

**NT PLANT QUARANTINE & BIOSECURITY GUIDANCE NOTE****NUMBER 1 – SOURCING PLANTS**

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**1.0 Background**

National Trust (NT) gardens require plants for a range of purposes, including new acquisitions to collections, to re-stock gardens, for seasonal bedding, and to sell to the public. Plants are obtained from a wide range of sources including: from commercial nurseries at home and abroad, local nurseries, NT nurseries (e.g. Knightshayes), other NT Gardens, members, volunteers and the public.

**Brought-in plants are the single most important way in which pests and diseases are introduced into a garden**, therefore, it is essential that we take sensible precautions to reduce the risk of inadvertently introducing pests and diseases on brought-in plants. Below are some guiding principles that should be considered when sourcing plants:

**1.1 Source locally**

- Wherever possible, and in line with the Trust's peat-free policy, buy plants grown in peat free compost.

**1.2 Plant origin**

- Plants originating from other continents may pose a higher risk of introducing pests and diseases into our gardens than plants propagated and produced within the UK. For example, Citrus longhorn beetle (*Anoplophora chinensis*), a pest that is a threat to trees, has come into continental Europe and Britain on cheap, traded *Acers* from China.
- Wherever possible, seek to purchase plants that have been propagated and produced within the UK; these are also likely to be better "acclimatised" to our conditions and will minimise the distance they have travelled.

**1.3 Plant type**

- Large, semi-mature specimen trees also pose a very high risk of introducing pests and diseases into our gardens. These are often produced on the continent, and for example are suspected of introducing the Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) into West London.
- Wherever possible, avoid large, semi-mature specimen trees.

**1.4 Donated plants**

- Although well-intentioned, these plants do pose a high risk of introducing unwanted pests and diseases in to our gardens.
- Consider very carefully all such offers, and if there is a specific need for such plants then they should go through 'quarantine' on arrival.

## 1.5 Develop supplier relationships where possible

- Try to source plants from nurseries and garden centres that have a proven track record.
- If possible, visit your supplier to see their operation - see the guidance below on things to look for when visiting.
- Specify exact requirements on our purchase order forms.
- If there is a specific need for plants from an unknown supplier, then they should go through 'quarantine' on arrival.

## 2.0 Examples of best practice at a well-managed supplier

### 2.1 General state of the nursery infrastructure (glasshouses, paths, mypex, gravel, benches, support wiring etc.)

**Look for:** well-maintained; in a good state of repair; clean glass; no missing panes; free from old plants, plant debris and weeds; no signs of drainage or flooding problems on growing areas or paths.

### 2.2 General standard of plant husbandry and health of plants

**Look for:** healthy, vigorous plants; plants not growing in puddles, plants not fallen over (when they can pick up pathogens from the soil); correct watering and nutrition – no signs of deficiencies, not pot bound, not too soft; no signs of pests and diseases – no dieback, leaf spotting, root browning, no visible insect infestation or sooty moulds (a sign of honeydew from insect damage).

### 2.3 Watering/irrigation

**Look for:** mains or borehole supply; water abstracted from streams, ponds or recycled should be subject to testing and disinfection (e.g. chlorination or slow sand filtration); preference for low level irrigation (drip-point watering) and preferably not overhead irrigation that can spread pathogens; end of season disinfection of irrigation lines; replacement/ disinfection of capillary matting.

### 2.4 Quarantine/hygiene

**Look for:** evidence that staff are trained in plant pests and diseases – you could ask a couple of relevant questions; leaflets and posters in the tea room; evidence that they have a quarantine procedure to handle bought-in material – plants checked on arrival, kept separate in a secure quarantine area on arrival, checked regularly; the quarantine area is away from the main production area and public access, is secure etc; plants are checked regularly; good end of season clean-up, disinfection of benches, beds etc; staff disinfect boots and equipment regularly.

### 2.5 Documentation

**Look for:** delivery notes to confirm plants comply with all necessary plant health legislation; plant passport number (this should be on their delivery notes and will look something like "EC Plant Passport UK/EW 12345"); name of their supplier and origin of material.

## 2.6 Source/origin of their plants (their provenance)

**Look for:** evidence that they know where their plants come from - ask them specifically where they source their plants from and where their suppliers source their plants from.

## 2.7 Waste management

**Look for:** safe disposal of infested material by burning, removal to landfill; covering of waste prior to removal; any waste tips are sited well away from production areas with no risk of water movement from the tip to production areas.

## 2.8 Pesticides

**Look for:** a responsible use of pesticides; for high importance perennial plant material, consider a contract clause that the plants have not been sprayed for 6 weeks prior to supply because of the risk that they may mask infection – if in place, check their pesticide records for compliance.

### Conservation Directorate Guidance Note Information

**Authors:** Dr David Slawson  
FERA  
Head of Pest and Disease identification programme  
The Food and Environment Research Agency

**Guidance Note No.**

**Date of issue:** November 2008