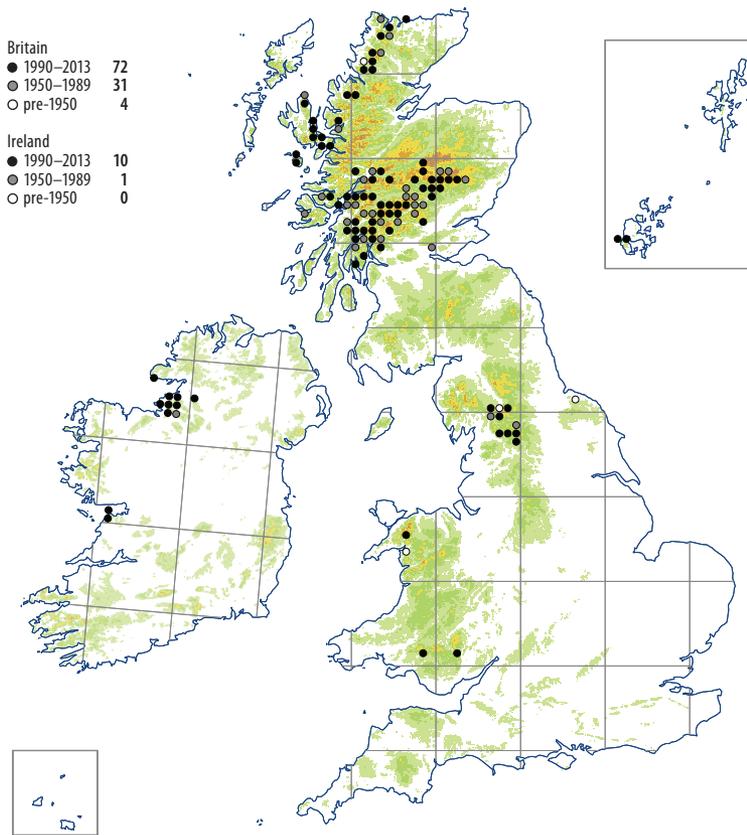


# Orthothecium rufescens



One of our most striking mosses, this is a large shiny pleurocarp that occurs most frequently as dense wine-red silky patches on damp, periodically flushed, north- to east-facing steep, often vertical sheltered montane cliff faces of limestone, calcareous mica-schist, basalt, or other basic volcanic rocks. In these places it grows with a wide variety of other plants, including *Saxifraga aizoides*, *S. oppositifolia*, *Selaginella selaginoides*, *Anoetangium aestivum*, *Blindia acuta*, and a large number of rare and scarce Arctic-alpine calcicoles. It also grows on the damp, shaded walls of low-lying limestone ravines, growing with *Asplenium viride*, *Cystopteris fragilis*, *Aneura pinguis*, *Preissia quadrata*, *Ctenidium molluscum*, *Fissidens dubius*, *Gymnostomum aeruginosum* and *Hymenostylium recurvirostrum*, and on more exposed wet limestone exposures in the west. At a recently discovered site in the western Brecon Beacons it

occurs on upland Old Red Sandstone. More rarely it occurs on the sides of turfy tufaceous hummocks in calcareous rich fens, springs and stony flushes, associated with *Thalictrum alpinum*, *Tofieldia pusilla*, *Leiocolea bantriensis*, *L. collaris* and *Palustriella commutata*. Although restricted in its distribution, *Orthothecium rufescens* can often occur in quantity and form a conspicuous element of the flora, as it does in the Dartry Mountains of W Ireland and parts of the Craven Dales in Yorkshire. Altitudinal range: 55–1100 m.

Dioicous; capsules are rare, mature in summer.

European Boreo-arctic montane. W, C and N Europe, including Iceland and NW Russia, and in the mountains of the northern Mediterranean region, south to northern Greece. Caucasus. Japan; records from Siberia belong to *O. chryseon* (Schwägr.) Schimp., according to Ignatov *et al.* (2006). N America (W Canada, Alaska), Greenland.

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