

## Briefing note

### Plant Health and Biosecurity

#### 1. Introduction

Keeping plants and our gardens pest and disease free has always been important to gardeners but with the advent of global trade and climate change there is a rise in the ability for pests and disease to arrive and thrive in the UK.

At LCGD we produce this briefing note because whilst the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) will take a lead we believe there is also a role for our industry to play and for us to take individual responsibility.

#### 2. Challenges

The challenges are many and here are just a few that are facing our nurseries in particular.

- Plant resilience to not just single diseases but multiple attacks.
- Communication of the risks from pests and diseases.
- Plant health education (or lack of awareness) both in our industry and to a wider audience of interested public e.g. RHS members and to an uninterested audience e.g. those travelling overseas that might bring back seeds and cuttings.
- Provenance and traceability of plants that may have been in several nurseries before being planted.
- Price competition especially through e-commerce and retail that forces suppliers to cut corners.

As an example, if as a garden designer you use mature containerised trees do you know where they have come from, have you been vigilant for diseases, do you know anything about the soil they are grown in, how long have they been in the UK and/or quarantined, have you checked them on arrival? These are all questions that we need to start asking of our suppliers and that we are able to explain why they are important to our customers.

#### 3. Our responsibility – vigilance and good practice

At LCGD we believe that garden designers have a responsibility to:

- Work collaboratively with nurseries and in particular:
  - To ensure that we are sourcing plants traceable to their point of origin.
  - To encourage suppliers to set up 12-month quarantine processes for imported trees and shrubs.
  - To check plants being delivered to us for signs of pests and diseases and to monitor their health.
- Work with our landscaper and gardener colleagues to promote good practice and, in particular, good maintenance and soil management and to be vigilant for pests and diseases.
- Keep our professional learning up to date and become plant health ambassadors to:
  - The design profession by helping to educate others who may not have the awareness or resources.
  - Our customers to maintain healthy gardens.

#### 4. Useful sources of information

The Society of Garden Designers surprisingly does not issue any guidance on the subject but that doesn't mean that we don't have a responsibility or that there isn't any useful information out there. Here, therefore, are some sources that we already find very useful.

## **Key sources**

The **Forestry Commission** has produced a wealth of information about pests and diseases and associated biosecurity but the **Arboricultural Association** has made it very easy to access that information on individual conditions here:

<https://www.trees.org.uk/Help-Advice/Pests-and-Diseases>

This publication is also very useful:

<https://www.trees.org.uk/Book-Shop/Products/Application-of-Biosecurity-in-Arboriculture-en>

The **Royal Horticultural Society** has good advice both on how it operates but also how gardeners can protect their own gardens. This information is especially useful when talking to your own clients:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/plant-health-in-gardens/protect-your-garden>

## **Other information**

The Dutch horticulture industry is very much aware of the issues around plant health and have decades of experience of plant inspection services. You can find out more information on how they inspect and monitor bulbs, trees and nursery stock through these website videos:

**Bulbs** <http://www.bkd.eu/bkd>

**Arboriculture** <https://www.naktuinbouw.com/arboriculture>

**Netherlands Inspection Service** <https://www.naktuinbouw.com/videos-about-naktuinbouw>

**Forestry Commission** leaflet on biosecurity is available to download here.

<https://forestry.gov.uk/England-keepitclean> also

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/beeh-a3vemx>

For up to date information you can use the **UK Plant Health Information Portal** from DEFRA

<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk>

**UK Government's Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/tree-health-and-plant-biosecurity-expert-taskforce>

**APHA** plant health controls <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plant-health-controls> which cover imports, exports, plant passporting etc.

The **Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board** publish useful support to the nursery industry:

<https://horticulture.ahdb.org.uk>

**Defra plant health portal** <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/> where you can link to the Defra plant health risk register.

Protecting Plant Health: A Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain from **DEFRA and the Forestry Commission** (free download)

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/plant-biosecurity-strategy-for-great-britain](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plant-biosecurity-strategy-for-great-britain)

**The Woodland Trust Tree** health publication

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2017/07/biosecurity/>

We all have responsibility for plant health and biosecurity in the UK and as designers we are especially well placed to talk to our suppliers and customers to influence them for the better.

### **So remember**

- **be vigilant,**
- **encourage good practice and**
- **keep up to date with your learning.**

**We will aim to keep this information up to date with regular reviews so please come back to LCGD for more information if this is helpful.**