Photo Guide to common Churchyard Lichens

Version 3.3, September 2025

This document is intended to help those new to churchyard lichens to recognise the most common species found in lowland English churchyards. As well as the photos there are brief descriptions and notes on where each species is likely to be found. These are not comprehensive, and you will find species not included here, so you are advised to refer to other resources such as those on the BLS website and Frank Dobson's book Lichens: An Illustrated Guide to the British and Irish Species (7th edition, 2018), for further information when needed.

This document was prepared for the BLS by Simon King, based on research by Janet Simkin. Photos by Simon King unless attributed. Chemical tests table courtesy of Sue Thomas.

The selection of species is based on the number of records from churchyards and burial grounds held in the BLS database. You are encouraged to add your records to this, to support research and lichen conservation in this important habitat.

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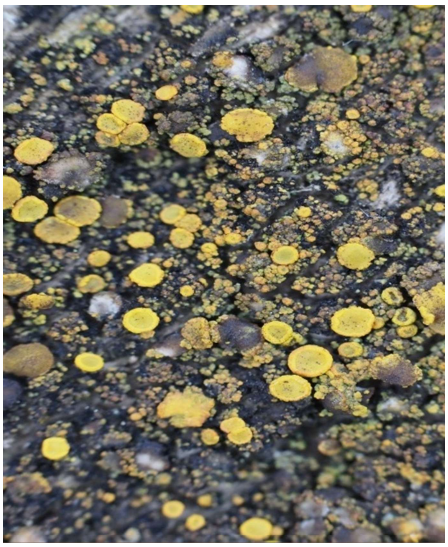
The names in () are the previous names for these species, as used in older books.

Chemical spot tests and ID difficulty

	Taxon name	Reaction with C	Reaction with K	ID difficulty	BLS no.
1	*Candelariella vitellina*	C-	K-	1	298
2	*Candelariella aurella*	C-	K-	1	291
3	*Variospora flavescens*	C-	K+ crimson/purple	1	259
4	*Calogaya pusilla*	C-	K+ crimson/purple	1	277
5	*Flavoplaca flavocitrina* *Flavoplaca arcis* *Flavoplaca limonia*	C- C- C-	K+ crimson/purple K+ crimson/purple K+ crimson/purple	2 3 1	2315 2442 2607
6	*Flavoplaca oasis* *Athallia holocarpa s. lat.*	C- C-	K+ crimson/purple K+ crimson/purple	2 1	2461 261
7	*Kuettlingeria teicholyta*	C-	K+ crimson/purple	1	281
8	*Protoblastenia rupestris*	C-	K+ crimson (apothecia)	1	1189
9	*Circinaria calcarea*	C-	K-	1	103
10	*Tephromela atra*	C-	K+ yellow	1	630
11	*Lecanora campestris*	C-	K+ yellow	2	635
12	*Lecanora polytropa* *Lecanora conizaeoides*	C- C-	K+ weak yellow K- or K+ weak yl	1 2	667 643
13	*Protoparmeliopsis muralis*	C-	K-	2	661
14	*Myriolecis dispersa*	C-	K-	2	646
15	*Myriolecis albescens*	C-	K-	2	627
16	*Lecidella stigmatea*	C-	K+ yellow or K-	2	803
17	*Lecidella scabra*	C+ orange (soredia)	K+ yellow	2	802
18	*Psilolechia lucida*	C-	K-	1	1200
19	*Lepraria incana*	C-	K- or areas K+ purple	1	820
20	*Diploicia canescens*	C-	K+ yellow	1	491
21	*Acarospora fuscata*	C+ red	K-	1	10
22	*Diplotomma alboatrum*	C-	K+ yellow →red	2	496
23	*Buellia aethalea*	C-	K+ yellow→red or K-	1	200
24	*Porpidia tuberculosa*	C-	K-	2	572
25	*Verrucaria nigrescens*	C-	K-	1	1510
26	*Verrucaria viridula*	C-	K-	2	1518
27	*Physcia adscendens*	C-	K+ yellow	1	1112
28	*Physcia tenella*	C-		1	1120
29	*Physcia caesia*	C-	K+ yellow	1	1114
30	*Phaeophyscia orbicularis*	C-	K- but orange patches K+ purple	1	1107
31	*Physconia grisea*	C-	K-	2	1127
32	*Xanthoria parietina*	C-	K+ crimson/purple	1	1530

1) *Candelariella vitellina*

This and the next species both test K-, distinguishing them from most of the other orange crustose lichens. *C. vitellina* has large irregular granules, often clumped to form a thick crust. On nutrient-enriched siliceous rocks.



2) *Candelariella aurella*

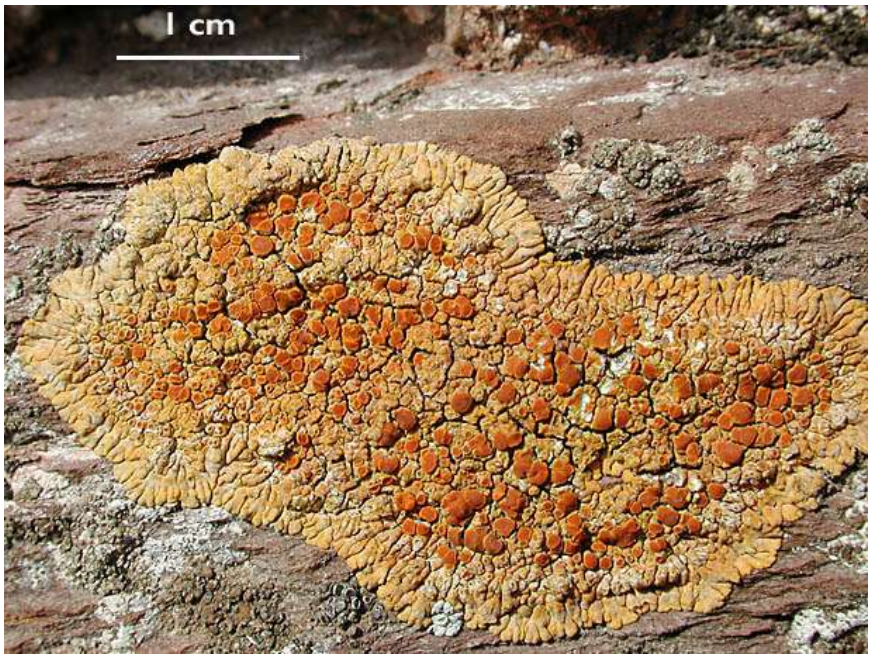
Mustard yellow, with a black prothallus, on nutrient-rich calcareous rocks and mortar. Pollution tolerant. K-. The *C. aurella* is the yellow in this photo, which also includes *Flavoplaca oasis*.

3) *Variospora flavescens* (*Caloplaca flavescens*)

Lobed, often with a whitish zone behind the lobes.

4) *Calogaya pusilla* (*Caloplaca saxicola* auct. br.)

Small (2cm), lobed and very pruinose. On hard calcareous rock in dry situations.



(photo courtesy of Frank Dobson)

5) *Flavoplaca flavocitrina (Caloplaca citrina s. lat.)*

This and the following similar species are all included in the *Caloplaca citrina aggregate* but are now recorded separately if possible.

F. flavocitrina is often quite scattered, and is found low on vertical surfaces) in moist, shaded situations on substrates with some basic influence (including sandstones).

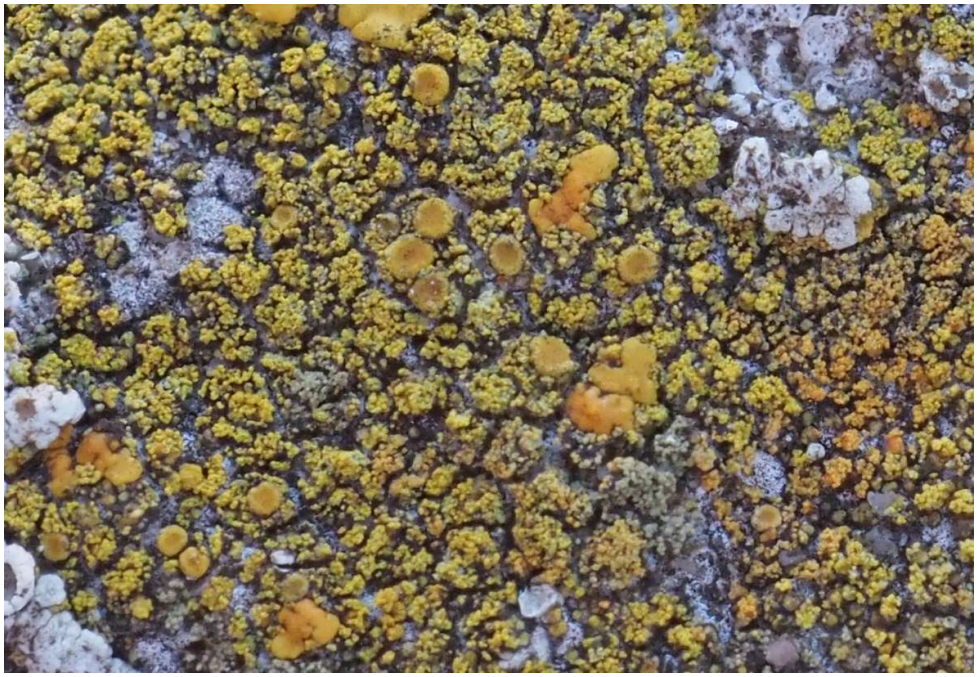
(photo courtesy of Paul Cannon)

Flavoplaca arcis (Caloplaca citrinia s. lat.)

Areoles edged with large blastidia, *coarser* than *flavocitrina*. On limestone and cement.

Flavoplaca limonia (*Caloplaca citrina s. lat.*)

Convex areoles covered in soredia giving it a more fluffy appearance, creamy yellow (scrambled eggs). Usually on shaded N or E facing walls, on mortar or limestone.



(photo courtesy of Paul Cannon)

6) *Flavoplaca oasis* (*Caloplaca oasis*)

Usually on calcareous substrates such as limestone, marble, concrete or mortar, often over *Bagliettoa calciseda*.

(photo courtesy of Sue Knight)

Athallia holocarpa (*Caloplaca holocarpa*)

This very similar species is shown below for comparison. It is usually found on siliceous (acid) rocks such as granite, sandstone or slate.

(photo courtesy of Paul Cannon)

7) *Kuettlingeria teicholyta (Caloplaca teicholyta)*

White-grey, slightly lobed around the edge, sorediate in the centre.

(photo courtesy of Frank Dobson)

8) *Protoblastenia rupestris*

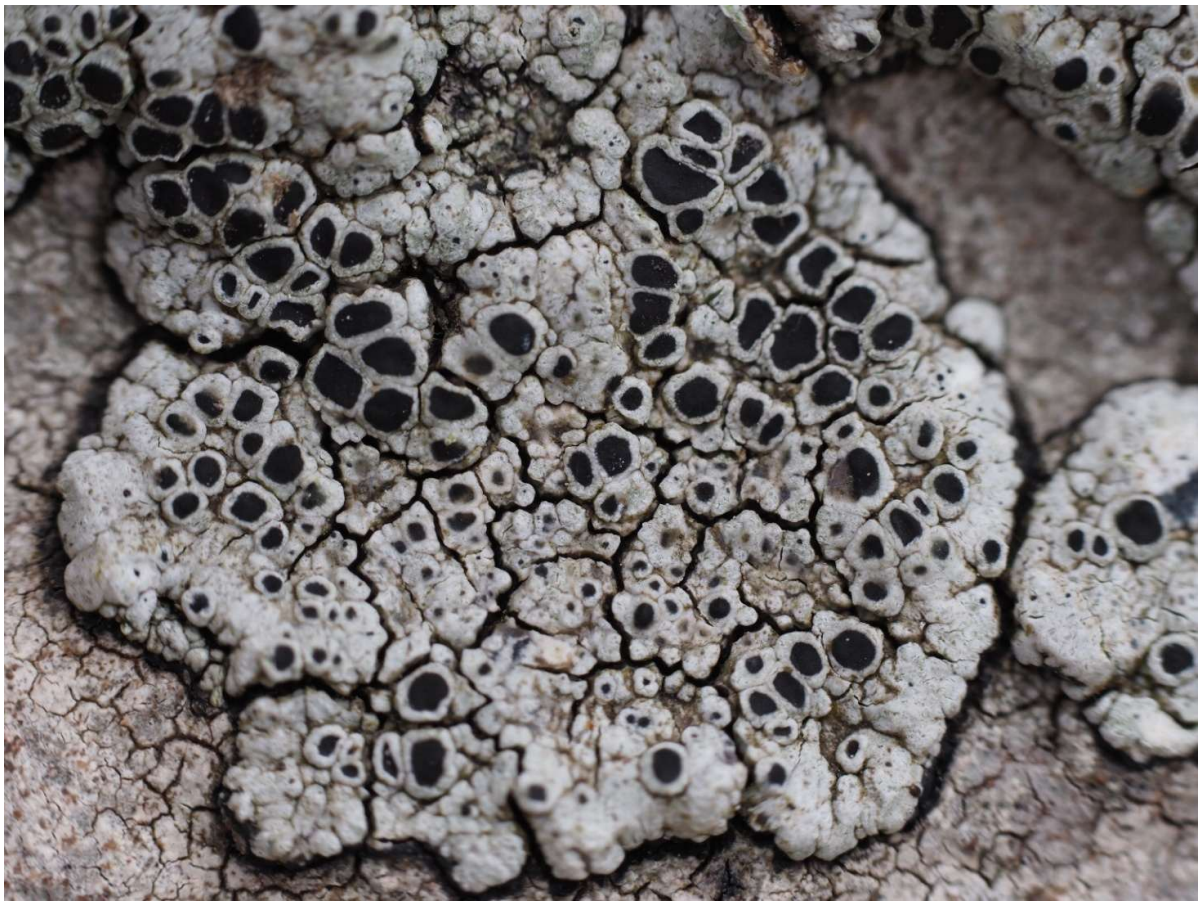
Thallus grey-brown, apothecia convex and orange.

9) *Circinaria calcarea* (*Aspicilia calcarea*)

Pale grey or white, , smooth, with a zoned prothallus and irregular black apothecia. On hard limestone.

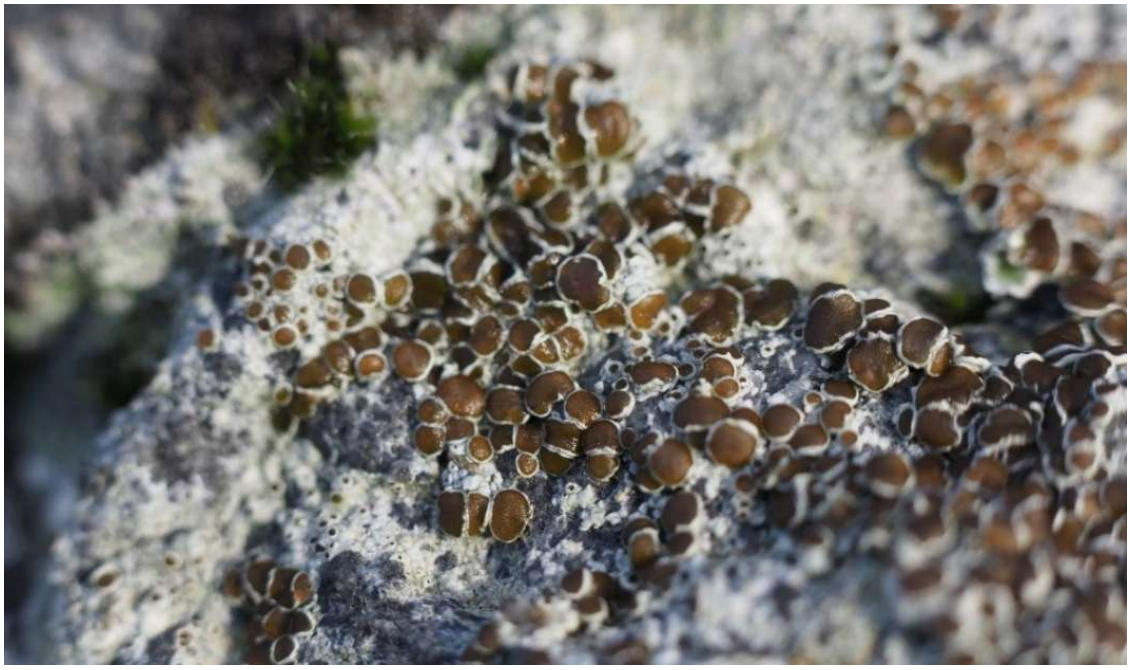
10) <u>Tephromela atra</u>

Light grey thallus with a dark prothallus, apothecia large with black disc and grey margin. On well-lit siliceous rock.



11) <u>Lecanora campestris</u>

Thallus grey with a white prothallus, sometimes very thin. Apothecia large with a brown disc and grey margin. On calcareous rocks including calcareous sandstones.



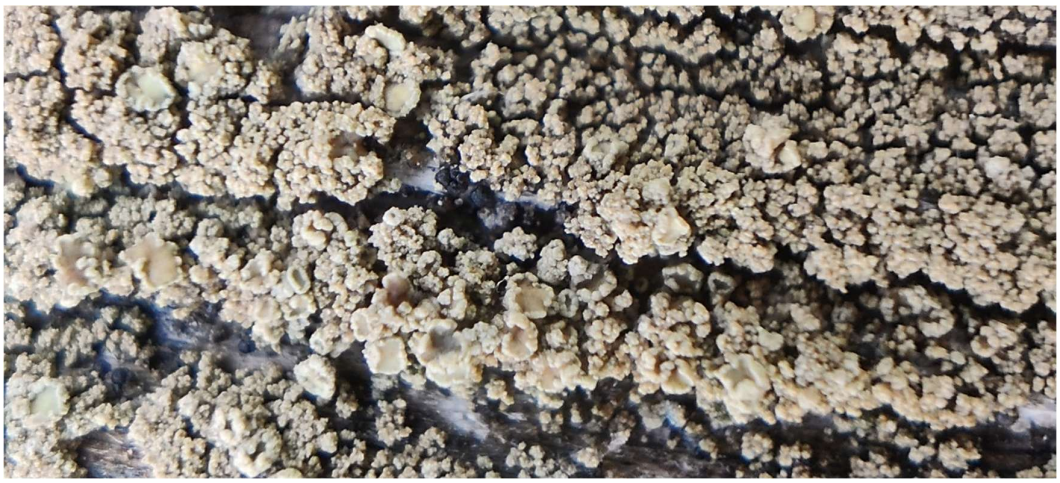
(lower photo courtesy of John Skinner)

12) *Lecanora polytropa*

Yellow-green with a dark prothallus, green-brown apothecia often cover much of the thallus. On siliceous rocks, sometimes on worked timber.

Lecanora conizaeoides

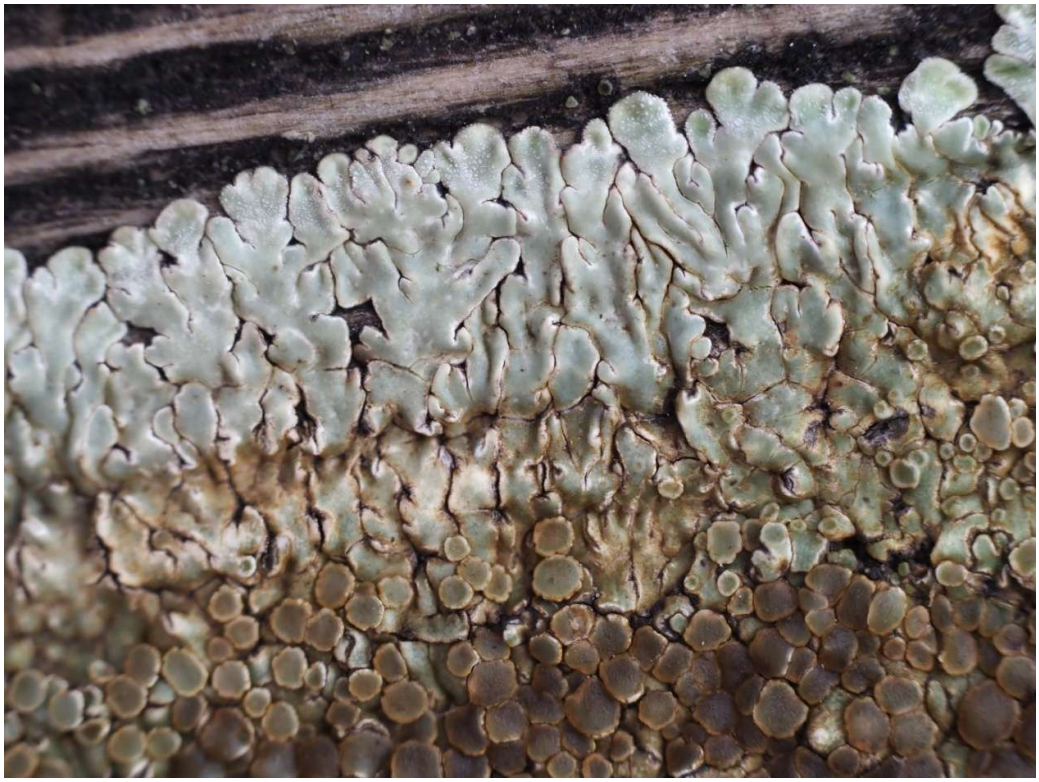
This similar species is very tolerant of the sulphur dioxide pollution associated with coal burning and used to be very common in churchyards, but it is rarely recorded now. It is included here for comparison.



(photo courtesy of Sue Thomas)

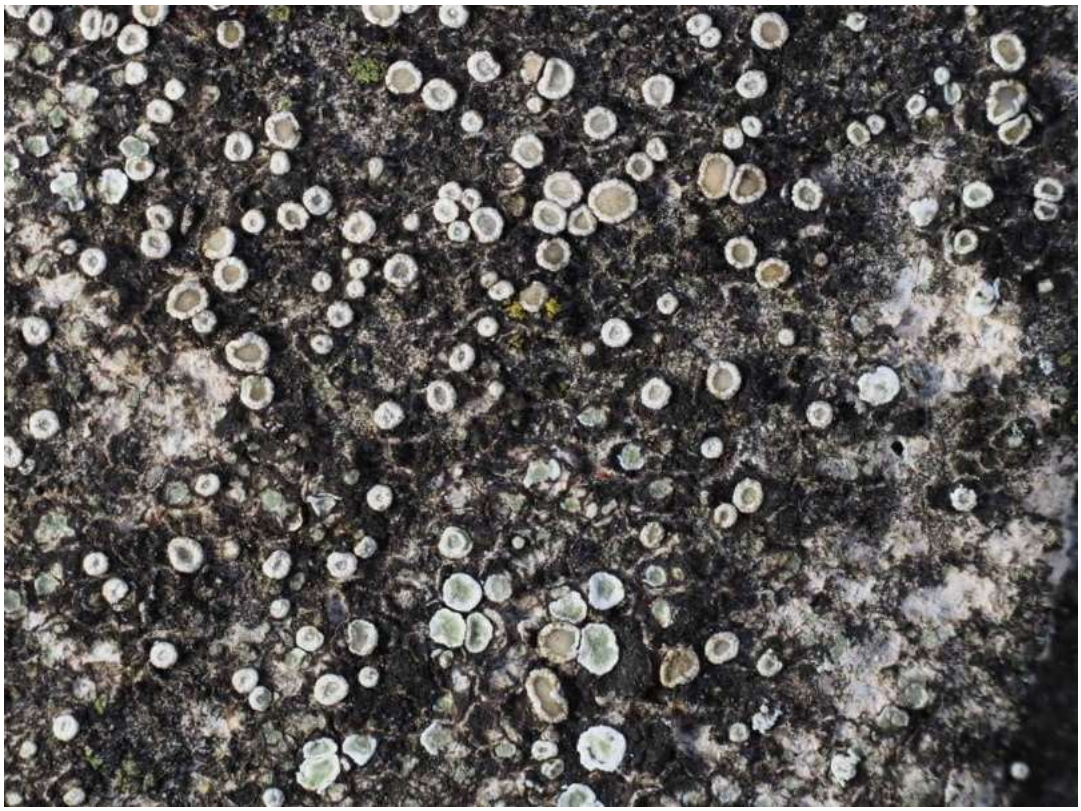
13) *Protoparmelia muralis* (*Lecanora muralis*)

Green-grey, lobed, with brown apothecia in the centre. Tolerant of pollution, nutrient enrichment and trampling, so often found on tarmac and paving.



14) <u>Myriolecis dispersa</u> (*<u>Lecanora dispersa</u>*)

Thallus thin, often all you see are the small scattered apothecia. Pollution tolerant, found on nutrient-rich basic substrates.



15) <u>Myriolecis albescens</u> (<u>Lecanora albescens</u>)

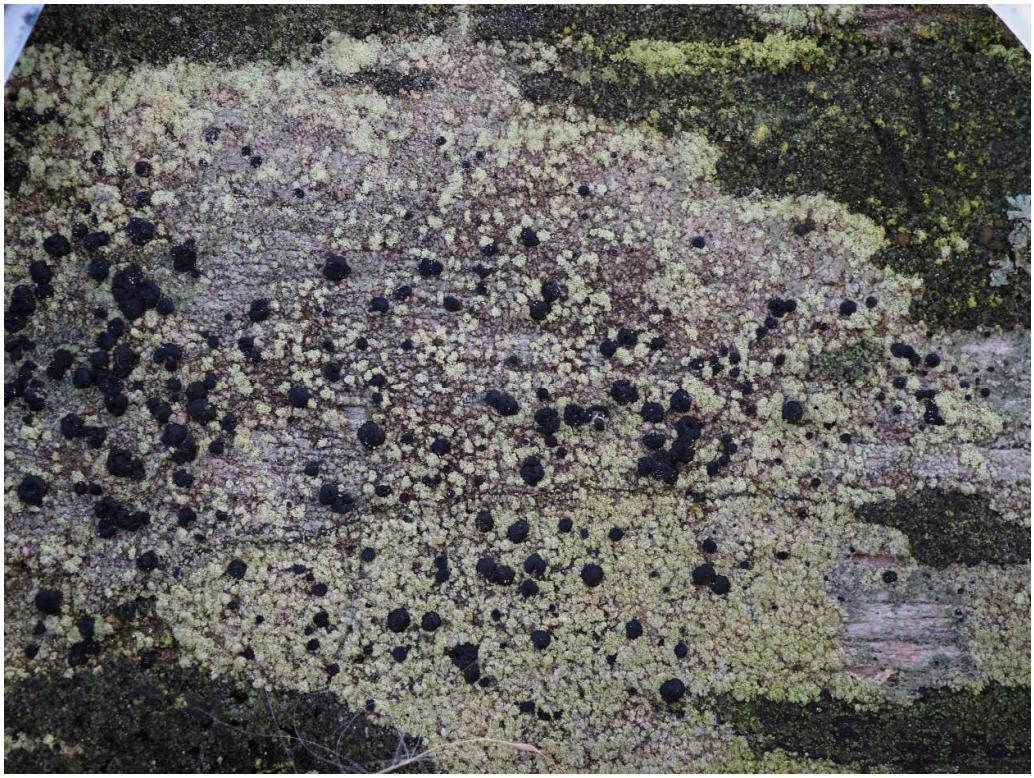
Thick white thallus, many pruinose apothecia. On calcareous rock in sunny situations.

16) *Lecidella stigmatea*

Thallus pale grey=brown but often hard to see, apothecia black. On more or less calcareous rocks and mortar.

17) <u>Lecidella scabra</u>

Thallus covered by green soredia, scratches pale green. Apothecia black, often absent. On hard acid rocks, sometimes on wood. C+orange.



18) <u>Psilolechia lucida</u>

Bright yellow-green. On sheltered, shaded rocks and brick in humid situations. May pick out the inscription on a headstone.

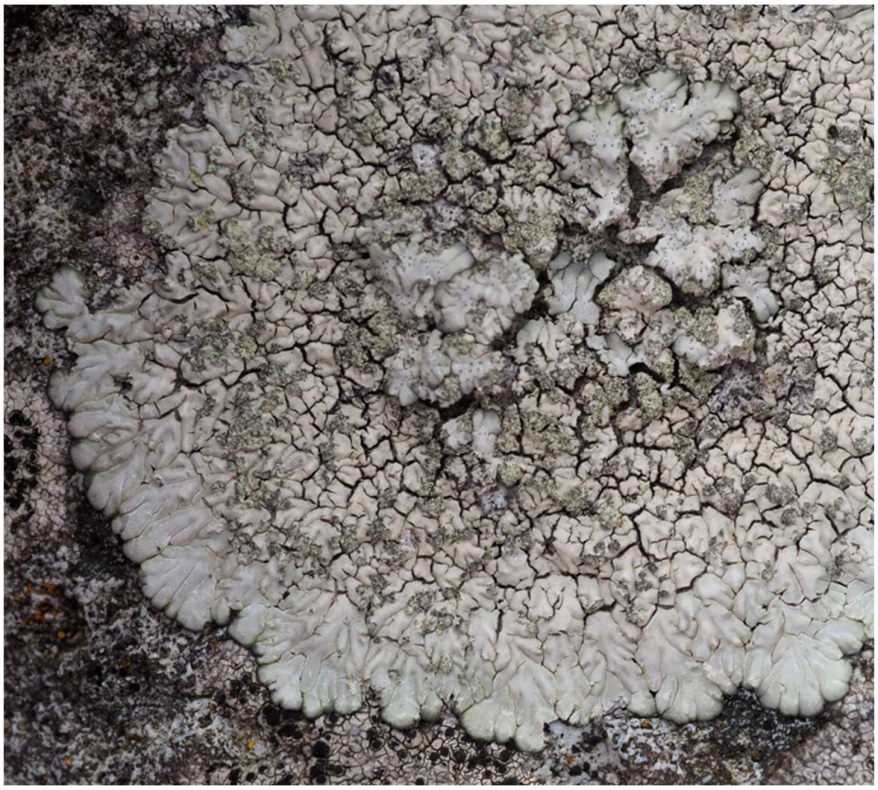
(photo courtesy of John Skinner)

19) <u>Lepraria incana</u>

Fluffy bluish-grey granules, common on shaded siliceous rock, soil, trees and mosses. Pollution tolerant. These photos are all of *Lepraria incana* s. str.

20) Diploicia canescens

Pale grey-white, thick, with convex pruinose lobes at the edges and darker soralia in the centre. On basic and nutrient-enriched stone and trees.

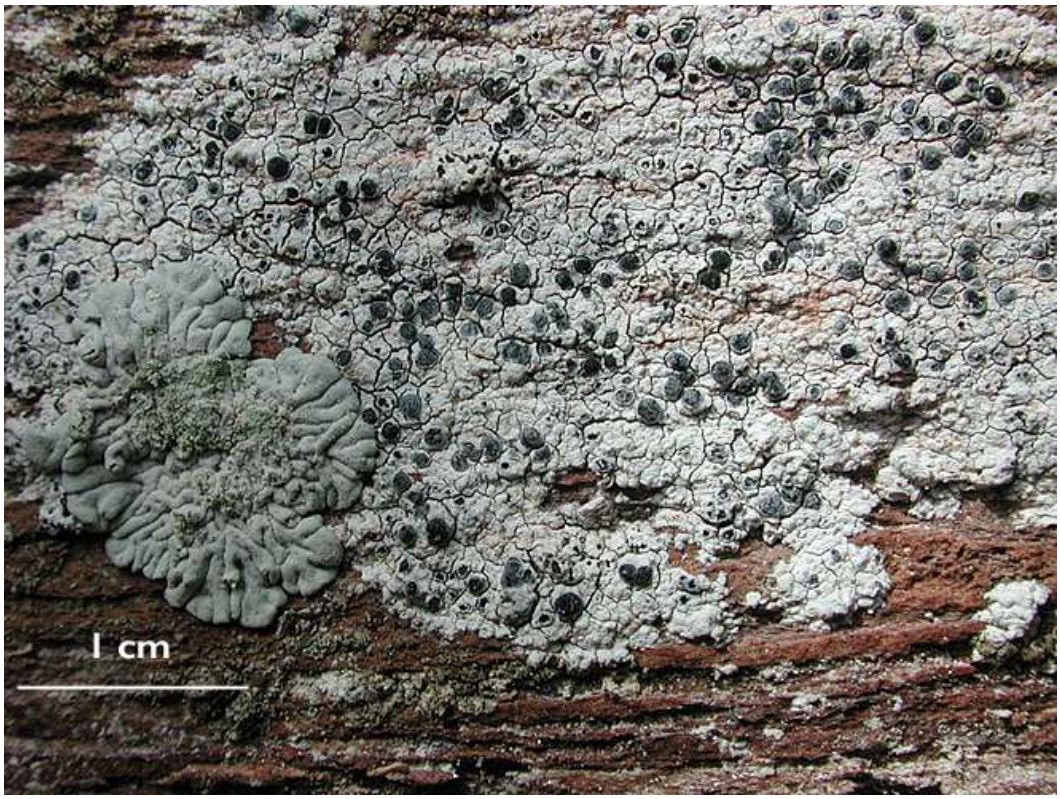


21) <u>Acarospora fuscata</u>

Dark brown “dried mud”, on nutrient-rich hard siliceous stone. Often on horizontal surfaces.

22) <u>Diplotomma alboatrum</u>

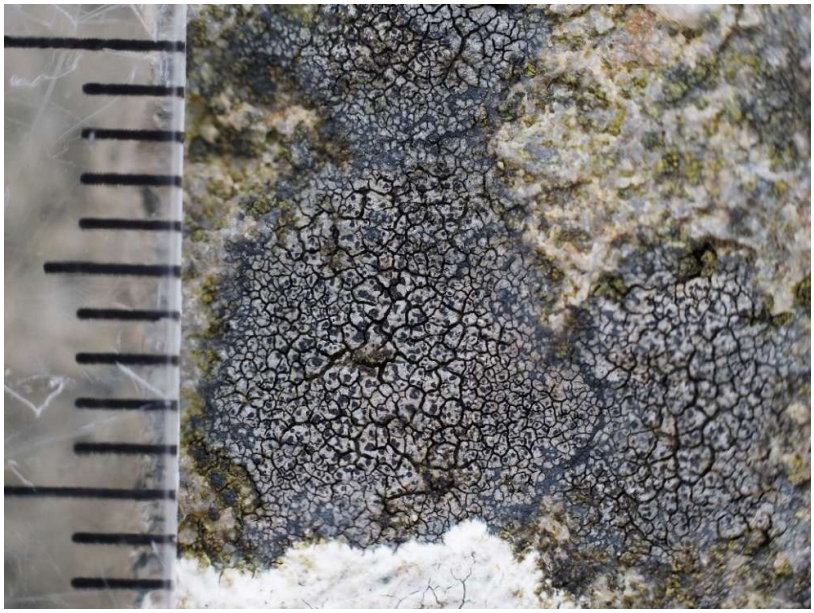
Pale grey-white, may be rough or smooth. Apothecia grey but very pruinose. On calcareous stone, mortar, basic bark and nutrient enriched trees, sometimes parasitic on "*Caloplaca*" species.



(photo courtesy of Frank Dobson)

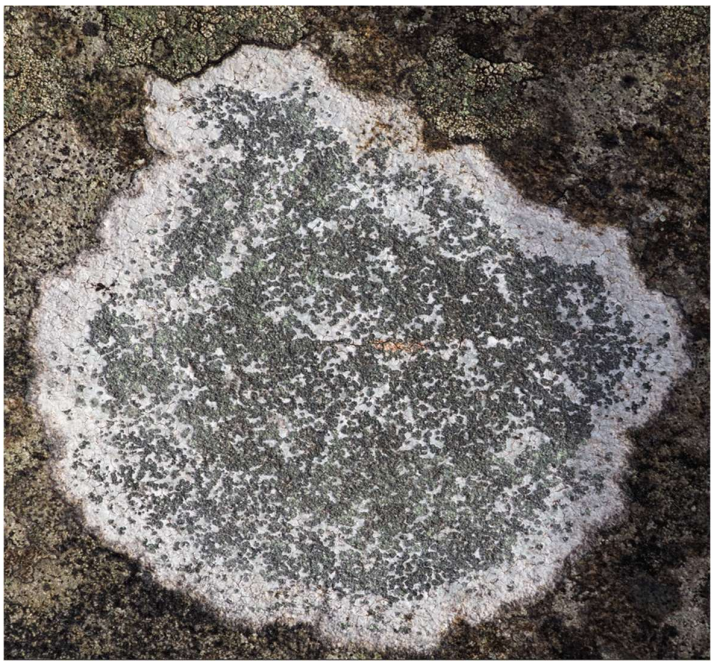
23) <u>Buellia aethalea</u>

Small grey-brown crusts with a dark prothallus, often in mosaic with other crusts. Apothecia very small, black. On well-lit siliceous rock.



24) <u>Porpidia tuberculosa</u>

Pale grey-white with a narrow dark prothallus, dark bluish-grey punctiform soralia scattered over much of the surface leaving the thallus showing at the edge. An early coloniser of exposed acid rocks and pebbles.



25) <u>Verrucaria nigrescens</u>

Thick dark brown-black crust with partly immersed perithecia, common on calcareous rock and mortar.

(photo courtesy of Sue Knight)

26) <u>Verrucaria viridula</u>

Pale greenish-grey or brown, thick and cracked with dark, partly immersed, perithecia. Usually on limestone, concrete or brick.

(variable appearance)

(photos courtesy of Sylvia Davidson)

27) Physcia adscendens

Foliose, small, grey with hooded lobe ends (sorediate below, and pale rhizines with dark tips. On well-lit calcareous stone and on nutrient-enriched trees.

28) <u>Physcia tenella</u>

Very similar to P. adscendens but with lobe ends splayed, sorediate below.

(lower photos courtesy of Isobel Clark)

29) <u>Physcia caesia</u>

Foliose with narrow, convex, lobes that are matt grey and large darker blue-grey soralia in the centre. Forms small, neat orbs on nutrient-enriched and dust-impregnated stone, asphalt and wood.

30) <u>Phaeophyscia orbicularis</u>

Small (to 3cm) orbs, brownish grey when dry but green when wet, black below. Rhizines dark with pale tips, soralia dark and mostly on lobe edges. Pollution tolerant, often on concrete and other basic stone, also on nutrient-enriched bark.

31) <u>Physconia grisea</u>

Pruinose grey-brown when dry, green when wet, pale beneath. Darker soralia start on the edges of the lobes but spread. On nutrient-rich and dust impregnated stones and trees.

32) *Xanthoria parietina*

Large round, foliose thalli, bright orange in sun but grenish-grey in shade. Apothecia large with an orange disk and paler margin. Pollution tolerant and common on nutrient-rich rocks and trees, especially bird-perching sites.