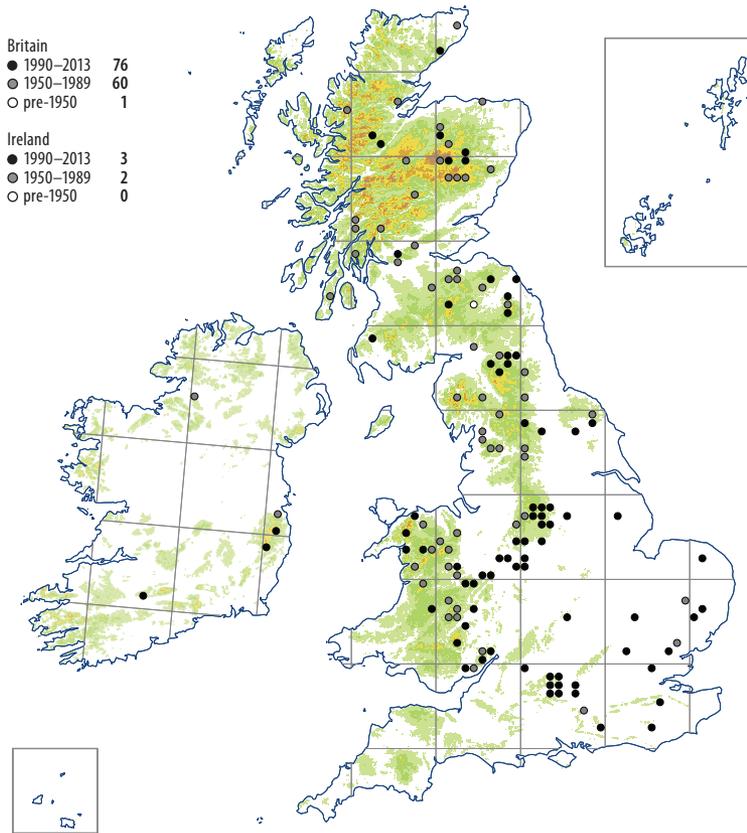


Plagiothecium laetum



A calcifuge moss of shaded habitats, often found as flat patches on stumps, rotten logs and tree roots and bases in broadleaved woodland, less often under conifers. Most records are from trees with acid bark, especially oak and birch, but is also recorded from various other species including spruce, sycamore, hawthorn, ash, and the stools of coppiced hazel and sweet chestnut. It is occasionally found in wet woodland at the base of alders and willows. Less often it occurs on acid and peaty humus on shaded woodland banks, among siliceous rocks (rarely on old walls), and on the steep sides of gullies and ravines; in the mountains it is recorded from block scree and on steep rocky slopes. Altitudinal range: 15–500 m.

Although collected in 1928 it was not recognised as a distinct species in Britain for another 30 years (Crundwell, 1959b).

Records peaked around 1990 and it is possible that, like some other *Plagiothecium* species, it benefited from formerly high levels of acid deposition.

Autoicous; capsules are frequent, mature from autumn to winter. Fusiform axillary gemmae are occasionally produced on leaf tips and in leaf axils.

Plagiothecium laetum is very closely related to *P. curvifolium* and occasional plants appear to be intermediate and are difficult to identify. Some authors do not regard them as separate species and their status is unlikely to be clarified without molecular analysis. *P. laetum* can also be confused with small forms of *P. denticulatum*, and there are likely to be some errors on the map.

Circumpolar Boreal-montane. Most of Europe, from Scandinavia and Arctic Russia south to Portugal, northern Spain, Italy and the Balkan mountains. Turkey, Caucasus. Defined broadly, *P. laetum* is widespread across northern and temperate Asia, Japan, Greenland and N America (south to California and New Mexico).

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