



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## Biosecurity advice: preventing the introduction and spread of viruses in yacon



**Fig. 1.** Yacon tubers © <https://www.fruithillfarm.com/yacon-tuber-certified-organic.html>

Yacon (*Polymnia sonchifolia* syn. *Smallanthus sonchifolius*) is a tuberous root plant in the family Asteraceae. It originates from the Andean highlands, from southern Colombia to northern Argentina. Outside its region of origin, yacon is cultivated in Brazil, China, Czechia, Estonia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia, Taiwan and United States.

Yacon has edible roots and is also used for medicinal purposes.

An investigation by the Animal and Plant Health Agency in 2020, found that yacon being grown in the UK and imported yacon from several different sources, were infected by a harmful virus: Potato yellowing virus. These findings highlight that there is uncertainty about the disease status of this crop.

Yacon can no longer be legally imported into GB, and while there remains a significant degree of uncertainty over the general disease status of this crop, we recommend yacon currently in GB should not be grown in the future.

At this stage, the risks to commercial crops are low and Defra is issuing biosecurity advice on a precautionary basis. The advice is intended to be practical and provide realistic options, for those who have already imported or grown yacon, which if followed will keep the risk of spreading any infection to a minimum.

If you have any further queries about yacon, import requirements or plant health controls, please contact your relevant plant health authority

Biosecurity advice on yacon can be found here:

<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/Yacon-Biosecurity-guidance-2022-v2.pdf>

To report a pest/disease follow this link: <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/pests-and-diseases/reporting-a-pest-disease/>

## Advisory Information

If you have any further queries about yacon, import requirements or plant health controls, please contact your relevant plant health authority:

For **England and Wales**, contact your local APHA Plant Health and Seeds Inspector or the PHSI Headquarters, York. Tel: 0300 1000 313 (please select option 3 when calling)  
Email: [planthealth.info@apha.gov.uk](mailto:planthealth.info@apha.gov.uk)

For **Scotland**: Contact your local RPID officer for Agriculture crops  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/AOcontacts/contacts>

Contact Horticulture and Marketing Unit for Horticultural crops  
Email: [hort.marketing@gov.scot](mailto:hort.marketing@gov.scot)  
Web: [www.gov.scot/PotatoHealthControls](http://www.gov.scot/PotatoHealthControls)

For **Northern Ireland**, contact the DAERA Plant Health Inspection Branch:  
Tel: 0300 200 7847 Email: [planthealth@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:planthealth@daera-ni.gov.uk)

For additional information on UK Plant Health please see:  
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/phiw/riskRegister/>  
<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/>  
<https://www.gov.uk/plant-health-controls>  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/plant/PlantHealth/PlantDiseases>  
<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk>

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