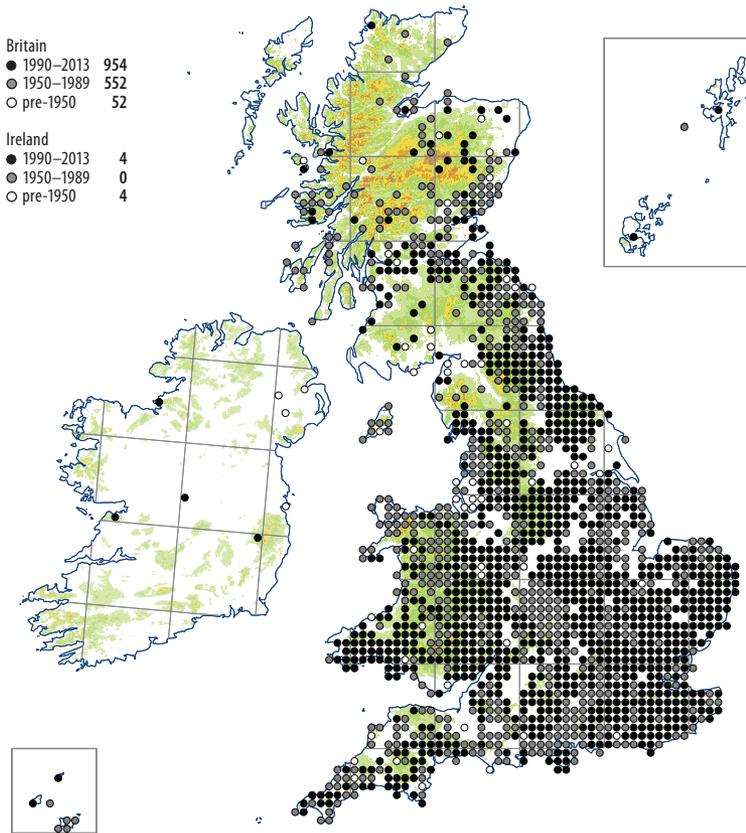


Brachytheciastrum velutinum



This species of well-drained, shaded habitats is common both in calcareous districts and in areas dominated by sands and gravels. A typical habitat is on tree bases, stumps and logs in woodland, with *Amblystegium serpens* and *Rhynchostegium confertum*; as an epiphyte it occurs on the bark of a wide range of trees, commonly ash, elder, elm and willow. It is frequently found on bare, firm soil and rock in a variety of sheltered and shaded places, on banks, among roots under trees, beside lanes, hedges, streams and tracks, and in churchyards. Although often found where the substrate is leached or slightly acid, it also occurs in base-rich conditions, being recorded on soil on rock ledges on limestone, on concrete and on mortared walls. It extends into towns and cities, often growing with *Bryum capillare*, *Grimmia pulvinata* and *Tortula muralis* in dry, quite exposed places on walls, stones and brickwork. There are colonies

growing directly on lead and zinc mine spoil in N, mid and S Wales. Altitudinal range: 0–545 m.

The records show a significant declining trend, for reasons that are unclear. It is often likened to *Rhynchostegium confertum*, and this source of confusion may have caused it to be over-recorded in the past, as in Cornwall (Holyoak, 2012). It is patchy in its occurrence and less predictable than *R. confertum*. Nevertheless its rarity in Ireland is remarkable, and it is perhaps overlooked there.

Autoicous; capsules are common, mature in winter and spring. *Brachytheciastrum velutinum* was one of the species found by Heinken *et al.* (2001) to be transported in the fur and hooves of deer and wild boar in forests in Germany.

Circumpolar Temperate. In Europe from Iceland, Scandinavia and Arctic Russia south to the Mediterranean region, where it is frequent in the mountains. Macaronesia, N Africa, SW Asia, Caucasus. Widespread in the Northern Hemisphere, from the Arctic (rare) to Afghanistan, S Siberia, southern China, Japan, and in N America south to Oregon and New England. Reported also from C Africa, Campbell Island and New Zealand. However some reports may belong to segregate species.

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