

Rhwydwaith Sentinel Cymru Wales Sentinel Network

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Mewn Partneriaeth â
Llywodraeth Cymru
In Partnership with
Welsh Government



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency
Asiantaeth
Iechyd Anifeiliaid
a Phlanhigion

Hello everyone!

I'm really pleased to be sending you the inaugural quarterly newsletter for the Wales Sentinel Network.

Through this newsletter we aim to:

- Keep you up to date with the latest plant health issues across Wales and the UK
- Highlight opportunities to work with other organisations to improve the biosecurity and resilience of your sites
- Feature events which staff or volunteers may be interested in attending
- Promote working relationships and knowledge transfer between the sites

This newsletter is aimed at supporting the 22 sentinel sites across Wales who have signed up to the Wales Sentinel Site Network, but please feel free to share with other interested parties. We would welcome contributions to future newsletters and please contact Daniel.Wood001@gov.wales for further information.

This week marks Plant Health Week 2022, which aims to raise awareness of protecting plant health, which then protects the benefits that plants provide to us, the environment and the economy. During Plant Health week there are a wide variety of ongoing activities planned and further information including social media posts can be found at [Plant Health Action |](#).

The Sentinel Site Network

This newsletter may be the first time some readers have encountered the Sentinel Site Network. The network is a group of parks and gardens across the whole of Wales. Each park is located in one of the 22 Local Authorities and all sites receive 2 site visits per year from APHA Plant Health and Seeds Inspectors.

The network aims to act as an early warning system for plant pests and diseases as well as providing opportunities for stakeholder engagement and training events for volunteers and staff. APHA colleagues conduct plant health operations and Welsh Government co-ordinate the project.

Plant Health Alert

Phytophthora pluvialis

Phytophthora pluvialis, is a fungal-like pathogen known to affect a variety of trees including western hemlock, tanoak, pine (*Pinus radiata*, *Pinus patula* and *Pinus strobus*) and Douglas-fir. It was originally reported in Oregon, USA in 2013 on tanoak and Douglas fir and was subsequently identified as the pathogen responsible for 'red needle cast' of radiata pine in New Zealand.

Symptoms

Phytophthora pluvialis is reported to cause needle cast – where needles turn brown and fall off – as well as shoot dieback and lesions on the stem, branches and roots.

A [symptom guide](#) has been prepared by Forest Research to provide further information on *Phytophthora pluvialis* illustrating symptomatic trees.



Example of *Phytophthora pluvialis* lesions on a tree stem.

Phytophthora pluvialis was discovered in a woodland in Cornwall in September 2021, where it was found to be affecting mature western hemlock and Douglas-fir trees. Following extensive surveillance, 15 outbreak sites have been discovered in Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire, Powys, Newport, Monmouthshire and Rhondda Cynon Taf alongside Cornwall, Devon, Cumbria, Surrey and Scotland.

In Wales, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are carrying out additional surveys.

The Welsh Government have introduced 5 Demarcated Areas across Wales around Crychan, Radnor, Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire and South East Wales to reduce the spread of the disease. Movement restrictions of material capable of spreading *Phytophthora pluvialis* include restrictions on felling and the movement of susceptible material in these areas.

Reporting Sightings

Please remain vigilant for signs of *Phytophthora pluvialis*. If you think you have spotted signs of this disease anywhere in Great Britain then please tell us using [TreeAlert](#).

Summary of 2021 Sentinel Site Network Developments

In February 2021, a virtual meeting of the Sentinel Site Network took place. During this meeting the former Minister for Energy, Environment and Rural Affairs welcomed the Sentinel Site members, bringing the network together for the first time.

Since then, inspections by APHA inspectors have continued to take place twice a year including during Covid-19. These inspections have yet to find anything unusual, but action has been taken on *Phytophthora ramorum* on Rhododendron. *Phytophthora ramorum* has also been found on some unusual hosts elsewhere in Wales including Paulownia and Araucaria. *Dothistroma septosporum* (red band needle blight) has also been found.

Current key threats at the moment are - Sweet chestnut blight, Ash die back, *Phytophthora ramorum* & *kernoviae* and Oak Processionary Moth. More information can be found on these through the plant health portal <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/>.

Promotional Material

Recently, Sentinel Site promotional material has been distributed to sites throughout the network. Interpretation boards have been installed on sites alongside signs and posters for public displays. We welcome any photos of these which can be shared throughout the network, on social media and in future newsletters.

Additional projects

International Plant Sentinel Network

The International Plant Sentinel Network (IPSN) is an initiative created with a focus on linking botanic gardens and arboreta, National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPOs) and plant health scientists to provide an early warning system of new and emerging pest and pathogen risks. It is led by Botanic Gardens Conservation International, with diagnostic support from Fera Science Ltd. Through both national and international partnerships the network creates and shares:

- Examples of best practice
- Standardising monitoring and surveying methodologies
- Training materials to increase capability among member gardens
- Access to diagnostic support
- Databases to share and store information amongst partners and NPPOs

Tree Alert

Tree Alert has been developed to gather information about the health of the nation's trees, woodlands and forests. The information supplied will support important tree health monitoring and surveillance work, contribute to ongoing scientific research in this field and, ultimately support efforts to protect the nations trees. If you think there are signs of tree pests or diseases please report these using [TreeAlert](#) for investigation.

Be Plant Wise

Help our native wildlife to thrive by stopping the spread of invasive plants!



The wrong plant in the wrong place can be damaging to the environment. Invasive plants can harm native wildlife, impact on the economy and the way we live.

Once established, invasive plants are costly to control and the damage they cause can be irreversible. Pond and aquarium plants can be particularly devastating if they escape into a natural waterbody.

Be Plant Wise by following three simple tips:



Choose the right plants for your garden, pond and water features.



Keep your plants in your garden – don't plant them, or allow them to grow, in the wild.



Dispose of your unwanted plants, roots, weeds, seeds, and seed heads responsibly.

Observatree

[Observatree](#) is a UK network of highly skilled volunteers consisting of 200 citizen scientists. They undertake a range of surveys to assist with spotting new tree pests or diseases and monitoring the spread of existing ones.

Observatree volunteers focus on 22 pests and diseases which are of highest concern. We train volunteers to be able to identify and report these threats. We also encourage tree health professionals, and people actively involved with trees, to report any findings of concern. More eyes on the ground means a greater chance of earlier detection. A wide range of resources and training materials are freely available to help you improve your tree health knowledge.

Action Oak

Our iconic oak trees face a fight for survival against pests and diseases that have the potential to devastate the oak population.

These include

- Oak processionary moth
- Acute oak decline
- Root-attacking species of honey fungus
- Powdery mildews

Losing oak trees from our landscape will impact our well-being, economy, environment and the species that depend on them.

Research and monitoring has begun but we must do more to ensure we protect our majestic oak trees for future generations to enjoy.

We encourage anyone who has an interest in oak trees to visit the [Action Oak website](#) for the latest news, research and resources.

Tyfu Cymru



[Tyfu Cymru](#) delivers industry specific support and training to build the capacity and capability of the Welsh horticulture sector. It responds to both immediate needs and provides leadership to equip businesses with the knowledge and practical skills for green and inclusive growth. This is achieved through disseminating knowledge and encouraging best practice through [workshop and events](#), [specialist advice](#), [training programmes](#) etc.



Tyfu Cymru's [Integrated Pest and Disease Management \(IPDM\) Programme](#) reduces environmental risks through the utilisation of natural resources, natural predators and bioprotectants, and the targeted use of agrochemicals. The programme supports businesses increase productivity through a reduction in losses and reduce their use of agrochemical application, in doing so protecting and enhancing biodiversity, water quality, and soil health.



Wales Plant Health Evidence & Advisory Group

The years 2020/21 were designated as the International Year of Plant Health. Tyfu Cymru hosted the Wales Plant Health Conference which drew attention to the importance of plant health in food, gardens, forests and natural habitats and the threats to biosecurity. The Welsh strategies for plant health need to be world-leading in the same way that Wales has led in sustainable development.

So, following the Conference, WPHEAG was formed, working with the Welsh Government and APHA, to provide dialogue and information exchange between those with interests in commercial horticulture. It discusses emerging or developing issues on plant health, collects evidence and informs policy.

The Group comprises members from the Welsh Government, APHA, NRW, National Botanic Garden of Wales, ADAS, RHS, HTA, ConFor, Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities and grower representatives, all providing essential input to the work of the Group. Tyfu Cymru provide the secretariat and the Group is chaired by Dr David Skydmore.

The Group looks forward to working with the Site Sentinel Network in horizon scanning, detection of pests and diseases and contributing to policy development.

New Bee Friendly Booklet: Planting for Pollinators

We all have an important role to play in pollinator conservation. As part of the Bee Friendly Scheme, Welsh Government has published a new booklet [Planting for Pollinators](#). No matter what kind of growing space you have, the booklet is full of good ideas and top tips. To accompany the booklet they have also produced a set of three posters to welcome pollinators in to your: [balcony and yard](#), [community](#) and [garden](#) space.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales' science team has provided expert advice detailing some of the top plants for pollinators, to guide growers on what to plant throughout the year. Other members of the Wales Pollinator Taskforce have provided advice on how cutting your grass less often can help pollinators, pollinator plants that are suitable for containers and how to make new plants through seed sowing, cutting, division and layering.

The recently published Planting for Pollinators booklet is to help people with the first Bee Friendly theme (Food – provide pollinator friendly food sources) but also mentions the second theme (Five star accommodation – providing places for pollinators to live) about providing shelter for pollinators.

You can find out more about the Bee Friendly scheme and download a booklet or poster here: <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Bee-Friendly>

For hard copies please e-mail: NatureConservation@gov.wales

Upcoming events

Welsh Government are currently working with colleagues from Forest Research, APHA, NRW and the sentinel sites to organise a series of events around biosecurity and plant health this year.

We are aiming to run quarterly virtual workshops where your networks can ask experts questions on specific pests and diseases or on certain campaigns and programmes and further information on these will be sent to you this year.

We are also planning an annual Sentinel Site member meeting, similar to the 2021 virtual meeting where there will be opportunities to discuss the network together, share best practice and work together.

If you have any suggestions or ideas for the content of these or other events, please contact Daniel.Wood001@gov.wales.