UK plant health guidance

Xylella fastidiosa: Information about controls for importers and users of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Updated August 2019

Leaf scorch of Polygala myrtifolia (Milkwort) infected by Xylella fastidiosa subsp. multiplex in Corsica. Photo: Bruno Legendre, Anses Plant Health Laboratory.

This guide is intended for all plant: growers, retailers, landscapers, garden designers, traders, importers whether outside of the European Union (EU) or from the EU and within the UK.

Summary of key points:

- This disease has the potential to have huge implications for the UK horticultural trade and the wider environment. It is, therefore, imperative that all parties are aware of the importance of following the measures put in place.

- There are outbreaks of Xylella fastidiosa in Italy, France (Corsica and mainland France), Spain (islands of Mallorca, Menorca and Ibiza and mainland Spain) and mainland Portugal. In March 2018 Germany declared it had eradicated the disease.

- An outbreak in the UK could lead to destruction of host plants within 100 m, and a 5 km movement ban for ‘specified’ plants for five years.
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- The range of plant species found to be infected within the EU has increased and includes trees, shrubs and herbaceous. Keep checking the list: [http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/plant_health_biosecurity/legislation/emergency_measures/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/plant_health_biosecurity/legislation/emergency_measures/index_en.htm)

- Landscapers, designers, retailers and anyone directly importing plants are now subject to the same stringent requirements as growers and suppliers. There is now a plant passporting obligation on all ‘professional operators’, this requires that prior to the movement of all ‘host plants’ across the EU they must have been officially inspected and be accompanied by a plant passport to show they have been sourced from disease free areas/sites.

- From 1 March 2018, additional requirements must be met for certain high risk plants of *Coffea, Lavandula dentata, Nerium oleander, Olea europaea, Polygala myrtifolia* and *Prunus dulcis* shall only be moved once the authorised plant passporter has had an annual inspection and the plants have been sampled and tested. Suppliers and recipients of these plants must keep records for 3 years. Also from 9th October 2018, *Polygala myrtifolia* plants moved from production sites must be officially visually inspected and sampled as close to the time of movement as possible.

- Import controls for material from third countries outside the EU remain. All plants for planting are subject to import controls and must be accompanied by a valid plant health (phytosanitary) certificate.

- Until the UK leaves the EU, plant passports must accompany host species imported from the EU. After that, phytosanitary certificates will be required for such plants [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/plant_health_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/plant_health_en.pdf). National legislation came into force on 26 November 2018 requiring that *Olea europaea* plants from the EU must be notified to APHA in writing. After the UK leaves the EU, pre-notification requirements will apply for all plants imported with a phytosanitary certificate.

- Suspected outbreaks of *X. fastidiosa* or any other non-native plant pest must be reported to the relevant Plant Health Service authority. Be vigilant for signs of *X. fastidiosa* and report any suspicious sightings:

  For England and Wales, contact your local APHA Plant Health and Seeds Inspector or the PHSI Headquarters, Sand Hutton, York. Tel: 01904 405138
  Email: planthealth.info@apha.gov.uk

  For Scotland, contact the Scottish Government’s Horticulture and Marketing Unit by Email: hort.marketing@gov.scot
Xylella fastidiosa: the facts

The disease:

*X. fastidiosa* is a bacterial pathogen, which has been found in parts of France, Italy, Spain and Portugal and if it enters the UK it could have a wide and damaging impact on nursery stock production, urban landscapes and the countryside. It causes multiple symptoms including wilts, diebacks, stunts, leaf scorch and plant death. The UK is on high alert for this pathogen and we must be especially vigilant, as the pathogen has not been recorded here. As the insect vector is already native to the UK an outbreak of *X. fastidiosa* could have significant impacts. The pathogen has four known subspecies which affect different hosts, in the America’s widespread damage has been recorded, including affecting up to 35% of urban plantings in New Jersey, USA as well as causing severe damage to citrus, coffee and olive production. For further information please see the additional reference sources at the end of this document.

Timeline (for disease spread in the EU):

*X. fastidiosa* subspecies *pauca* was first confirmed in Europe in 2013 causing devastation to olive plantations in southern Italy. In 2015, *X. fastidiosa* subsp. *multiplex*, was identified affecting a number of host species in France and Corsica. In July 2016 *X. fastidiosa* subsp. *fastidiosa* was confirmed in a glasshouse in Germany on a *Nerium oleander* plant and subsequently on *Rosmarinus*, *Erysimum* and *Streptocarpus*, by spring 2018 Germany had eradicated the disease. In October 2016, infected *Prunus* trees on Mallorca were found and then other hosts on Ibiza and Menorca. The Balearics now have many outbreaks and three different subspecies of *X. fastidiosa* have been found. At the end of June 2017 *X. fastidiosa* subsp. *multiplex* was found on the Spanish mainland (south of Valencia) in *Prunus dulcis*, then in spring 2018 in an olive tree near Madrid and then a *Polygala myrtifolia* nursery in Almeria. In autumn 2018, *X. fastidiosa* subsp. *multiplex* was detected in a range of genera in Tuscany, Italy. *X. fastidiosa* subsp. *multiplex* was also confirmed from an asymptomatic *Lavandula dentata* plant in a zoo in the north of Portugal. Annex 1 below lists the current hosts of *X. fastidiosa* in the EU, new hosts are recorded frequently.
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Leaf scorch and die back of Olea (olive) infected by X. fastidiosa. Photo: Camille Picard (DGAL-SDQPV, FR)

UK controls:

Anyone receiving host plants from suppliers in the UK, needs to ensure that they are accompanied by a valid plant passport confirming they have been sourced from disease free areas/sites. Once the UK leaves the EU, passportable genera from the EU must arrive with a valid plant health (phytosanitary) certificate.

The already extensive list of host species recorded in Europe is likely to grow and includes species of oak, maple, Hebe and higher risk hosts of Coffea, Lavandula dentata, Nerium oleander, Olea europaea, Polygala myrtifolia and Prunus dulcis and many other popular plants for gardens, landscapes and forestry. The host list is updated frequently see https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/plant_health_biosecurity/legislation/emergency_measures/xylella-fastidiosa/susceptible_en

All UK authorised plant passporting businesses must have ‘host plants’ officially inspected annually and ensure plants are accompanied by a UK plant passport – see Annex 1 for hosts as of April 2019. In practice this means that landscapers, designers, retailers and anyone directly importing plants are now subject to the same stringent measures as growers and suppliers. The plant passport can be used to underpin and help businesses record audits and include in assurance schemes plants they have received or traded, as this in turn can help investigations into potential finds of the disease or limit any actions taken at premises.

Additional requirements apply to the higher risk hosts described above, which must be from a site where the annual official inspection includes systematic testing of the plants concerned, using a prescribed sampling system. These supplementary requirements took effect from 1st March 2018 and for Polygala myrtifolia plants on 9 October 2018.

Find out more about plant passports: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plant-health-controls
Passporters need to make contact with their local Plant Health Inspector if they trade in a *X. fastidiosa* hosts not covered by an existing authorisation.

Any nursery or other professional operator not previously authorised to trade in material covered by the plant passporting scheme should also contact their local Plant Health inspector to find out what may be required. Contact details are on page 2 of this guide.

Although the EU measures permit the movement of host plants from demarcated areas if they meet certain stringent conditions, in practice no nurseries have been authorised for plant passporting in such areas. If this were to change, there is a legal requirement to notify Plant Health Services of any ‘specified plants’ (as defined in the EU legislation) received from a demarcated area, to facilitate tracing and targeted checks. Details of currently demarcated areas are available on the European Commission website at: [http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/plant_health_biosecurity/legislation/emergency_measures/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/plant_health_biosecurity/legislation/emergency_measures/index_en.htm)

The UK has developed and published a contingency plan for dealing with *X. fastidiosa* should it be found. The UK plan is at [https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/uploads/Xylella-CP-May-19.pdf](https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/uploads/Xylella-CP-May-19.pdf)

### In the event of an interception or outbreak in the UK

The way a finding will be dealt with will depend on where the infection occurred, the risk or evidence of spread and what early actions are undertaken.

The first decision is on the need to demarcate an infected area and a buffer zone. Where there is evidence that the plants recently arrived on site already infected and vectors carrying the organism are not found then no demarcated area will be needed. To limit the risk of spread the Plant Health Service would require destruction of the host plants and is likely to destroy any potential hosts in close proximity.
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Where the disease is found on a plant and it has spread or there is risk that spread may have occurred then a 5 Km demarcated area is required but the eventual size and length of time it remains in place will depend on a risk assessment.

For isolated outbreaks resulting from introductions of infected plants where there is robust evidence that spread has not occurred and specified actions have been taken, it may be possible to reduce the buffer zone width to 1km and to revoke restrictions after a minimum 12 months period. Decisions on whether this provision would apply would be taken on a case by case basis.

These specified actions include removing all hosts irrespective of their health status immediately from within 100 m of the infected plants, an intensive survey to show that no infected plants or vectors are present in the infested area and no evidence of spread is detected within the 5 Km buffer zone.

Period of restrictions: If evidence of spread is detected then statutory movement restrictions will remain within a buffer of radius 5km for a five year minimum after official surveys have confirmed that \( X. \) \textit{fastidiosa} is not present. The ‘specified plants’ listed in the emergency decision could only be moved within or outside of the demarcated area (which is the infected area, plus a buffer zone of 5km), if they have been grown under physical protection and provided certain other requirements have been met. Insecticidal application will be required within the demarcated area in order to control vectors which spread \( X. \) \textit{fastidiosa}.

\[ X. \textit{fastidiosa} \] symptoms on \textit{Prunus} (cherry). Courtesy: Donato Boscia. CNR - Institute for sustainable plant protection, UOS, Bari (IT) Laboratory, Angers (FR)
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Industry best practice:

- Ensure that plant passports arriving with host plants are correct and keep the plant passport to aid trace back if necessary. This may also support assurance schemes your business may be in.

- Source from known suppliers or visit suppliers to view their processes, procedures, bio-security arrangements and the plants they grow. Follow the guidance on high risk hosts [https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/Xylella-host-info-notev8final.pdf](https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/Xylella-host-info-notev8final.pdf)

- Make sure that imported plants both originate from and are sourced from disease free areas. Details on infected (demarcated) areas in Europe [https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/plant/docs/ph_biosec_legis_list-demarcated-union-territory_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/plant/docs/ph_biosec_legis_list-demarcated-union-territory_en.pdf)

- Isolate or quarantine new batches of plants and monitor them during the growing season for signs of the disease – whilst not a legal requirement it is good practice to place ‘imported’ hosts of *Xylella* in a quarantine area – ideally a good distance away from other host plants and if possible place under physical protection. If any outbreak is confirmed all ‘host’ material within 100 m will need to be destroyed

- For contractors/designers, ensure that plants you use have been ordered early and monitored for disease in a low risk area, before being planted at their final destination.

- Label and keep records of the identity of all received batches of plants including: where the plants came from and when.

- Maintain records of pesticide treatments.

- Destroy old or unusable plants.

Annex 1: Host plants found to be susceptible to *X. fastidiosa* in the European Union:

- *Acacia dealbata*  
- *Acacia saligna*  
- *Acer pseudoplatanus*  
- *Amaranthus retroflexus*  
- *Anthyllis hermanniae*  
- *Artemisia arborescens*  
- *Asparagus acutifolius*  
- *Calicotome spinosa*  
- *Calicotome villosa*  
- *Catharanthus species*  
- *Cercis siliquastrum*  
- *Chenopodium album*  
- *Cistus albidus*  
- *Cistus creticus*  
- *Cistus monspeliensis*  
- *Cistus salviifolius*  
- *Coffea*  
- *Convululus cneorum*
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Coprosma repens
Coronilla glauca
Coronilla valentina
Cytisus scoparius
Cytisus villosus
Dimorphotheca fruticosa
Dodonaea viscosa
Elaeagnus angustifolia
Eremophila maculata
Erigeron bonariensis
Erigeron sumatrensis
Erysimum
Euphorbia chamaesyce
Euphorbia terracina
Euryops chrysanthemoides
Euryops pectinatus
Ficus carica
Fraxinus angustifolia
Genista x spachiana
Genista corsica
Genista ephedroides
Genista lucida
Grevillea juniperina
Hebe
Helichrysum italicum
Helichrysum stoechas
Heliotropium europaeum
Juglans regia
Laurus nobilis
Lavandula angustifolia
Lavandula dentata
Lavandula stoechas
Lavandula x allardii
Lavandula x chaytorae
Lavandula x intermedia
Lonicera japonica
Medicago sativa
Metrosideros excelsa
Myrtus communis
Myoporum insulare
Nerium oleander
Olea europea
Pelargonium x fragrans
Pelargonium graveolens
Phagnalon saxatile
Phillyrea latifolia
Polygala myrtifolia
Prunus armeniaca
Prunus avium
Prunus cerasifera
Prunus cerasus
Prunus domestica
Prunus dulcis
Quercus suber
Rhamnus alaternus
Rosa canina*
Rosmarinus officinalis
Spartium junceum
Streptocarpus
Teucrium capitatum
Ulex europaeus
Ulex minor
Veronica elliptica
Vinca
Vitis vinifera
Westringia fruticosa
Westringia glabra
*Rosa multiflora* was removed by EU Commission following notification from France.

Other sources of information:

- **EPPO (European Plant Protection Organisation)**: [http://www.eppo.int/QUARANTINE/special_topics/Xylella_fastidiosa/Xylella_fastidiosa.htm](http://www.eppo.int/QUARANTINE/special_topics/Xylella_fastidiosa/Xylella_fastidiosa.htm)
- **Pictures of hosts with symptoms at EPPO** [https://gd.eppo.int/taxon/XYLEFA/photos](https://gd.eppo.int/taxon/XYLEFA/photos)

For additional information on UK Plant Health please see:


Authors: Edward Birchall and Dan Munro (APHA)

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to APHA/PHSI, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1LZ Tel: 01904 405138; Email: planthealth.info@apha.gov.uk