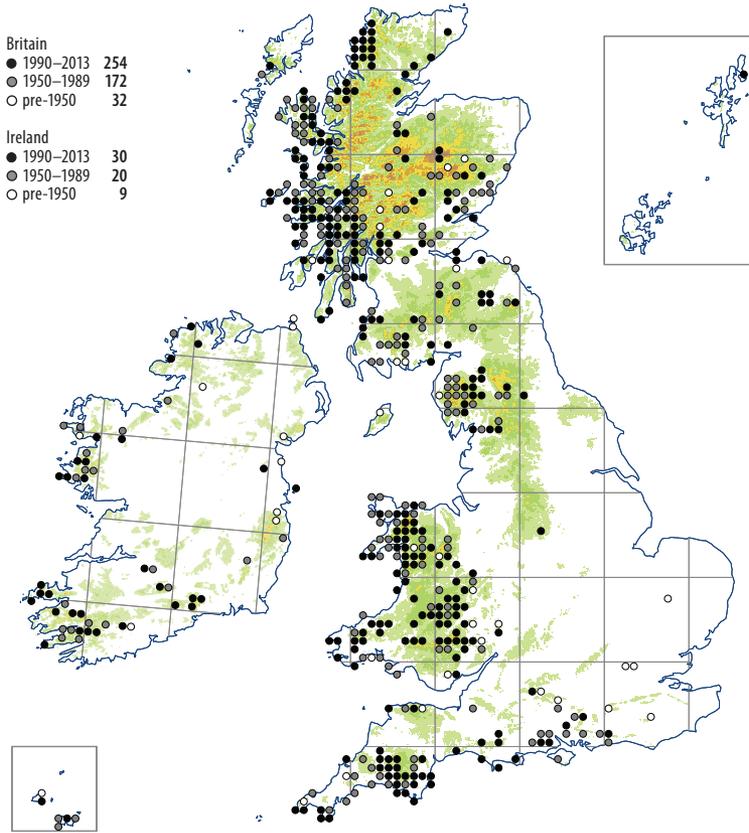


# Pterogonium gracile



Characteristically growing on the sloping or vertical sides of rocks and boulders in sheltered but open to lightly or moderately shaded localities, sometimes by water on dry rocks in humid microclimates. It is most frequent on hard, basic igneous and metamorphic rocks such as basalt, dolerite, gabbro and calcareous tuff. It is, for example, locally abundant on shaded serpentine on the Lizard Peninsula, growing in pure patches or mixed with *Frullania microphylla*, *F. tamarisci*, *Porella arboris-vitae*, *P. obtusata*, *Radula lindenberghiana*, *Homalothecium sericeum*, *Hypnum cupressiforme* and *Zygodon viridissimus*. It also grows on acid rocks on the coast, but only rarely on calcareous sedimentary rocks or in turf over calcareous sand. At its isolated sites in the Peak District it is confined to non-calcareous dolomitised limestone. *Pterogonium* is also found as an epiphyte on the bases or trunks of trees, especially in parkland and on river

banks. It is characteristic of large, mature trees, notably ash, oak and formerly elm, but is also recorded on the base-rich bark of species such as elder, elm, poplar and sycamore. In the New Forest it is most frequent on ancient beeches, where it is sometimes abundant on individual trees (Paton, 1961). Altitudinal range: 5–700 m.

It has decreased in the south and east of its range because of a general decline in ancient trees and the loss of elm to Dutch Elm Disease. It is slow to colonise new host trees, and was probably inhibited by air pollution when SO<sub>2</sub> levels were high.

Diocious; capsules are very scarce, mature in late winter and early spring.

Submediterranean-Subatlantic. S and W Europe, extending north to SW Norway and Estonia; common in the Mediterranean countries at moderate altitudes. Macaronesia, N Africa. Turkey and the Near East, Armenia, Azerbaijan. C and S Africa. Western N America.

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