

Press Pack: About Plant Heritage

Founded in 1978, [Plant Heritage](#) is a world leading cultivated plant conservation charity, for plants that have been collected, bred or grown in UK gardens.

The UK has a rich horticultural history and is home to a nation of gardeners, but this history doesn't maintain itself. Plant Heritage aims to conserve and safeguard the UK's horticultural heritage by keeping living examples of garden plants in the National Plant Collections scheme, or with Plant Guardians.

The main elements of Plant Heritage's work are:

National Plant Collections

Plant Heritage's [National Plant Collections](#) are living plant libraries, showcasing the amazing diversity of our nation's cultivated plants. They are created, and curated, by individuals or organisations who are passionate about protecting the diversity of the nation's rich flora. There are around 700 National Plant Collections in the UK, with new collections accredited on a quarterly basis each year.

Plant Guardians

[Plant Guardians](#) grow and nurture one or more rare and unusual plants in their own space. Anyone can do this whether they have a back garden, greenhouse, allotment or just a windowsill. Being a Plant Guardian means you can take an active role in the conservation of garden plants, without needed to hold a National Collection.

The annual Plant Exchange

Members of Plant Heritage come together to exchange rare and unusual garden plants. 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

Fluctuating fashions, changes in the nursery trade, loss of specialist knowledge, environmental changes and new pests and diseases all threaten cultivated plants. To combat this, Plant Heritage started the [Threatened Plants Programme](#) in 2009.

Combining data from the RHS Plant Finder with Plant Heritage's records from the National Collections, Plant Guardians, Plant Exchange and cultivar lists from over 2,000 botanic and historic gardens in the UK and Ireland, it's possible to track the locations and availability of cultivars to see how rare or threatened they are. If a cultivar 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 cultivar from being lost through propagation and sharing at the Plant Exchange.

Through its membership, the National Collection Holders and Plant Guardians, Plant Heritage seeks to rediscover and reintroduce cultivated plants back into popular use by encouraging their

propagation and distribution, so that they are grown as widely as possible. Plant Heritage also works closely with botanic gardens, specialist horticultural societies and alongside organisations such as the National Trust, English Heritage and The Royal Horticultural Society, to name a few.

Plant Heritage: Timeline (1978-present)

- **1978:** The National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG, now called Plant Heritage) was created by Christopher Brickell, then Director General of the RHS, after identifying that a significant part of the nation's rich horticultural heritage was at risk of disappearing forever due to an ever diminishing nursery trade after the Second World War.
- **1979:** The first local group was formed in Dorset.
- **1981:** The first NCCPG stand at RHS Chelsea Flower Show (by Roy Lancaster, Allen Paterson and Anne Kenrick in conjunction with the NCCPG Dorset group) won a Silver Lindley medal.
- **1982:** The NCCPG became a registered charity. At year-end, 61 National Plant Collections had been established, and the first ever Plant Heritage Journal was published.
- **1990:** The first National Plant Collections Directory was produced.
- **1991:** The NCCPG took part in the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show for the very first time.
- **1992:** HRH the Prince of Wales became NCCPG Patron.
- **1994:** The Plant Conservation Committee was formed, accrediting new National Plant Collections four times a year.
- **2002:** HM The Queen became a National Collection Holder of *Morus* at Buckingham Palace.
- **2003:** The first winners of the Brickell Award for the best Scientific Collection instituted at the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show were Henry Oakeley (for *Ida*, *Lycaste* and *Anguloa*) and Henry Noblett (for *Astilbe*).
- **2006:** The number of National Plant Collections reached 650.
- **2008:** In its 30th anniversary year, the NCCPG changed name to 'Plant Heritage'.
- **2010:** Alan Titchmarsh became President, Plant Heritage was granted Scottish Charitable status and the Threatened Plants Project (now Programme) began, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.
- **2013:** The 'Plant Guardian' scheme was launched, enabling members to nurture one or more rare plants in their own home or garden.
- **2016:** 'The Missing Genera' campaign was launched, encouraging those with a passion for plants to join Plant Heritage and start their own National Plant Collection.
- **2018:** Plant Heritage celebrated its 40th year, winning a Silver-Gilt for its RHS Chelsea Flower Show display in the same year.
- **2021:** 'National Plant Collections Everywhere' display at the first ever autumn RHS Chelsea Flower Show was awarded a Gold Medal
- **2022:** 'What's your plant passion' display at RHS Chelsea Flower Show was awarded a Gold Medal and best display in the Discovery Zone.
- **2023:** Plant Heritage celebrates its 45th sapphire anniversary, with 700 National Plant Collections and over 2000 rare plants recorded in the Plant Guardian scheme.

Plant Heritage dignitaries

Patron: The former Prince of Wales

President: Alan Titchmarsh VMH

Vice Presidents: Christopher Brickell, Jamie Compton, Lady Hamilton, Roy Lancaster, Sir Roy Strong, Michael Marriott, Sarah Bray, Elizabeth Banks, David Knott

Chairman: Cecilia Bufton