

New records of coral fungi: upright coral *Ramaria stricta* and greening coral *Ramaria abietina* from central Scotland

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Coral fungi of the genus *Ramaria* form clumps of beautiful branching growths with a superficial resemblance to marine corals. There are around a dozen species in the British Isles, most of which are uncommon and seldom recorded (Buczacki *et al.*, 2012).

During a visit to the King's Buildings Campus, University of Edinburgh, on 24th November 2011 numerous clumps of coral fungi, each around 10 cm in diameter and height, were observed spread over just a few square metres of a woodchip mulched border bed, adjacent to the West Mains Road entrance (NT26537078). A specimen was collected and sent to Professor Roy Watling who confirmed the identity as the upright coral (*Ramaria stricta*). This site was revisited three years later on 21st October 2014, when around 25 similar clumps of *R. stricta* were observed and photographed in the same border bed (Fig. 1).

On the 23rd September 2017, during a Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group (CAFG) foray in Victoria Park, Glasgow, an array of *R. stricta* growths was discovered, also in woodchip mulched border shrubbery, close to the children's play area (NS54056728). Again numerous clumps of fungi were observed among the bushes, but some of these had amalgamated into a spectacular wavy stand around 1 m long, 20 cm wide, and 15 cm in height (Fig. 2). This site was revisited in 2018, but late in the season on 28th December, when about 20 clumps of remnants of *R. stricta* were found in various states of decay. In 2018 the coral fungi clumps were about 10 cm in diameter with only one double clump about 20 cm in length.

On 26th October 2016 a group of seven clumps of greening coral (*R. abietina*) were found growing among leaf litter under a Sawara cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*) in the author's garden in Giffnock, Glasgow (NS55835902). *R. abietina* forms clumps around 3 - 5 cm in width and height. It has a distinct olive-green colouration but, despite this, is quite difficult to spot among leaf debris (Fig. 3).



Fig. 1. Clumps of upright coral fungus (*Ramaria stricta*), King's Buildings Campus, University of Edinburgh, October 2014. (Photos: M. O'Reilly)



Fig. 2. Upright coral fungus (*Ramaria stricta*), Victoria Park, Glasgow, September 2017. (A) Large growth around 1 m long. (B) Close-up of growth around 10 - 15cm high. (Photos: M. O'Reilly)



Fig. 3. Clumps of greening coral fungus (*Ramaria abietina*), around 5 cm high, on cypress leaf litter, Giffnock, Glasgow, October 2017. (Photos: M. O'Reilly)

Around ten clumps of *R. abietina* reappeared at the same location on 27th October 2017, and a single clump again on 17th November 2018. *R. abietina* material was also sent to Professor Roy Watling for confirmation.

The distributions of *R. stricta* and *R. abietina* in Scotland are quite similar, with most records in the north-east Highlands and just a couple each in southern Scotland (National Biodiversity Network, 2019). They are relatively uncommon with 14 and 32 Scottish records respectively shown on the National Biodiversity Network Atlas. However, the atlas shows relevant records only up to 2003/2004. The Fungal Records Database for Britain and Ireland (2019) holds more recent records, to October 2014 for *R. stricta* and October 2015 for *R. abietina*. For *R. stricta* the records from central Scotland include two from Glasgow (Blythswood Square, 2004; and Bell Street, Calton, 2011) and one from Chatelherault Country Park, Hamilton in 2010. For *R. abietina* the central Scotland records include Chatelherault (2004, 2005, and 2008), Edinburgh (Bawsinch, 2006), Lanark (2011), Kilsyth (Colzium Estate, 2011) and Glasgow (Bell Street, Calton, 2011). The site at Bell Street in Calton, Glasgow is of interest holding both species simultaneously. *R. stricta* occurs naturally on decaying wood but is known to thrive on mulched wood-chippings and might be expected to become more common with the increasing use of such mulches in suburban areas. *R. abietina* is associated with coniferous needle litter and many records originate from conifer plantations. However, exotic conifers in suburban areas offer an equally

acceptable habitat. Hence both of these unusual species should be looked out for in suburban parks and gardens where they may be currently overlooked.

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REFERENCES

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