



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Top 10 best practice tips for anyone who moves plants in the UK

There has been a long-term trend of increasing volume and speed of movement of plants and other material traded from an increasing variety of sources. This increases the chances of pests arriving with imported goods and travellers, as well as by natural means. Other stresses including those caused by climate and changes in land use may increase the risk of pest establishment, spreading and having an impact. Such introductions include Ramorum dieback (*Phytophthora ramorum*), Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) and Asian long-horned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*). These organisms impact our environment, economy and social well-being and divert valuable resource in surveillance and management practices. It has been shown that by employing good biosecurity practices the risk of introducing and spreading plant pests and pathogens is significantly reduced.

This short guide highlights key steps that help reduce this risk.

Benefits of compliance:

- **Economic benefits:** The impact of a single plant pest or pathogen can significantly impact individual business, for example, when *P. ramorum* was found in the UK, numerous businesses had to close as the cost of managing the disease in their plants far exceeded retail returns.
- **Environmental benefits:** These are far reaching and include conserving biodiversity: whole ecosystems are impacted when a single species is affected by a plant pest or disease.
- **Social wellbeing:** Evidence from social science shows the benefits of plants in improving health and mental wellbeing. Food availability and loss of access to woodlands, parks and gardens for recreation can all be impacted when affected with plant pests or disease.
- **Benefits for your business:** Ensuring your business follows these tips will enable you to pass plant passport audits much more easily, especially businesses which pertain to record keeping, pest knowledge, traceability systems, training of staff and inspections of plants. In addition, promotion of business good biosecurity practice builds confidence in buyers increasing trade.

Ten Top Tips:

Best practice is important to mitigate against these wide-ranging impacts. The following highlights best practices to reduce the risk to industry of spreading pest and disease when trading and moving plants.

1. Research the source of your plants carefully and only select plants from reliable suppliers that practise good biosecurity. Become familiar with the types of pest commonly associated with the plant species you trade in, so you can check for any symptoms upon arrival to your premises.

2. When receiving/moving plants at your place of business, check all paperwork is compliant with current government guidelines and keep up to date accurate records. Information relating to record keeping can be found on the [Plant Health Portal](#).
3. Carry out an inspection of plants upon arrival or before moving off / between sites. Look for symptoms / signs of pest or disease damage. Pest factsheets to help with this can be found on the [Plant Health Portal](#).
4. Have a designated, secure and, if possible, rain protected holding area that is for plants prior to moving to main production areas or off-site. Some pest and diseases may be latent and develop symptoms later. Monitor regularly and ensure good hygiene is maintained.
5. Keep up to date on current plant pest and disease threats by visiting the [Plant Health Portal](#) and the [Risk Register](#), learn how to recognise symptoms and their hosts, including common, indigenous pest and diseases. Get symptoms and their causes identified early. Train staff to recognise symptoms. The Plant Health Alliance's [Plant Healthy](#) scheme is one source of information for businesses.
6. Spread the message, not the pests. Keep staff, contractors, customers and visitors informed of your biosecurity practices.
7. Keep it clean – regularly disinfect tools and machinery. Wash down loading / unloading areas, equipment and vehicle tyres. Use new pots and trays where possible or disinfect between use, protect hands from contamination and wash clothing regularly.
8. Bag infected material and dispose of it appropriately. Cover skips & other general plant waste disposal areas and locate them downwind from production/retail areas.
9. Carefully monitor areas that can be sources of infection on-site. Standing water can harbour some water borne diseases such as Phytophthora Root Rot (*Phytophthora* sp.). Hedgerows, weeds and other onsite plants can multiply diseases and act as a green bridge, carrying the disease from season to season. You should test irrigation sources regularly to ensure they are free from pests and disease.
10. Stressed plants are more prone to attack. Good plant husbandry is key to reducing the impact of most diseases. Ensure plants are appropriately watered and fed. When moving plants, do not pack too tightly together and ensure they have adequate water, air and light.

Who to contact for more information/ if you would like to report findings.

Details of where to report plant pest or disease can be found on Defra's plant health portal: <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/pests-and-diseases/reporting-a-pest-disease/>

This is also a useful resource for further pest and disease information, diagnostics, and where you can find your local plant health inspector.

Report tree pest and disease through Forestry Commissions Tree-alert: <https://treealert.forestresearch.gov.uk/>

If you witness poor biosecurity practises, or have specific concerns, then you can also contact your local plant health and seeds inspector.

Plant health professional register: <https://www.rsb.org.uk/careers-and-cpd/registers/plant-health-register>