



RHS Flower Shows 2025

Biosecurity Policy & Regulations



RHS Shows Biosecurity Policy & Regulations 2025

Applies to all shows and events operated by the RHS. The regulations must be followed by all associated staff, exhibitors and contractors.

All plants and cut flowers intended for use or sale at RHS shows and events should be visibly free from pests and diseases.

Biosecurity and plant health inspections take place at all RHS shows and events. Plants (i.e. living plants and parts thereof) and cut flowers which do not meet regulations or are found to be unhealthy may be removed at the discretion of the RHS.

For any Biosecurity and Plant Health enquiries please contact showspanthealth@rhs.org.uk

Biosecurity Policy *Abridged version, full version available on request

At RHS shows and events, plants (i.e. living plants and parts thereof) and cut flowers, originating from the UK, Europe and other continents are brought together, posing a unique biosecurity risk. To mitigate this risk and protect UK gardens, biodiversity and horticultural trades the RHS has developed Biosecurity Regulations specific to RHS shows and events. These are designed to minimise the risk of introducing harmful and invasive organisms to RHS shows, events and garden sites, and the threat of them spreading within and beyond a show, event or garden site.

Biosecurity Guidance for Sourcing Plants & Cut Flowers

When selecting a plant supplier it is important to consider:

- Reputation for quality and plant health
- Previous history supplying RHS shows and events
- Where the majority of plants or cut flowers will originate from, e.g. imported or UK grown?

Exhibitors and contractors should work with suppliers to ensure that all plants have been monitored on a UK nursery for a minimum of 3 months during a growing season, in particular imported woody plants (trees, shrubs, hedging, palms, tree ferns).

Please ensure that suppliers do not deliver poor quality or visibly unhealthy plants or cut flowers to an RHS show or event.

If directly importing plants or cut flowers please use the following link for information on the relevant import rules and pest and disease risks: gov.uk/guidance/check-plant-health-information-and-import-rules

Biosecurity Regulations

UK Plant Passports *Does not apply to cut flowers

The UK plant passport scheme applies to professional operators selling plants to other professional operators, or distance selling plants. Only registered professional operators can issue UK plant passports, e.g. nurseries, design, landscaping and gardening businesses, horticultural societies and charities. The RHS is a registered professional operator.

To register visit: gov.uk/government/publications/register-to-become-a-plant-health-professional-operator

Plants sold on a show site must meet UK plant passport requirements:

- Plants sold to a non-professional operator (e.g. show visitor) do not require a plant passport.
- Plants sold to another professional operator (e.g. horticultural business) require a plant passport.
- Plants sold for delivery (e.g. mail order) require a plant passport.

All professional operators should keep UK plant passport records for 3 years.

Specimen Plants 3m high & above (Trees, shrubs, hedging, palms, tree ferns)

Imported specimen plants 3m high & above pose an increased risk of introducing new pests and diseases into the UK, in comparison to smaller plants. Large canopies, trunks and root balls make thorough plant health inspections difficult. Please adhere to the following:

- **Plant list submission:** Please include size, country of origin and supplier name for all specimen plants 3m high & above.
- **Supplier plant health checks:** Please ensure that suppliers check the health of specimen plants 3m high & above in advance of plants arriving on a show site. See 'Biosecurity Guidance for Sourcing Plants & Cut Flowers'.
- **Reject woody plants with bore holes (entry & exit), 2-3mm and larger.**
- **Reject woody plants with bleeds and/ or discoloured bark.**
- Fully UK grown specimen plants are preferred, e.g. grown in the UK from UK origin seed or cuttings.

Xylella fastidiosa *Does not apply to cut flowers

Xylella fastidiosa (Xf) is a bacterial disease of global concern, it is known to infect over 600 plant species, causing decline in health and death, there is no cure.

Xylella is not yet in the UK but imported high-risk host plants pose the greatest risk of introducing it. *Cut flowers of high-risk host plants do not pose a risk and can be used at shows and events.

The following Xf high-risk hosts must not be used or sold at RHS Shows:

Olea europaea (olive), *Nerium oleander* (oleander), *Polygala myrtifolia* (myrtle-leaf milkwort), *Coffea* spp. (coffee), *Spartium junceum* (Spanish broom)

The following Xf high-risk hosts can be used or sold at RHS Shows if grown from UK origin cuttings or, if imported, have a UK plant passport showing origin as GB:

Lavandula spp. (lavender), *Salvia rosmarinus* (rosemary), *Prunus dulcis* (almond), shrubby *Veronica* spp. (formerly *Hebe*)

UK plant passports can be found on pots, labels and invoices, section D shows the country of origin.



Tobacco whitefly

Tobacco whitefly (*Bemisia tabacci*) can cause severe feeding damage and transmit over 110 different viruses. Symptoms include chlorotic spotting, growth distortion, and premature leaf drop.

Imported tender, tropical, sub-tropical plants and cut flowers should be checked thoroughly for signs of Tobacco whitefly when sourcing. This pest is notifiable, infested plants are subject to immediate destruction.

For images and details: planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/Bemisia-tabaci-Defra-Plant-Pest-Factsheet-Feb-2017-2.pdf

Contact Us

If you have further questions about our biosecurity policy and regulations please contact us at showsplanthealth@rhs.org.uk

Spruce (*Picea*) & *Ips typographus*

Ips typographus (eight-toothed spruce bark beetle) feeds on live but significantly weakened spruce trees and will infest healthy trees if the population is high. Outbreaks in Kent, Sussex and Surrey have been caused by beetles blown in from the continent.

In June 2024 the demarcated area (DMA) expanded to cover East Anglia as well as the south-east of England, the rest of the UK is a Pest Free Area (PFA).

Chelsea Flower Show & Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival sit within the DMA.

- Allowed: *Picea* spp. under 3m but only with **permission from the Forestry Commission** to move to and from a show site.
- Prohibited: *Picea* spp. dead/ felled trees, logs and other material where bark remains.

Malvern Spring Festival & Wentworth Woodhouse sit within the PFA.

- Allowed: *Picea* spp. of any size allowed but must not originate from the DMA.
- Avoid: *Picea* spp. dead/ felled trees, logs and other material where bark remains. If essential to the exhibit this material **must not** originate from the DMA.

For further information visit: gov.uk/government/news/new-restrictions-to-limit-impact-of-ips-typographus-tree-pest

Oak (*Quercus*) & Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

OPM (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) arrived in the UK 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 eye, skin and respiratory irritation.

OPM is established in Greater London and the home counties, known as the Established Area. A Buffer Zone with a 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. Please be vigilant for this pest when sourcing oak trees.

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

All information correct at January 2025 and subject to change.

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