

Press release: Tightened measures to protect the country from Xylella

Olive trees (*Olea europaea*) will soon be added to the government's list of tree species included in the plant health statutory notification scheme for imports from the EU. These new measures, coming into force on 26 November, will strengthen the UK's protection against the risk of the plant disease Xylella.

The statutory notification scheme involves a legal requirement to notify the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) in advance of the import of certain trees and plants from EU member states.

Olive trees are known hosts of the bacterium Xylella which causes disease in a wide range of plants grown in the UK and its introduction could have a significant effect on our landscapes. The government is following the situation in Europe closely where the disease has devastated olive groves in southern Italy and was recently intercepted at a wholesaler in Belgium.

Adding olive trees to the notification scheme is part of the government's risk-based approach in tackling tree and plant diseases. It will help APHA inspectors target specific imported plant consignments, giving the best chance of intercepting any diseased plants at an early stage.

These new measures apply to England only but other parts of the UK are considering the introduction of equivalent legislation.

Biosecurity Minister Lord Gardiner said:

Xylella is a major threat to our landscape and our industry and we must do all we can to ensure the UK remains a Xylella-free zone. That is why we have introduced tighter measures around the import of certain high risk plant hosts, such as olive trees, which will come into force later this month.''

Alongside these tightened measures we urge the public and tree and plant professionals to remain vigilant for signs of Xylella, practice good biosecurity measures and to notify authorities without delay if the disease is suspected.

All growers and traders should take the following actions:

- ensure imported plants both originate from and are sourced from disease free areas
- source from known suppliers or visit suppliers to view their processes, procedures, bio-security arrangements and the plants they grow
- isolate or quarantine new batches of plants and monitor them during the growing season for signs of the disease

- ensure that plant passports arriving with plants are correct and keep the plant passport to aid trace back if necessary
- follow the full [guidance on Gov.uk](#), including requirements on notifying imports to APHA.

This update to the legislation follows the launch of the government's first [Tree Health Resilience Strategy](#) in May, which pledged tough action to protect the nation's trees from pests, diseases and climate change.

Read the [updated legislation](#).