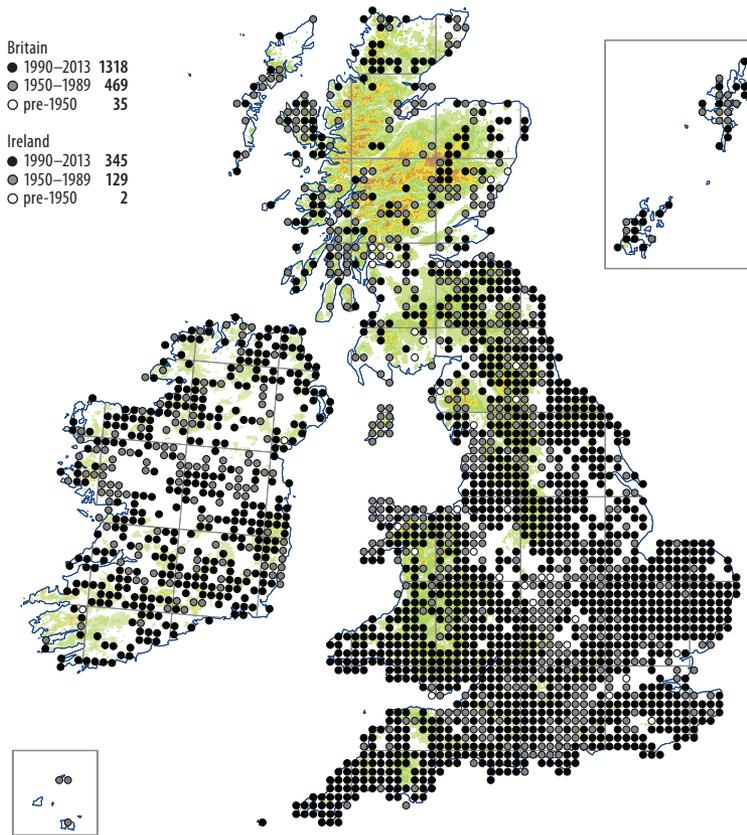


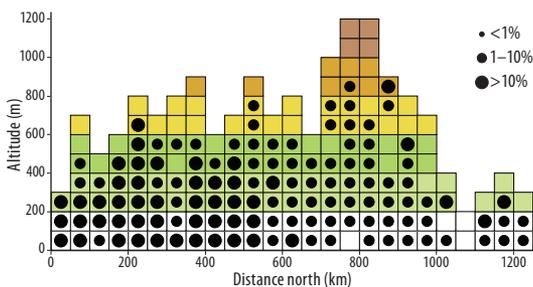
Dicranella varia



A common plant of open habitats on a wide range of neutral or basic substrates. It is particularly characteristic of bare chalk, but occurs on a wide range of other soils, including clays, marls and loams, less often on sandy soils. It occurs on chalk downland, in disused quarries, on river and stream banks, coastal slopes, lanesides, tracks and paths and generally on bare patches or dumps of soil. It is fairly tolerant of shade and may occur on rutted tracks and bare places in woodland. Tolerant of heavy-metal concentrations, it is sometimes abundant on metalliferous mine waste. It is occasional in arable fields, typically in assemblages that are characteristic of basic soils in eastern regions (Preston *et al.*, 2010). It may extend into otherwise acid habitats along roads and tracks, and has even been recorded as an associate of *Aongstroemia longipes* at Lochan na Lairige on Ben Lawers. Altitudinal range: 0–580 m.

Dioicous; capsules are common, mature in winter. Rhizoidal tubers are frequent on calcareous soils, but often absent elsewhere. Gemmae are produced on the protonema in culture (Pressel & Duckett, unpublished).

Some specimens approach *Dicranella howei*, a weakly defined species which largely replaces *D. varia* in the lowlands of S Europe. Intermediate plants were reported by Crundwell & Nyholm (1977) as possible hybrids, and Bosanquet (2010) has described populations in Pembrokeshire in which the leaf characters match *D. howei* but the only fruiting plants present had capsules of the *varia* type, suggesting that sporophyte characters may be more variable than supposed. An unusual plant growing in dense turfs by a spring on a clay undercliff in Dorset appears to belong to the *D. varia* aggregate (Bosanquet, 2012).



Circumpolar Boreo-temperate. Europe from Svalbard southwards. Macaronesia, N Africa. SW Asia. However many of the older southern reports probably belong to *D. howei*. In a broad sense, *D. varia* is widespread across the Northern Hemisphere, south to N India and SE China, but rare in Siberia and the Russian Far East; Japan. N and C America, Caribbean, Andes of Colombia and Peru. South Sandwich islands.

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