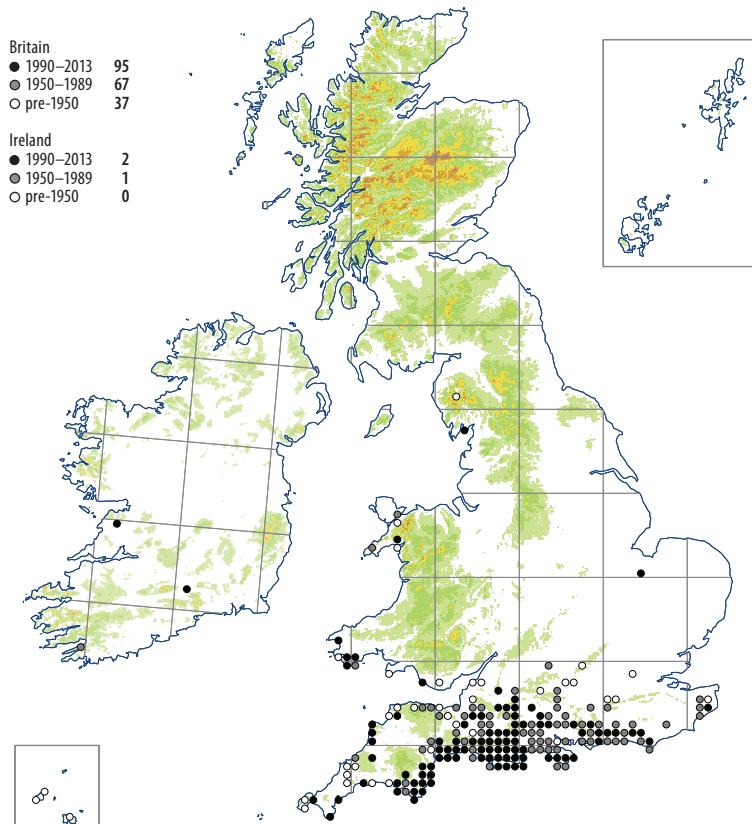


Leptodon smithii

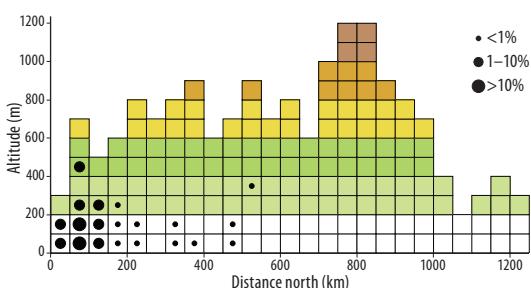


An epiphyte of tree boles in woods, parks, churchyards, on roadsides and in hedgerows, also occurring on branches of shrubs in laid hedges. It is most frequent on hosts with basic bark, commonest on ash, maple and sycamore and formerly on elm, and also recorded from beech, elder, hawthorn, lime, oak, poplar, rhododendron, sallow, spindle and wisteria. In 2012 it was found well outside its previous British range growing in small quantity on a Conference Pear tree in an orchard in Norfolk. It is notably tolerant of dry shade, and is thus able to grow on the undersides of leaning trees. *Homalothecium sericeum*, *Leucodon sciuroides*, *Neckera complanata*, *Orthotrichum lyellii*, *Syntrichia laevipila* and *Zygodon viridissimus* are characteristic associates. It is found rarely on walls (including concrete and flint) and calcareous rocks. Altitudinal range: 0–190 m.

It has decreased along the northern edge of its range, though it has recently been found near Grange-over-Sands on Morecambe Bay, its northernmost extant world locality. Air pollution may have contributed to its decline at its eastern localities, and many populations on elm trees were lost when their host trees succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease. Low fertility may have reduced its powers of dispersal, but the population in Norfolk shows that it still has the ability to colonise new habitats.

Dioicous; sex organs are frequent, capsules are rare, and apparently less common than formerly, mature in spring. In Dorset, at the centre of its distribution, Hill & Edwards (2003) reported that capsules had not been recorded since 1952, though they were subsequently found in 2007. Greene (1958) suggested that production of sporophytes was limited by spatial separation of the sexes.

Mediterranean-Atlantic. Frequent in the Mediterranean countries, both on rocks and on trees, and extending north along the Atlantic coast to northern England; outlying localities in southern C Europe and on the Black Sea coast. Macaronesia (Canary Islands, Madeira), N Africa. SW Asia (including Arabia), Georgia, Azerbaijan. Southern S America. E and S Africa. SE Australia and New Zealand. Its European and world distributions are mapped by Pócs (1960).



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