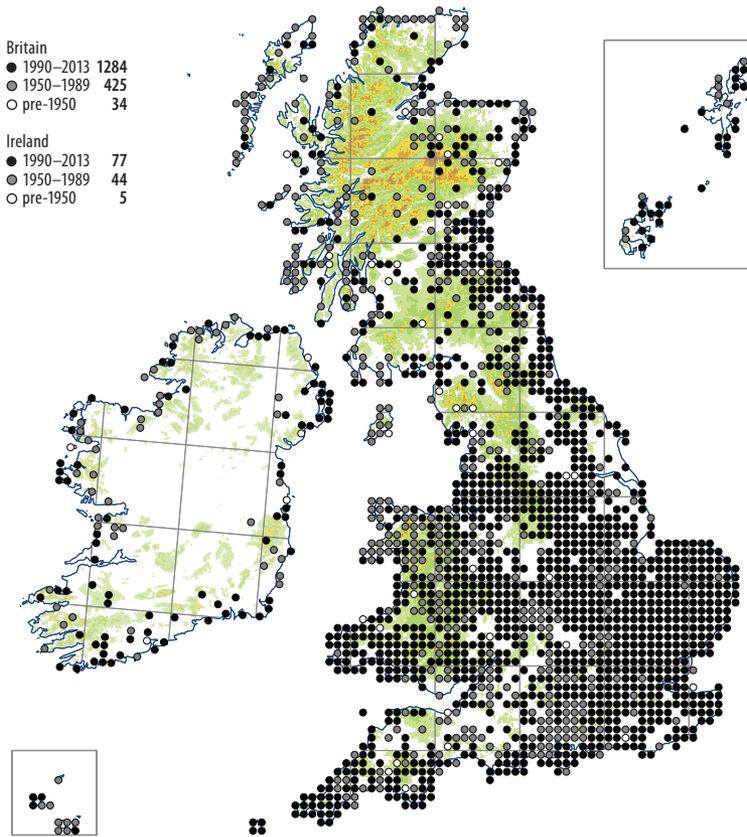


Brachythecium albicans



A plant of neutral or acid, base-deficient, usually sandy or gravelly soils in unshaded situations. It is particularly prominent in open acid *Agrostis-Festuca* grassland where associates include *Ceratodon purpureus*, *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Polytrichum piliferum*. At the edge of moorland it may occur in well-drained turf over somewhat peaty soils. It is also characteristic of certain types of thin, stony, slightly leached, calcareous soils in Breckland, associated with *Barbula* spp., *Didymodon* spp. and *Dicranum scoparium*, in conditions where the relatively continental climate leads to summer drought. Likewise it occurs in thin turf on leached soil over limestone and other basic rocks. On the coast, it reaches its maximum abundance on sand dunes, being tolerant of low rates of deposition of wind-blown sand, and is often found with *Syntrichia ruralis* var. *ruraliformis*. It also occurs on wall tops, on sandy heaths, in quarries and on

mine waste, and sometimes in weedy habitats by gravelly tracks and roadsides. Altitudinal range: 0–680 m.

Records have increased in ruderal habitats in Britain, but apparently not in Ireland.

Diocious; capsules are rare, maturing from autumn to winter.

Coverage was patchy in the 1991–1994 Atlas but is now much more complete, at least in the southern half of Britain. Its absence from the central parts of Ireland is striking, reflecting the scarcity of light, non-calcareous soils there.

Circumpolar Boreo-temperate. In Europe extending north to Iceland, N Fennoscandia and Arctic Russia, and south to the mountains of the Mediterranean region. Macaronesia, N Africa. Turkey. Incompletely circumboreal, absent from much of Siberia, and in N America mainly in the west, perhaps introduced in the north-east. Australia and New Zealand (possibly introduced).

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