



## RHS SHOWS BIOSECURITY POLICY & REGULATIONS 2025 v1

**Please read in full** and refer to when sourcing plants for RHS Shows.

**This document applies to living and cut plant material.** In this document 'plants' means living plants (i.e. containerised, bare root, seeds, bulbs), cut flowers, cut foliage.

The RHS Biosecurity team carry-out plant health and compliance inspections at shows. If required, plants may be removed at the discretion of the RHS. For questions relating to Biosecurity & Plant Health at RHS Shows please email: [showsplanthealth@rhs.org.uk](mailto:showsplanthealth@rhs.org.uk)

### RHS Shows & Events Biosecurity Policy (Abridged version)

At each RHS show and garden event, plants of all types, originating from the UK, Europe and other continents are brought together, posing a unique biosecurity risk. To mitigate this risk and protect UK wild plants, landscapes, wildlife and livelihoods the RHS has developed Biosecurity regulations specific to RHS shows and garden events. These are designed to minimise the risk of introducing harmful and invasive organisms to RHS shows and garden sites, and the threat of them spreading within and beyond a show or garden site.

Please note in this document and in legislation 'plants' means living plants and parts thereof, e.g. containerised, rootball, cut flowers, cut foliage, bare root, seeds, bulbs. For current information on Defra policy and legislation (including UK plant passports) please visit the Defra Plant Health Portal: [planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk](http://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk)

For a copy of the full RHS Shows & Events Biosecurity Policy email: [showsplanthealth@rhs.org.uk](mailto:showsplanthealth@rhs.org.uk)

### RHS Shows Biosecurity Regulations

All plants intended for use or sale at RHS Shows should be visibly free from pests and diseases, please adhere to the following guidance and regulations.

#### 1.1 Tobacco whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*) & imported tender/ tropical/ sub-tropical plants

Tobacco whitefly feeds on over 800 plant species and is a vector for over 110 different plant viruses. In 2023 APHA recorded an increase in interceptions on imported tender/ tropical/ sub-tropical plants & cut flowers/ foliage.

Please be vigilant for this pest when sourcing imported tender/ tropical/ sub-tropical plants. Tobacco whitefly is a notifiable pest, if found it must be reported to APHA and the affected plants destroyed. For images and more details of this pest visit:

[planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/Bemisia-tabaci-Defra-Plant-Pest-Factsheet-Feb-2017-2.pdf](http://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/Bemisia-tabaci-Defra-Plant-Pest-Factsheet-Feb-2017-2.pdf)

## 1.2 UK plant passport scheme

The UK plant passport scheme is a crucial part of the UK's approach to plant biosecurity, ensuring traceability of plants in the event of a plant health issue.

The UK plant passport scheme must be followed by any person or business regularly growing, trading or supplying plants for business use. In legislation this is referred to as a professional operator, the RHS is an example of a professional operator.

- Plants sold to a customer on a show site for personal use (not business use) do not require a plant passport.
- Plants sold to a customer on a show site for business use require a plant passport.
- Plants ordered at a show which are later sent to a customer require a plant passport.
- Professional operators should retain plant passport records for 3 years.

Phytosanitary certificates: Imported plants require a phytosanitary certificate to ensure that legally required inspections and laboratory tests have been carried out before export.

*Xylella* high-risk hosts and plant passports: see 1.3 *Xylella fastidiosa* regulation.

## 1.3 *Xylella fastidiosa* high-risk host plants

*Xylella fastidiosa* is a bacterial disease of global concern due to the vast range of plants it can infect and kill. Preventing its arrival in the UK is of utmost importance as there is currently no cure.

- The following plants are temporarily prohibited from all RHS Shows:  
***Olea europaea* (olive), *Nerium oleander* (oleander), *Polygala myrtifolia* (myrtle-leaf milkwort), *Coffea* spp. (coffee), *Spartium junceum* (Spanish broom)**
- The following plants must have a UK plant passport showing origin as GB, (see example below):  
***Lavandula* spp. (lavender), *Salvia rosmarinus* (syn. *Rosmarinus officinalis*) (rosemary), *Prunus dulcis* (syn. *Prunus amygdalus*) (almond), *Hebe* spp. (shrubby veronica)**

The letters GB will be shown in section D (see example), indicating the country of origin. A UK plant passport can be found on a pot label/ sticker or order paperwork.



## 1.4 Semi-mature trees, palms and tree ferns (Single stem or multi-stem, above 5m high and/or stem girth more than 20cm) (girth is measured 1-1.2m high from base of tree)

Semi-mature trees, palms and tree ferns have large canopies and root balls, and complex forms which can make it difficult to carry-out thorough plant health inspections, increasing biosecurity risk.

To mitigate biosecurity risk posed by semi-mature trees, palms and tree ferns (above 5m high and/or stem girth more than 20cm) please adhere to the following:

- Include all semi-mature trees, palms and tree ferns being used in the plant list submitted via the **Exhibitor Pre-Site form** (for risk assessment).
- Imported trees must be held and monitored by a nursery in the UK for at least three months prior to use at a show.
- Provide documentary evidence of country of origin and length of time in the UK, i.e. plant passports, delivery and invoice paperwork from the nursery.
- Ideally, use only fully UK grown trees, i.e. grown in the UK from UK seed or cutting material for the entire life of the tree.

### **1.5 Oak (*Quercus* spp.) & Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) (*Thaumetopoea processionea*)**

OPM arrived in England on imported trees in 2005. The caterpillars feed on oak species causing severe defoliation, impacting tree health. They are a hazard to human and animal health as the hairs on the caterpillar cause significant eye, skin and respiratory irritation.

OPM is established in Greater London and the home counties, known as the Established Area. A Buffer Zone and a further 10km Exclusion Zone surround this area to control further spread.

**Chelsea Flower Show & Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival** sit within the OPM Established Area. All Oak (*Quercus*) species of any size are prohibited from both shows, to comply with UK legislation which prevents spread into the UK Pest Free Area.

**Malvern Spring Festival & Wentworth Woodhouse** sit within the Pest Free Area, therefore all Oak (*Quercus*) species of any size can be exhibited at both shows.

For further information visit: [forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionea/](https://forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionea/)

### **1.6 Spruce (*Picea* spp.) & Larger Eight-toothed European Spruce Bark Beetle (*Ips typographus*)**

Outbreaks of *Ips typographus* have occurred in Kent, Sussex and Surrey. The beetle is primarily associated with dead or weak trees, and will infest healthy trees if in high numbers. It is also a vector for a number of fungal tree diseases.

Exhibitors must declare all Spruce (*Picea*) species taller than 3m via the Exhibitor Pre-Site form. This is to ensure that APHA inspect the Spruce before it leaves a show site, as required by the Forestry Commission. Undeclared Spruce will not be able to leave a show site until an inspection by APHA has been completed.

For further information visit: [forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/larger-eight-toothed-european-spruce-bark-beetle-ips-typographus/](https://forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/larger-eight-toothed-european-spruce-bark-beetle-ips-typographus/)

### **1.7 Protected (includes CITES) and wild collected plants**

Selling wild collected plants (e.g. plants, bulbs, corms, moss, etc.) at RHS Shows is strictly prohibited.

Exhibitors should ensure they comply with CITES and other conservation legislation which is intended to protect plant species and the habitats in which they grow.

- Plant species listed under *Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* are protected by law and cannot be sold if wild collected, for the full plant list visit: [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/8](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/8)

- CITES protected plant species used in an exhibit or offered for sale should be accompanied by relevant documentation. Export and import CITES permits may be required for imported plants, for further information visit: [gov.uk/guidance/cites-imports-and-exports](https://gov.uk/guidance/cites-imports-and-exports)
- To check if a plant species intended for use is CITES regulated visit: [speciesplus.net/#/](https://speciesplus.net/#/)

### **1.8 Non-native invasive plant species**

Use or sale of non-native invasive plant species (any part of a plant) at RHS Shows must be in line with current UK legislation. Use or sale of plant species listed in the red table (below) is prohibited.

A few non-native invasive species can be used if demonstrated to be integral to an exhibit's message or theme, see amber table (below). Exhibitors must contact the Biosecurity team and the Show manager to request permission to use these plants. If use is agreed the plant must be clearly identified in the exhibit with information to explain its invasiveness.

The list of prohibited non-native invasive plants is taken from Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 for England and Wales, the EU Implementing Regulation 2016/1141 and the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019.

#### **Large leaf *Gunnera* species prohibited from use at all RHS shows**

Large leaf *Gunnera* species must not be brought to RHS show sites due to the risk of inadvertently exhibiting an invasive plant as defined by UK regulations. Research recently published by the RHS indicates that plants widely grown and sold in the UK as *Gunnera manicata* are the invasive species *G. tinctoria* or a hybrid of *G. manicata* with *G. tinctoria* (*G. × cryptica*). Under the Invasive Alien Species regulation, an invasive species includes any hybrids of that species. As a consequence, the hybrid *G. × cryptica* is subject to the same restrictions as *G. tinctoria*. While *G. manicata* is not considered invasive, due to the lack of certainty over identification of this species in cultivation, large leaved gunneras must not be used in exhibits, or offered for sale, at RHS shows.

The enforcement agency responsible for tackling invasive species are likely to be vigilant for large leaf *Gunnera* species and have authority to access show sites as needed. If you require further information please visit:

[gov.uk/guidance/invasive-non-native-alien-plant-species-rules-in-england-and-wales](https://gov.uk/guidance/invasive-non-native-alien-plant-species-rules-in-england-and-wales)

Prohibited from sale or exhibit	
Scientific name	Common name
<i>Acacia saligna</i>	Golden wreath wattle
<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	Tree of heaven
<i>Alternanthera philoxeroides</i>	Alligator weed
<i>Andropogon virginicus</i>	Broomsedge
<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	Milkweed
<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>	Fern, Water
<i>Baccharis halmifolia</i>	Tree Groundsel
<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>	Carolina fanwort
<i>Cardiospermum grandiflorum</i>	Balloon vine
<i>Cortaderia jubata</i>	Purple pampas grass
<i>Crassula helmsii</i>	Stonecrop, Australian Swamp; New Zealand Pygmyweed
<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>	Water hyacinth
<i>Elodea nuttallii</i>	Nuttall's waterweed
<i>Ehrharta Calycina</i>	Perennial veldt grass
<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>	Chilean rhubarb
<i>Gymnocoronis spilanthoides</i>	Senegal tea
<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	Giant hogweed
<i>Heracleum persicum</i>	Persian hogweed
<i>Heracleum sosnowskyi</i>	Sosnowsky's hogweed

Prohibited from sale or exhibit	
Scientific name	Common name
<i>Humulus scandens</i>	Japanese hop
<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>	Pennywort, Floating
<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	Balsam, Himalayan
<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>	Curly waterweed
<i>Lespedeza cuneata</i>	Chinese shrub clover
<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i>	Primrose, Water
<i>Ludwigia hexapetala</i>	Primrose, Water
<i>Ludwigia peploides</i>	Primrose, Floating Water
<i>Ludwigia uruguayensis</i>	Primrose, Water
<i>Lygodium japonicum</i>	Climbing fern
<i>Lysichiton americanus</i>	American skunk cabbage
<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>	Japanese stiltgrass
<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>	Parrot's Feather
<i>Myriophyllum heterophyllum</i>	Broadleaf watermilfoil
<i>Parthenium hysterophorus</i>	Parthenium weed
<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i>	Crimson fountaingrass
<i>Persicaria perfoliata</i>	Asiatic tear-thumb
<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>	Mesquite
<i>Pueraria montana</i> var. <i>lobata</i>	Kudzu vine
<i>Salvinia molesta</i>	Giant salvinia
<i>Triadica sebifera</i>	Chinese tallow tree

Allowed if permission given	
Scientific name	Common name
<i>Elodea</i> spp.	Waterweeds
<i>Reynoutria japonica</i>	Knotweed, Japanese
<i>Reynoutria japonica</i> × <i>Reynoutria sachalinensis</i> [ <i>R.</i> × <i>bohemica</i> ]	Knotweed, Hybrid
<i>Reynoutria sachalinensis</i>	Knotweed, Giant