



Collection Holder's Handbook

Updated November 2019



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Congratulations on becoming a holder of a National Plant Collection® !

This handbook aims to tell you where to find all the contacts or information you need to manage your National Plant Collection and outline the requirements for holding a National Plant Collection. We offer plenty of help and support through our network of volunteers, experts and office staff.

We keep rare plants growing...

As plants fall out of fashion or are superseded, vital genetic traits could simply vanish, unless they are taken into care and shared with others. If the expertise to grow and propagate them is also lost, our ability to properly conserve our unique garden flora is placed under significant threat.

Plant Heritage was formed to help minimise this risk across Britain and Ireland, to ensure our incredible diversity of cultivated plants, whether for food, medicine, ornament or heritage, remains available for the enjoyment and use of generations to come.

A wide range of amateur and professional gardeners, as well as organisations including county councils, botanic gardens, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and the National Trust (NT) hold National Plant Collections (NPCs).

Collectively they are managed by the conservation team at central office and supported locally by the National Collections Coordinators, part of the local structure of Plant Heritage.

To read more about our conservation strategy, here is a link to the page on our website:

www.plantheritage.org.uk/conservation/why-protect-garden-plants/

'A collection holder who has diligently studied his or her chosen field for years becomes as valuable as the collection itself' - Stephen Anderton, garden writer



Section 1

About the organisation and all the contacts you'll need

Plant Heritage is a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity.

The board of trustees are the directors of the company and their role is to manage the business of the company. Every member of Plant Heritage has a vote in appointing new Trustees.

Panels: members, through the following three panels direct the work of the charity:

- Plant Conservation
- Membership and Supporters
- Resources and Skills

The Plant Conservation Committee (PCC)

This is a committee of experts, regional coordinators and staff from the conservation team who have delegated authority from the board to manage the national collections scheme. They will have scrutinised the applications and approved your National Plant Collection.

The experts are professional horticulturists and botanists who have vast experience of their subject. regional coordinators report on collection issues in their areas. The conservation team manages all the applications and report on their areas of work.

This committee meets four times a year. If there are any changes in status to be made to your collection it has to be approved by the PCC.

There is a link in the [About Us](#) section on the website where you can see the present list of PCC members.

Plant Conservation Panel (PCP)

Meetings 4 times a year

This is a panel made up of members of the board, local group representatives, collection holders and experts, who monitor the conservation activities of Plant Heritage. They are responsible for the development of the conservation strategy, oversee the work of the conservation team and delivery of associated programmes and activities. A list of current members of this panel and the other panels that steer our work are in the [About Us](#) section of the website.



Nepenthes collection at Chester Zoo

The staff at central office and an outline of their responsibilities

Anyone below can be contacted on the office phone number

01483 447540

[See who's who on the website](#)

Conservation Manager

Responsible for overall delivery of Plant Heritage's conservation activities

Threatened Plants Programme Manager

In charge of the TPP, assessing threat status of cultivars in the UK

Plant Conservation Officer (PCO) – Collections and Coordinators

First point of contact for enquiries about your collection, new collections, changes to scope, getting new signboards

Plant Conservation Officer (PCO) – Data and Recordkeeping

Contact for changes to website or directory, plant database, plant guardians and recording issues

If you are not sure who to contact, email collections@plantheritage.org.uk and we will forward to the relevant person.

Contact membership@plantheritage.org.uk for enquiries and updates about your membership.

Contact comms@plantheritage.org.uk regarding shows, press, advertising and publications.

Contact fundraising@plantheritage.org.uk for enquiries regarding fundraising

Please note this is a busy, shared office and when there are large tasks to achieve or events to organise everyone will work on it.

News and communication from central office

Your contact with the office so far will have been through the proposal and application process in the run up to having the collection approved by the PCC. They will have provided feedback from the PCC, supplied you with the logos you need to add to your letter heads and an order form for display boards for your collection.

The team will now regularly update you on news, new collections, events and many other aspects of the charity's work. These come in the form of:

Digital

- **A quarterly e-Newsletter**
- **Blogs**, we have a general Plant Heritage blog www.plantheritage.wordpress.com and one specifically aimed at Collection Holders www.collectionholdernews.wordpress.com
- **Website**, www.plantheritage.org.uk
- **Social media**, we are on Facebook [@OurPlantHeritage](https://www.facebook.com/OurPlantHeritage), Twitter [@PlantHeritage](https://twitter.com/PlantHeritage) and Instagram [@PlantHeritage](https://www.instagram.com/PlantHeritage)

Print

- **The Journal**, published biannually in Spring and Autumn
- **The Directory**, published annually in Spring

Your local group

National Collections coordinator

Your area or county collections coordinator is your main contact for support and advice. Their role is voluntary and their interest in plants and conservation is why they give their time to this important role.

Coordinators receive training when they take on the role and they report to the plant conservation team. They send annual reports to the Plant Conservation Committee through their regional coordinator. If there are no volunteers to take on the coordinators role in your area, the staff team at the office will cover this until someone is found.

You will find a list of area coordinators in the National Plant Collections directory or on the [web site](#).

Local group activities

Most counties or areas have an active local group with a committee that will organise talks, garden visits, publish regular newsletters and organise other events such as propagation workshops, plant sales or seed swaps. You are of course encouraged to get involved.

See the [local groups page](#) of the website for details in your area.

You will find all the current contact details for local group volunteers on the website or in the annual Directory. The local group committee member contacts are listed on the back of the local newsletter.

In summary:

- Your local collections coordinator is your main contact.
- Central office staff will keep you up to date with news and events such as workshops.
- The Plant Conservation Committee (PCC) make all the decisions to do with approving or changing the status of national collections.
- Trustees who are voluntary members are appointed to run the charity. If you would like to get involved see the [About Us](#) section of the website
- All contacts can be found on the Plant Heritage website



Collection of *Hyacinthus orientalis* held by Alan Shipp, Cambs

Section 2

Practical requirements for managing your collection

As a proven expert in your field you will not need advice about the cultural aspects of your collection. There are however a few requirements set out to maintain the quality and integrity of the National Plant Collections scheme:

Membership

You must renew your membership of Plant Heritage each year.

Labelling

Clear and permanent labelling of the collection, which should be visible to visitors, is a requirement of the scheme. Identification and correct naming are of paramount importance. We recommend a double labelling system, such as sinking an extra label down into the side of a pot as a back up. We recommend keeping a plan or map of plant locations in garden collections. There are links in the appendices to label suppliers. We can supply cost price plastic stick-in labels to collection holders—contact us for details.



Engraved plant label

Plant list

To have your collection approved you will have had to provide a properly accessioned list of plants, correctly named. For more details on writing an accessioned plant list, [see the article in the Resources section](#) of the website. You are also asked to outline what expert contacts you use and how you make sure your plants are identified correctly. As of 2016, our preferred method of keeping plant records is on our online database Persephone, unless you are already using another recognised botanical database (eg IrisBG).

For more information on Persephone and how it can help you manage the plant records, images and information about the plants in your collection, see the [Persephone page](#) in the Resources section of the website.

Propagation

Most collection holders are required to routinely propagate their plants for maintenance or breeding and importantly, to have back up plants for your collection. Depending on the space and type of collection you have, we ask that you keep THREE specimens of each taxa in your collection, unless it is collection of larger shrubs or trees where ONE specimen is required, but with evidence of ongoing propagation.

If you feel that you would like to pass on the specialist propagation skills you have developed, or record them, you could contact your local group or office staff to discuss this.

Herbarium specimens

We encourage you to contribute to herbaria. Herbarium specimens have been in use since the introduction of standardised plant identification. The RHS, Kew, Natural History Museum and some universities are in possession of some of the earliest recorded specimens which are still used to this day to identify species. The RHS Wisley Herbarium is trying to collect herbaria sheets for all cultivars grown in the UK and are very willing to accept specimens from national collection holders. The RHS Colour chart is used and may be available for loan from your group or from central office, to ensure the colours of the specimens are recorded before they fade in the drying process. For help and advice on taking ⁷ herbarium specimens please [see the website](#) under Conservation and Cultivation advice. There are also regular workshops that can help you with the process.

Assistance for National Collection Holders

Plant Heritage provide you with support and assistance where it can.

Practical

Practical assistance can be provided by your local group in the form of work parties for either practical maintenance or help with record keeping. Tasks must relate to your collection of course. Volunteers always welcome an opportunity to learn more about a plant group. Contact your local coordinator.

Educational

We aim to run free workshops on subjects of interest to NCHs such as taxonomy, preparing herbaria sheets, photographing collections and support with using the Persephone plant recording database. These are advertised through our e-newsletters and on the website.

Financial

The Plant Heritage bursary is advertised once a year through our newsletter and website and can provide funding to help with researching, interpreting or displaying your collection.

Local groups may give small grants to help with the costs of developing your collection. These can include examples like sourcing plant material, relabelling a collection or disease testing. You may be asked to give feedback or progress reports to the group. The local committee makes the decision on these using agreed guidelines. Funding for general running costs are not included.

You are encouraged to apply for grants and bursaries a wide range of charitable trusts and institutions. The conservation team will support you through the process if you need help or advice. Details for all of the above can be found on the [Bursaries and Awards](#) page of the website.

Researching your collection

It is helpful to know what resources are available if you wish to pursue research into your collection. The RHS libraries at Wisley, Hyde Hall, Rosemoor, Harlow Carr and Central London are open to anyone by appointment. JSTOR is an online digital library of academic journals, books and primary sources which collection holders can access for free. Please contact us for login details.

Herbaria can be a source of early plant specimens for comparison. See section above for details.

There are many useful websites for researching plants. For guidance on correct plant nomenclature, please see the Hortax website. Certain taxa have an International Cultivar Registry and organisations such as Kew and the BGCI maintain large online databases of plants. Links to these and more are in the appendix.

In summary:

- Collection holders are members of Plant Heritage.
- A double labelling system should be used for your plants.
- Records and plant lists are regularly updated and preferably held in an electronic form such as the Plant Heritage online database Persephone.
- Arrangements should be made for the propagation of your plant collection.
- Unless you have a physically large collection, like trees or large shrubs, it is a requirement to hold THREE of each plant—see requirements for holding a National Collection.
- You are encouraged to contribute specimens to the Herbarium at RHS Wisley.
- Practical or financial assistance can be arranged

Section 3

Administration of the collection

Annual reports

You are required to provide the conservation team in the office with an annual report, either by completing the [Annual Report](#) form, or if you prefer to use a more narrative style you can use the form as a guide for what needs to be included and send it by post or email.

Directory

The National Plant Collections Directory is published and sent out to all members annually. The same details are available on the website. The office staff will ask you annually to confirm your details for the entry that applies to your collection and details of any open days.

Record keeping

We ask that you provide us with a new plant list every two years, plus additions and losses on the Annual Report if no plant list submitted for that year.

If you are using Persephone you should make your records available for the staff to view. As long as we are informed that the plant records are up to date ie, on your annual report, then we will view your plant list there.

It is also useful to keep cultural notes and photographs as your collection develops, particularly if you have an interest in breeding. Photos of the collections may also be used on our website. These can be added to your database records, making some fields confidential if you prefer.

Coordinator visits

The local coordinator visits to see you and the collection every two years. They may ask to see plant records if you have not made them available using Persephone. The coordinator is there to act as a liaison between you, the collection holder and central office so the visit is a valuable opportunity for you to raise any questions you may have. The form used by the coordinator to feedback to the office is in the [Collection Coordinator resources](#) section of the website.

If you plan to make any changes to your collection such as from Provisional to Full status, a coordinator visit is necessary so they can write a short report before it goes to the Plant Conservation Committee for approval.



Primula 'Pridhamsleigh' from the collection of 'Double Primroses: *Primula vulgaris*' in Cornwall

Open days

One of the requirements of holding a national collection is to make it available for others to see. Some collections are in gardens open to the public. With a private collection you can state a preference for visits by appointment or set an annual open day. Some collection holders combine this with opening their garden through the National Gardens Scheme or holding a fundraising event with plant sales or a talk on their specialist collection.

You can publicise your open day(s) in the Directory, published annually in March, and on the Plant Heritage website. We will also share on our social media sites. If you post on social media, please use the hashtags #PlantHeritage #NationalPlantCollections #PlantDiversity or #PlantConservation.

For help publicising the day locally contact your local group or coordinator. Another great place to advertise is on local notice boards, parish magazines and radio stations.

As a collection holders you have insurance with us relating to opening your collection to the public. [The insurance document](#) is available on the website.

The Brickell Award

The Brickell Award was established in 2003 to celebrate the jubilee year of the NCCPG, now Plant Heritage. It was named after Chris Brickell, one of the founding members of the organisation.

This prestigious award recognises the extensive and vital conservation work carried out by many collection holders and is awarded to those who have demonstrated excellence in this field.

[Full details and the criteria](#) upon which the award is judged is on the website.

In summary:

- Send your Annual Report to central office
- Confirm details for the directory.
- Keep plant records and lists up to date.
- Your local collections coordinator will visit you to see the collection every two years.
- The collection needs to be made available for members or public visits. Open days are a good way of making this a controlled annual event.
- Collection holders have some insurance through Plant Heritage for open days.
- Collection holders demonstrating excellence can be nominated for the prestigious Brickell Award.



Sarah Cook receiving the Brickell Award at Hampton Court 2018, with Chris Brickell and Alan Titchmarsh

Change of scope

Additions or losses of plants to your collection may make it appropriate to change the scope or name of the collection. If for example you started with just deciduous examples of *Agapanthus* but have since collected evergreens, you may wish to change the scope to include the entire breadth of your collection. Contact your local coordinator or the plant conservation team for advice.

Retirement

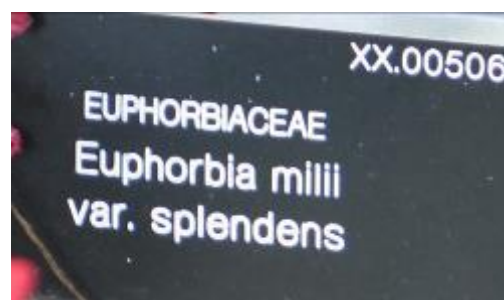
If you have reached a point where you want to retire from holding a collection, please let your coordinator and the office know as soon as possible. It is of such importance to our conservation aims that we ask you to consider a plan for the succession of the collection on your application form. It's an issue that can be difficult to discuss but we are very keen to keep or pass on both the collection and the records and expertise you will have gathered over the years. There are many ways we can help to ensure the future of your collection – please speak to one of the conservation team for advice.

Scientific Collection status

If you are actively carrying out research on your collection, publishing reference papers, writing articles and sharing your findings you could be eligible to apply for scientific status. Should you wish to consider it, we encourage you to visit the [Apply for Scientific Status](#) page on the website and contact the conservation team who will be happy to take your request to the PCC, who will appoint a mentor to guide you through the process.

Summary

- Change to the scope of a collection must be agreed by the PCC
- We require that you make a plan for the succession of your collection where at all possible
- Contact your local coordinator or the office if you have any questions about the above



Section 5

Plant Heritage conservation initiatives explained

The Plant Exchange

The [Plant Heritage Plant Exchange scheme](#) is designed to increase the diversity of garden plants available in cultivation and to help conserve plants in danger of being lost. It enables members and collection holders to offer rare, threatened and unusual plants freely to other members, and request plants which are difficult to obtain or which have disappeared from the horticulture trade. Members who wish to participate in the scheme can request from or offer plants to the Exchange by contacting the Plant Exchange organiser in their area group, local contact or the office if your area does not have a local organiser. National Collection Holders are given priority for receiving plants if requesting plants for their collection.

The exchange historically takes place at the national AGM. Members are asked to offer and request plants by their local group organiser, after which the lists of offers and requests are sent out to group members and published in your local newsletter updates. They are also on our website.

We recommend that plants from the Plant Exchange, as with all new plants for your collection are put into a 'quarantine' area for approx. 6 weeks to monitor plant health and possible pest or disease.



Delivering plants from members for our annual Plant Exchange

The Threatened Plants Programme

We have a dedicated Threatened Plants Programme Manager who has created a massive resource of information that can match plant lists to many published botanical and trade plant database records in order to ascertain which plants on a collections list could be threatened in cultivation. This work is on going and depends on a continued flow of information. Experts including national collection holders contribute by helping to assess the conservation value of a plant.

See the [TPP web pages](#) for more details

The Plant Guardian scheme

Our [Plant Guardian scheme](#) allows members who cannot house a whole collection to become actively involved in the conservation of cultivated plants from their own back garden, greenhouse, allotment or windowsill. Once plants are submitted [through the online registration form](#), the conservation team assess whether a plant is rare, and if eligible, members will be welcomed as a Plant Guardian. Often these plants have come from the annual plant exchange. We publish the list on our website, so people searching for a plant know that it is being kept safe by one of our members.

Plant Guardians and collection holders are encouraged to propagate and share plants to ensure their continued survival.

Section 6

Legislation affecting national collection holders

There are many legal issues associated with a plant collection, (eg, plant breeding, water management and plant health) that you may need to be aware of at some point as your collection builds. You will find specific information sheets on the Plant Heritage website under Collection Holder resources.

Many of these subjects are discussed and updated via the collection holders newsletter and at the regular conferences organised by the conservation team for collection holders.

Plant collection

Protected species - CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement that came into force in 1975. The import, export and use for commercial gain of certain species requires a CITES permit. For plants, the list includes mainly orchid, cacti, succulents, medicinal plants and cycads.

Follow these links for more information:

[Guidance on CITES import & exports \(UK government\)](#)

[List of species covered by CITES](#)

Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) - the Nagoya Protocol

The Nagoya Protocol is an agreement part of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which deals globally with the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources.

From **12th October 2014**, this legally binding international agreement covers **wild collecting** of plants and **associated traditional knowledge** from more than 100 signatory countries.

It is the responsibility of the collection holder to ensure that they have undertaken the necessary steps to legally obtain and utilise plant material collected under the terms of this agreement. Users of genetic material will be required to obtain prior informed consent from the owner of those resources, on mutually agreed terms. For example, should a plant-hunting trip be organised to country X to collect seed of species Y, it will be necessary to find out what the legal requirements with regard to plant collecting and ABS are in that country. See links for more details:

[The Nagoya Protocol - guidance for National Collection Holders](#)

[Convention on Biological Diversity - CBD \(1992\)](#)



Scadoxus membranaceus ©Jonathan Hutchinson

Water management

National Collection Holders have an exemption from water use restrictions, such as hosepipe bans, for watering the plants in their collections. To find out more about temporary bans on water use please refer to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 [linked here](#) (page 25)

The exemption for National Plant Collections is explained in the [Water Use Order 2010](#) (page 3) The most recent guidance to water companies on water use restrictions 2013 is [Managing through drought](#) (page 20 no.3)

Plant health

As a collection holder, you will be aware of plant health issues affecting the plants in your collection, but there are resources available to help you with this. The [guidance to biosecurity](#) provided by the National Trust gives information on how to protect your National Collection from pests & diseases.

The main resource for plant health is the [UK Plant Health Information Portal](#), maintained by DEFRA. The [UK Plant Health Risk Register](#) records and rates risks from pests to UK crops, trees, gardens and ecosystems. A search function is available by plant name or pest name.

The [RHS advice](#) pages of their website have over 400 searchable advice sheets in the 'garden health' section, which covers a wide range of garden plant health problems.

Tree Health—For news and resources on tree pests and diseases, see the [Forest Research website](#). If you would like to be more involved, in monitoring and reporting tree health concerns, see the [Observatree website](#).

Plant Breeders Rights

Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) are granted to new cultivars in order to give the breeder exclusive control over the propagating material from that plant for a certain number of years. If you have cultivars with PBRs in your collection you should be aware of restrictions on the propagation and sale of these plants. For more information on how PBRs are assessed and on the cultivars that have a PBR, see the [NIAB website](#). You also may want to apply for PBR on cultivars that you have bred. More information can be found on the relevant [DEFRA page](#).

Cross border plant movements

Moving plant material around **within the EU** is permitted, but with restrictions on certain taxa, **particularly those that can host certain pests and diseases**.

New rules for plant passports come into force on 13th December 2019. Some plant genera will need a plant passport for travel anywhere in the EU, others just for moving into restricted areas. For up to date guidance including the lists of which plant groups are covered by this legislation, see the [DEFRA website](#). It is also best to check with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) if you intend to import large quantities to the UK for any reason.

Bringing in plants from **outside the EU** will usually require a phytosanitary certificate, issued by the origin country [full guidance available on the .www.gov.uk website](#).

DEFRA are providing [updates regarding Brexit](#) and likely effects on plant movement within the EU.

APPENDIX

USEFUL CONTACTS

National Organisations:

The Royal Horticultural Society – <http://www.rhs.org.uk>

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew – <http://www.rbgekew.org.uk>

The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh – <http://www.rbge.org.uk>

PlantNetwork – <http://www.plantnetwork.org>

The National Trust – <http://nationaltrust.org.uk>

The National Trust for Scotland – <http://www.nts.org.uk>

The Woodland Trust - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) - <http://www.defra.gov.uk/>

Natural History Museum - <http://www.nhm.ac.uk>

Botanical Society of the British Isles - <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/>

The Irish Botanic gardens - <http://botanicgardens.ie/>

Northern Ireland's Flora and Fauna - <http://www.habitas.org.uk/>

The Irish Naturalist Journal - <http://www.habitas.org.uk/inj/index.html>

Arboricultural Association - <http://www.trees.org.uk>

Royal Forestry Society - <http://www.rfs.org.uk>

English Heritage - <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/>

Hortax - <http://www.hortax.org.uk>

International Organisations:

Fauna and Flora International – <http://www.fauna-flora.org/>

Botanic Gardens Conservation International - <http://www.bgci.org/>

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) - <http://www.cites.org/>

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - <https://www.cbd.int/>

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - <http://www.unep.org/>

Plantlife International - <http://www.plantlife.org.uk/>

Global Trees Campaign - <http://www.globaltrees.org/default.asp>

Earth Watch Institute - <http://www.earthwatch.org>

Plant Talk - <http://www.plant-talk.org>

International Society of Arboriculture - <http://www.isa-uki.org/>

Online Databases:

Kew Plants of the World Online—<http://www.plantsoftheworldonline.org>

RHS Horticulture database—<https://apps.rhs.org.uk/horticulturaldatabase/>

International Cultivar Registration Authorities (ICRAs) - <https://www.ishs.org/sci/taxlist/taxlist.htm>

JSTOR Herbaria search—<https://plants.jstor.org/>

Harvard University Herbaria - <https://huh.harvard.edu/pages/collections>

International Plant Names Index (IPNI) - <http://www.ipni.org/index.html>

The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew - <http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/data/index.html>

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species - <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

Flora of China - http://www.efloras.org/flora_page.aspx?flora_id=2

Wikispecies - <http://species.wikimedia.org/wiki/Plantae>

Australian Botanical Databases - <http://www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/databases/index.html>

International Organization for Plant Information - <http://www.bgbm.org/IOPI/GPC/default.asp>

Internet Directory for Botany - <http://www.botany.net/IDB/>

BRAHMS Database - <http://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk>

Plants for the Future Database - <http://www.pfaf.org>

The Linnaean Database - <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/jdsml/research-curation/projects/linnaean-typification/>

Label Suppliers and Engraving Services:

LBS Horticulture - <https://www.lbsbuyersguide.co.uk/>

The Essentials Company - <http://www.theessentialscountry.co.uk>

Bradenham Hall Gardens - <https://www.bradenhamhall.co.uk/garden-labels/>

Wells&Winter - <http://www.wellsandwinter.co.uk/>

The Garden Superstore - <http://www.thegardensuperstore.co.uk/>

Harrod Horticulture - <http://www.harrodhorticultural.com>

Labels and Things - <http://www.labelsnthings.co.uk/>

NFC tags—<https://seritag.com/>