



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Factsheet: *Phytophthora pluvialis*

2026

Status in law

Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales)

Phytophthora pluvialis is present in Great Britain. It's not a notifiable pest. This means you do not need to report it if you suspect its presence.

Northern Ireland

Phytophthora pluvialis is not known to be present in Northern Ireland. It's not a notifiable pest. This means you do not need to report it if you suspect its presence.

Detecting *Phytophthora pluvialis*

Phytophthora pluvialis causes injuries (called lesions) under the bark of trees. These reduce the transport of nutrients around the tree which causes the symptoms such as leaf drop.

What to look for

Symptoms can be seen at any time of year. They can be worse after long periods of wet weather.

Canopy



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The canopy of infected trees:

- looks brown at the bottom from branch dieback
- may look fully brown or dead if the whole tree has dieback

Leaves



© Mick Biddle, Forest Research

Infected leaves can:

- turn olive-green, brown or yellow in colour
- drop, making branches appear bare

Trunk and twigs



© Ana Perez-Sierra, Forest Research

The trunk or twigs have:

- sunken areas with white bleeds of resin (known as cankers)
- brown stains (lesions) that are visible if the cankered bark is removed

Lesions are sometimes located in the roots, but these would not be seen without digging.

Affected plants

Phytophthora pluvialis in the UK most commonly infects:

- Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga mensiezii*)
- western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)

It can also infect other trees including:

- larch (*Larix*)
- patula pine (*Pinus patula*)
- radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*)
- stone pine (*Pinus pinea*)
- tanoak (*Notholithocarpus densiflorus*)
- Weymouth pine (*Pinus strobus*)

Potential impact on the UK

It can:

- weaken or kill the trees
- stain the timber making it less valuable
- increase costs to growers to control or eradicate the disease

However, not all infected trees will show severe symptoms. Some trees can recover. Impact on timber has been shown to be largely superficial.

Presence and spread

Where it's present

Phytophthora pluvialis is present in New Zealand and western states of the USA.

In Europe, it is present in the UK and Ireland. It has also been found in Belgium.

Notable interceptions and outbreaks

Between September 2021 and July 2022, it was found at 36 sites across England, Scotland and Wales. Due to its wide distribution, it was assumed that it had been in Great Britain for some time before being found.

Under plant health legislation:

- moving trees and wood out of outbreak sites was restricted
- trees were felled to control the disease

By 2026, research and observations of affected trees showed the pathogen was less damaging than predicted. Containment and management restrictions were therefore removed.

How it spreads

Phytophthora pluvialis spreads mainly through:

- wind and rain
- rivers and watercourses
- the movement of soil including plant pots, vehicles, or on the feet of people and animals
- plant trade

Reducing the risk

To reduce the risk of spreading *Phytophthora pluvialis*, you can:

- avoid moving timber or wood of host tree species from places where the pathogen is present

- remove symptomatic trees as part of normal felling operations
- Plant non-host trees in waterlogged areas
- follow good biosecurity practices including cleaning boots and machinery

What to do if you suspect *Phytophthora pluvialis*

You do not need to report infections to the authorities.

You can choose to report infections at [TreeAlert](#) for Great Britain, or planthealth@DAERA-ni.gov.uk for Northern Ireland providing a photograph and location. This supports ongoing tree health monitoring and research.

Follow good silvicultural and biosecurity practices.

Additional information

See more [images of *Phytophthora pluvialis* symptoms](#) from Forest Research.

Read a blog post from Forestry Commission on [why the policy was changed](#).

The original 2022 [Pest Risk Analysis](#) and 2026 [update](#).