

Hortus Pink Plant Biosecurity Policy

Last updated: February 2024

Next update: February 2025

The UK's biosecurity and Brexit

UK imports of live plants have increased by 71 per cent since 1999. The value of UK imports of live trees and plants was £1.06 billion in 2020. With increasing trade however, comes increasing risk of pests and diseases being imported inadvertently. There are now more than 1,000 pests and diseases on the UK plant health risk register. Some introduced plant pest and diseases, for example ash dieback, box tree moth and horse chestnut leaf miner, have spread widely in the UK and are causing significant changes to our landscape and horticultural practices

The current situation

Previously, plants could move around in the EU without restriction if they were grown in an EU country (including the UK), certified free from pest and diseases and for a traveller's own use or consumption. The UK has now left the EU and there are no longer exemptions for transporting plants for personal use. This means that, from the 1 January 2021, you must have a phytosanitary certificate for almost all plants and living parts of plants, including all seeds for planting and potatoes for human consumption, that you are bringing in in personal baggage. This applies to plant material from both the EU and any other country outside of the EU.

What we are doing

There has been an increase in the rate at which harmful plant pests and diseases have become established in the UK. Diseases such as ash dieback and those caused by *Phytophthora*, and pests such as box tree moth and horse chestnut leaf miner are causing significant changes to our landscape and horticultural practices.

The risk of new plant pests and diseases being introduced is associated with the long-term trend of increasing volume and speed of movement of traded plants, and other material, imported from an expanding variety of sources. These risks were considered by the Government's Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce which recommended actions to mitigate them and the Government's approach to plant biosecurity is set out in Protecting Plant Health: A Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain.

As a result of these increased plant health risks, we have a policy for plant health which draws upon the RHS work.

Our approach to plant health

- **DISEASE:** Avoiding where possible nine plant groups, identified by Defra as being particularly susceptible to diseases caused by *Xylella fastidiosa*, from being used unless UK sourced and grown. They include: hebe, lavender, oleander, olive, cherry, plum, rosemary, and Spanish broom. Intensify surveillance for, and train staff in, common plant pests and diseases in client gardens. Informing the relevant authority immediately if a notifiable pest is suspected; isolating the affected plants; clearly marking them to ensure they are not inadvertently moved; acting on the instructions of the relevant authority; no treatment or disposal actions to take place without the authorisation of the relevant authority.
- **SELECTION:** Wherever possible, use UK-grown planting material/ plants and those with RHS garden merit. Use least-risk plant material which is appropriate to the horticultural application. Utilise materials, like manure and topsoil, that come from specialist suppliers (not local farms or recycling centres). No plants will be grown from seed or planted on by Hortus Pink.

- **SUPPLIERS:** Utilise importer plant reception capability to meet increased quarantine challenges eg those that hold, in isolation, all imported semi-mature trees for at least 12 months prior to planting. Strive to use a list of RHS-approved suppliers that meet specified plant health criteria. Ensure all plants are checked before dispatch by the supplier and again before installation. Utilise registered waste carriers only. Maintain a preferred supplier list for plant supply.
- **PASSPORTS:** Record all plant passports for planted material utilised in client gardens. Maintain a complaints record and if they relate to a noticeable pest. Retain records for 6 years.
- **STAFF:** Train staff to recognise disease and plant biosecurity, where appropriate, via training and CPD to understand the principles of the Plant Health Management Standard. To circulate our plant biosecurity policy with staff and clients where needed. Zoe Pink leads the plant health for Hortus Pink and is responsible for the record of the self assessment with details any non-conformances and corrective actions.

Advice to clients

- Keep plants healthy: Good plant husbandry can reduce the impact of pests and diseases. Strong, healthy plants are more resilient and are less likely to be severely affected by pests and diseases. Mulching can not only feed plants to increase their vigour but may also prevent some pests and diseases leaving the soil and infecting the above-ground parts of your plants. Appropriate watering avoids plants being stressed, but ensure you have appropriate water collection and choose plants that are suitable for your watering capabilities.
- Keep it clean: Keeping your garden clean and tidy helps to reduce pests and diseases. Cleaning garden tools, greenhouses and water butts also reduces the spread of pests and diseases and reduces the chances that they will threaten your garden in the next growing season.
- Monitor your plants: Keeping an eye out for pests and diseases means that problems are more likely to be noticed early and before they cause serious damage. Early detection is also likely to mean that the problem is easier to control. RHS web profiles are an excellent source of advice for specific pests and diseases. RHS members can also make use of RHS Gardening Advice to access free diagnostic and control advice. The RHS will also provide advice to members of the public where a plant is suspected to be affected by an exotic pest or disease (not previously reported in the UK).
- Deal with garden waste appropriately: While home composting can be used for most green waste, local green waste schemes compost at higher temperatures and therefore kill more pests and diseases. Burning or disposal at a council refuse site is best practice for woody plants, and material affected by persistent pests and diseases.

Our education

We are working with the RHS, www.PlantHealthy.org.uk and the Association of Professional Landscapers to utilise changing plant health regulations. Our aim is to increase client and contractor awareness of plant health and biosecurity risks to ensure everyone understands their responsibility and drive cultural change. We encourage Defra to ensure the UK's plant health regulatory requirements are presented in a way that is accessible and user-friendly (for the public and industry) in order to contribute to this outcome.

Signed: 

Name: Zoe Pink