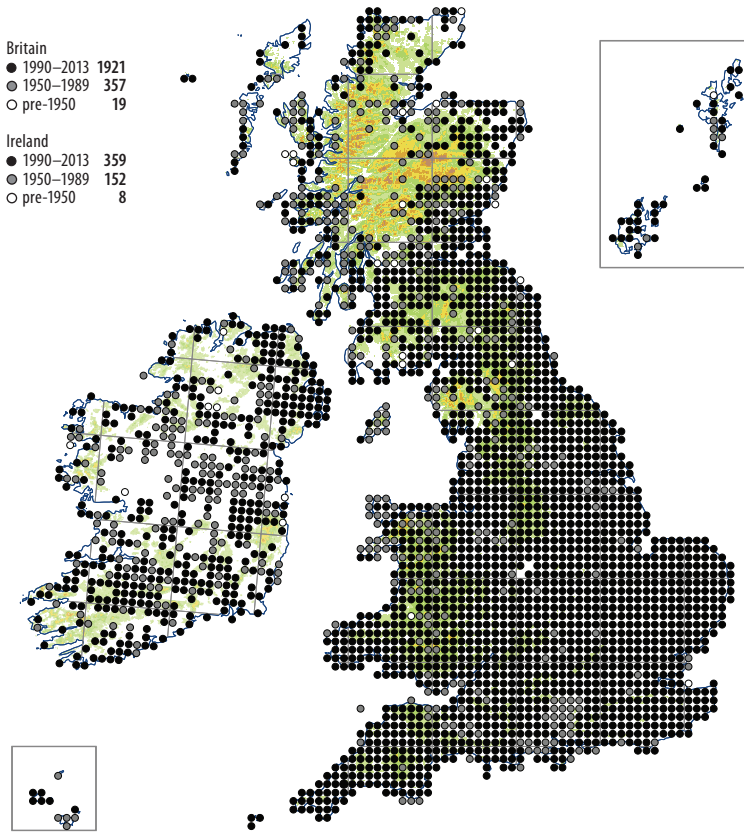


Amblystegium serpens



A slender moss forming flat and sometimes extensive mats on a wide range of moist substrates, sometimes in exposed places but more often where there is shade or shelter. It is typical of surfaces that retain moisture, including dead wood and the roots and bases of trees, as well as rocks, stones, old walls and soil. In sheltered places it colonises the trunks and branches of a wide range of trees and shrubs, especially those with soft bark such as elder and willows. It grows on many rock types ranging from calcareous to mildly acid, including chalk, limestone, flints, sandstone, flagstone, concrete and brick, but it is generally absent from harder rocks and tends to favour nutrient-rich sites. It is regularly present in damp woodland and carr, but is also common in villages and around habitations. Old thatch is a more unusual habitat. Coastal forms occur on stable sand dunes, in the upper saltmarsh zone, by brackish pools,

and on cliff-top soil (especially over basic rocks). Altitudinal range: 0–625 m.

Autoicous; capsules are common, except in saltmarshes and dunes, maturing over a period of several months from spring to late summer.

Fritsch (1991) reports large cytological variation within *Amblystegium serpens*, based on polyploidy. Only var. *salinum* is currently recognised as distinct in Britain and Ireland, occurring mainly in saline, coastal habitats, but its status is uncertain. Bosaquet (2010) reports that it is convincingly different from var. *serpens* in Pembrokeshire. It is not mapped separately here.

Circumpolar Boreo-temperate. Widespread in Europe, north to Iceland, Svalbard and Arctic Russia, south to Crete but rare in the Mediterranean lowlands. Azores, N Africa. Turkey and the Near East. Arctic and temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere south to India, Taiwan and Mexico. S America. C Africa (Kenya, Uganda). Australia, New Zealand. Reports from subantarctic islands probably belong to *Cratoneuropsis relaxa* (Hook. f. & Wilson) M. Fleisch ex Broth.

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