



Press Pack: About Plant Heritage

Plant Heritage is a leading plant conservation charity that champions and conserves a huge variety of garden plants – from garden favourites to rare gems – to ensure as many different varieties remain in cultivation as possible, and don't become lost from our gardens.

Founded almost 50 years ago, in 1978, the charity has grown from strength to strength to help maintain the UK's rich horticultural history which is becoming increasingly under threat from climate change, emerging pests and diseases or changing fashions and trends. We have thousands of members and hundreds of dedicated volunteers, supported by a small team of paid staff. Our royal patron is HM The King and our President is Alan Titchmarsh CBE.

To find out more about Plant Heritage, visit www.plantheritage.org.uk or get in touch (tel 01483 447540 or email comms@plantheritage.org.uk)

National Plant Collections

Plant Heritage's [National Plant Collections](#) are at the heart of the charity's work. These 'living plant libraries' protect and keep many different plant groups alive – from houseplants and garden plants to herbs and even trees. There are over 720 different National Plant Collections across the UK and Ireland, which come in all shapes and sizes and together contain nearly 100,000 different plants. New collections are reviewed and accredited every quarter by our Plant Collections Committee.

Together the National Plant Collections are a vital resource that help mitigate against the challenges of climate change and are hugely important for a range of pollinators too, which further encourages nature and biodiversity to thrive in the UK's gardens and green spaces. Without the National Plant Collections, a whole host of garden plants could easily become lost if they aren't being cared for.

Collections are more accessible than people realise, and are found everywhere from windowsills, back gardens and allotments to plant nurseries, parks, arboretums and botanical gardens. There are even collections in schools, zoos and recently in a pub garden and a women's prison, too. The National Plant Collections are available for the public to visit and admire, either by appointment, on special open days, or as part of the National Garden Scheme Open Gardens.

Plant Guardians

[Plant Guardians](#) grow and nurture one or more rare and unusual plants in their own space, whether indoors on a windowsill or outdoors in a garden, greenhouse, allotment. Anyone can become a Plant Guardian and can take part in active plant conservation without needing to hold a National Plant Collection. Keeping plants safe via the Plant Guardian scheme is another hugely important way of ensuring that a variety of plants are protected for future generations.

The Missing Collections campaign

Every year Plant Heritage highlights a selection of plant groups that aren't yet part of the National Plant Collections scheme, via its Missing Collections list.

This list encourages gardeners across the country to consider adopting one of the plant groups highlighted in a bid to protect more plants into the future. By starting a new National Plant Collection, anyone can play an active – and vital – role in plant conservation. New Collection Holders also get to join Plant Heritage’s vibrant community of fellow gardeners with a love for growing, sharing and saving plants.

Since the campaign began in 2016, many plant groups have been saved and are cared for as part of a National Plant Collection, including cottage-garden staples hollyhocks and fragrant *Daphne*. These new collections have joined the existing 700+ National Plant Collections found across the country.

Attending major gardening shows and events

You will find Plant Heritage at major RHS flower shows including Chelsea and Hampton Court/Badminton, as well as other regional shows. Our displays are intended to educate and engage the public about plant conservation and showcase examples of National Collections as well as missing collections.

The annual Plant Exchange

Members of Plant Heritage come together to exchange rare and unusual garden plants every year – more than 800 plants were swapped in 2025. The free [Plant Exchange](#) ensures that by distributing plants round the country, plants in danger of being lost can be re-established. Members are encouraged to propagate these plants and pass them on, helping to secure their future.

Threatened Plants Programme

Plant Heritage started the [Threatened Plants Programme](#) in 2009. It combines data from the RHS Plant Finder with Plant Heritage’s records from the National Plant Collections, Plant Guardians, the Plant Exchange and cultivar lists from over 2,000 botanic and historic gardens in the UK and Ireland.

From this, Plant Heritage can track the locations and availability of different plants to see how rare or threatened they are. If a plant is no longer available for sale through nurseries, it’s considered ‘Threatened in cultivation’. Threatened plants may be ‘Critical in cultivation’ (not found alive), ‘Endangered in cultivation’ (grown in only one or two locations), or ‘Vulnerable in cultivation’ (grown in three or more sites). Once this is known, Plant Heritage provides advice on how to stop this plant from being lost through propagation and sharing at the Plant Exchange.

Funding

Plant Heritage relies on hundreds of dedicated volunteers to ensure its vital plant conservation work is possible. The charity is funded solely by members, trusts and foundations, corporate sponsors and individuals. We work closely with leading organisations including the RHS, the National Trust and National Trust for Scotland and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and Edinburgh.