

## National Plant Collection- Application Guidelines

### 1. What is a National Plant Collection?

Plant Heritage was founded to conserve, document, promote and make available Britain and Ireland's rich biodiversity of garden plants for the benefit of everyone through horticulture, education and science.

Our main conservation vehicle is the National Plant Collection® scheme where individuals or organisations undertake to hold collection of one group of plants in trust for the future. Most of the collections are based around a related group, for example a collection of walnuts (*Juglans*) or daffodils (*Narcissus*). This allows the scheme to develop systematic coverage of cultivated plants in the United Kingdom. Plant groups that do not yet have custodians can be found in our Missing Genera list. Other collections can be based around the work of a collector (John Bartram) or a local industry (Perry Pears) or an award (Dykes Medal).

A National Plant Collection is not just a collection of plants; it is the knowledge that goes with these plants, the history and the records. Without this information, the collection is valueless to posterity.

As collections are for the purpose of conservation, we encourage duplicates, so rather than having 'the' National Plant Collection, people will have 'a' National Plant Collection.

### 2. Who are the Collection Holders?

Collection Holders are a remarkable group of people who undertake to uphold the scheme's ideals and stringent regulations. They come from both amateur and professional horticultural or botanical backgrounds. Without these dedicated individuals and organisations many cultivated plants would already be extinct. Many of the collections are in private ownership and include allotments, suburban and town gardens and large estates. Others are found in nurseries, which range from large commercial concerns to the small specialist grower. There are a significant number of collections held by the National Trust, National Trust for Scotland and botanic gardens. There are also many local authorities involved in the scheme. Universities, agricultural colleges, schools, and arboreta all add to the diversity.

The one thing they all have in common is that they dedicate themselves to acquiring the knowledge, skills and plants that make the National Plant Collections so well respected. If someone wants to know something about a plant, the Collection Holder may be the only person in the world with the answer. This is a big responsibility.

### 3. What do Collection Holders do?

As already mentioned, they undertake to conserve, grow, propagate, document and make available the plants in their chosen group. But what does this entail? The Requirements of the scheme are demanding and the rigorous application and monitoring procedures ensures that they are all met. Most Collection Holders go beyond our requirements, doing huge amounts of research, providing educational facilities both on and off site, liaising with horticultural organisations and publishing books and articles.

#### Conserve

Conservation is the main function of the collection; the plant material in the collection is held as a safeguard against the plant becoming extinct. There are two main methods of conservation: in-situ and ex-situ. In-situ conservation for wild plants means concentrating conservation activity in their native habitat, to enable them to remain there. Ex-situ conservation for wild plants is often carried out when their habitat is too threatened and they need a safe place elsewhere. This is where collections of plants such as those held by botanic gardens and National Collection Holders come in. Plants can be grown safely in another location, their needs researched and understood, and they can be returned to their native habitat from this stock at a later date if this becomes possible. For a plant that originated in cultivation the garden is its native habitat.

Collection Holders will often coordinate their activity to make sure that plants are duplicated across collections. The scheme also requires that back-ups be held within each collection. Collection Holders must propagate their plants so that if there is a problem with disease, flood, mechanical failure, the plants are not lost from the collection (and possibly horticulture) forever.

#### Document

So that conservation can be of value to future generations it is essential that records are kept. The scheme requires that Collection Holders keep basic records of their plants – name, a unique accession number, their location on the site, where they came from and when they were planted. Records are vital to conserving both cultivated and wild plants. Further information can include herbarium specimens, colour charting, historical research, verification records as well as digital images of the plants.

When preserving garden plants it is important to prove that a plant is truly an old form, not an impostor! This is called verification, and can be done in a number of ways. Comparing a plant to pictures and descriptions in nursery catalogues or books can be used; alternatively the plant's history may give some clues. Did it come complete with name from the first nursery that released that plant? If this is so then the name is probably correct. Has it been authenticated by someone that knew the original plant when it was introduced? One of the most common problems amongst prospective collection holders is that the plants they buy are not correctly labelled. So don't assume that your plants are what they say they are, look for more than one source of evidence.

... and make available

Collection Holders are required to exchange plant material - the more copies that exist of a plant the safer it is. They do this by selling plants, swapping plants with collectors, taking part in Plant Heritage Group Plant Sales and the Plant Exchange. They are also obliged to open their collection to visitors; this can be by having a yearly open day, or by appointment. Some may be open to the public already. It is as important to make the Collection Holder's knowledge available, as well as the plants. We encourage them to publish their work either through the Plant Heritage Journal, Plant Heritage publications and our website; or through other media.

## The Requirements of holding a National Plant Collection, and information about the application form

### The requirements are shown in bold text

- GENUS & SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION.  
This defines what the collection will cover. If the collection is not genus-based then leave this blank. Consider the scope carefully; it should be as descriptive of your collection as possible. Refer to the wording of the existing collections in the National Plant Collections Directory.  
**Initially 75% of the taxa in your scope shown in the current paper edition of the RHS Plant Finder (or appropriate reference) must be in the collection. For collections not based on genus the scope must be based on research from reliable sources with 75% of the scope of the collection held.** (This means that the collection needs to contain 3/4 of the plants available for the scope you have defined.)  
The aim should be to make the collection as complete as possible, including those taxa not commonly available in commerce.  
**Individual taxa should be acquired from different sources to enable as much genetic variation as possible** (if appropriate to the collection).
- NAME OF APPLICANT AND CONTACT. The applicant will be the collection holder, this may be the name of a person or an organisation. If person we need to use for day to day contact is different (eg the Head Gardener, Plant Records Officer) please give their details here.
- PLANT HERITAGE MEMBERSHIP NUMBER. **The collection holder must be a member of Plant Heritage before making an application.** If the membership number is not known, it can be completed by National Office.  
**Non-payment of subscriptions will lead to the collection being withdrawn from the scheme.**
- ADDRESS AND ACCESS. This is the address where the collection is held; if the address for correspondence is different please let us know. We communicate as much as possible by email to save money and paper. **A requirement of having a National Plant Collection is that you grant reasonable access (paying or not) at relevant times of year through open days or by appointment, and access at any time of year for authorised offices of Plant Heritage by prior arrangement.**
- PLANT LIST RELEASE. As part of the application process (see flow chart for more information) your plant list will be sent to referees who are familiar with the genus or scope for their opinion. If you would like to know the names of the referees we have asked, we can tell you. We are however, not able to tell you

if they have responded or what they have said. We cannot consider your application without going through this process. If you are concerned about this, please let your coordinator know, we are able to keep some details confidential if necessary.

- GENERAL BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION. This should contain brief information on the background of the applicant and how they became interested in the collection. Or a brief history of the organisation and why the collection was developed.
- HISTORICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLECTION. How long has the collection been in existence for, was it inherited from someone else? Why was it started?
- ACCESSION POLICY. We need to know what determines what you do or don't add to the collection. Is it purely taxonomic (i.e. collecting all the species and sub-species in one genus); or based on a cultural reference? If you are collecting cultivars what determines which ones you add to the collection, and do you intend to keep all the plants you acquire?
- REFERENCE WORKS USED. What sources do you use to find out about your collection and how do you research further plants to add to the collection? (Please do not enter just 'Google' or 'Internet', we need more specific details.) **A requirement of holding a National Plant Collection is that up-to-date and correct nomenclature should be maintained.** These sources might be monographs, key revisions and the RHS Plant Finder. Evidence of present or future active research into relevant aspects of the collection is required, such as trialling cultivation and propagation techniques; comparing new cultivars etc
- CONTACTS AND LIAISON. We expect you to be in contact with other people who are interested in the same plants as you. **An understanding to help and cooperate with holders of parallel or complimentary collections is essential to ensure the stability of nomenclature**
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE. The plants need to be held in a permanent position. The collection needs to be appropriate for the site both in terms of cultivation needs and history, if held in a historic site.
- CLIMATE. If the collection is to be successful in the long term it will need to be situated in an area where the climate is suitable, for example regular high levels of rainfall for damp-loving plants.
- ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT. If the collection is held inside, does it have artificial heating or lighting? If so, is there a means of back-up if these fail?
- PLANTING MAPS OR PLANS. These are particularly useful for collections where the labels may be stolen, or those where the plants are only visible for part of the year.

- ESTABLISHMENT OF COLLECTIONS. A collection needs to be established for a certain period of time before we can consider it.  
Guideline establishment periods:  
2 flowering seasons (maintained true-to-type within collection)- annuals  
2-5 flowering seasons – herbaceous plants  
3-5 growing seasons – fast growing trees and shrubs  
5-10 growing seasons – slow growing trees and shrubs  
Pot or container-grown collections will be considered on an individual basis.
- SPECIMENS PER ACCESSION. As the collection will be held for the purposes of conservation, it is important that all the plants ( and the records, labels and research) have back-ups. We therefore need to see that in most cases you hold at least 3 plants of each accession for tender perennials; 3 plants per accession for hardy perennials; at at least one specimen plant for trees and shrubs (in the case of widely available taxa with more than 5 entries in the RHS Plant Finder over several years), with evidence of propagation. This is to ensure that a plant is not lost in the event of pests, diseases or accidents. Rare and difficult to propagate plants should be at least duplicated (e.g. those with less than 5 listings in the RHS Plant Finder). We would advise that the back-ups should be kept separately to the main collection.
- PROPAGATION AND AVAILABILITY OF MATERIAL. It is important that the collection in being propagated, and that you keep records of propagation techniques if appropriate. This is to ensure that the cultivation of the plants your collection is possible for future generations. **It is one of the requirements of the scheme that within reason and in accordance with international legislation, the collection holder should be willing to provide material, either plants or propagules to Plant Heritage or any body authorised by Plant Heritage, and to bona fide individuals, commercially, by exchange or as a gift.**
- CULTURAL PRACTICES AND HEALTH OF THE COLLECTION. The plants should, within reason, be free from pests, disease and physiological disorders. There should be evidence of good cultural practice, e.g. pruning, training, and the site should be weed free. There should be adequate space for development of the collection.
- NOMENCLATURE The applicant needs to ensure that the nomenclature is correct as far as possible, that they have a good understanding of the importance of accuracy and the issues involved with their particular plant. The standard reference for current nomenclature and spelling used by Plant Heritage is the RHS Plant Finder. However applicants may also find information on the following sites:

<http://www.ipni.org>;

<http://www.hortax.org.uk/plantnames/index.html>

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/RHS-Publications/Journals>

<http://www.plantnetwork.org/downloads.htm>

<http://www.plantheritage.com>

The applicant should be prepared to keep the nomenclature up to date. In many cases research by a collection holder that identifies synonyms, incorrect names or spellings can feed into updating the RHS Plant Finder.

- **LABELS.** Must be permanent and visible for viewing by visitors, and should include name and accession number as a minimum. (Where security is a problem a label with a code may be used, but this needs to be in conjunction with interpretative material for visitors)
- **BACK-UP LABELS.** A robust back-up system in case of loss/theft of labels is required.  
Information kept in records. At a minimum we need you to keep the information shown:  
Name of plant  
Source  
Date of acquisition  
Accession number  
Collector's number if appropriate  
Changes of nomenclature  
Additional information might include (as appropriate to the collection) field notes, position in garden, map reference, propagation method, death, reason for death, history, parentage, description, hardiness, awards, maintenance. A bibliography and references are encouraged for all collections.
- **BACK-UP RECORDS.** These are needed in case your main records are lost, corrupted or damaged
- **HERBARIUM SPECIMENS/PHOTOGRAPHS.** The collection of both with accurate descriptions is strongly encouraged, to enable the identification of plants in the future.
- **SUCCESSION PLAN.** Who will the plants, records and research be passed to in the event of the death or disability of the collection holder? We will need to have contact details of the person or organisation to whom they will be passed. If the collection is held by an institution or commercial organisation, what provision in the management plan is made for its future? (If possible please supply a copy of the relevant document)
- **COORDINATOR ASSESSMENT.** The collections coordinator who visits the collection will add their assessment here.
- **WHEN YOU HAVE A COLLECTION.** We expect you to send us an annual report (the time of year is up to you), update your contact details on a regular basis, and send an up to date plant list every five years. Your collections coordinator will visit your collection every other year.

## The Plant List

When you apply for a National Plant Collection your application form, your plant list and the references will be sent to the Plant Conservation Committee for their consideration. It is therefore very important that these are correct and contain the information we need to assess your application. If they don't they will need to be returned to you.

The Plant List **must** show the accession number, genus and lower rank (species, cultivar, form etc) as appropriate, the date acquired, and the source. If you do not know the source for all of the plants in your collection, please insert 'not known' by those plants. If your plants are of wild origin, we must have the collectors number as well.

Additional information is encouraged, but please do not add descriptions. **We can't accept catalogues.**

Please make sure that the **orthography** of the list is correct; that is that italics and single quotation marks etc are used appropriately. If you are unsure, please refer to the RHS Plant Finder, or the information available on <http://www.hortax.org.uk/>.

If possible please present the information in **alphabetical** order, this makes it easier for your Coordinator, National Office, and referees to check the list.

The **accession number** is a unique identifier for each plant, not each taxon. The number stays with the individual plant throughout its life. They are acceptable in many forms, but the preferred format shows the year and number. You may use a different system which works better for you.

If you would prefer that certain details of your plant list are **omitted** when it is sent to referees, please discuss this with your coordinator. You may have plants of high value that you do not wish to disclose the specific location of.

It is very important that all the names are **spelled** correctly, this may seem pedantic, but applications have been rejected on these grounds several times. The reason for this is that as a National Collection Holder you would be referred to as the ultimate authority on your genus, if you are unable to spell the names of your plants, a lot of confusion will result.

Collection scope		Rosa rugosa				
Applicant	Mr Example					
Accession Number	Genus	Species	Lower rank	Date acquired	Source	Notes
2009-002	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>		01/01/2009	Peter Beales	
1997-098	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Alba'	07/09/1997	Paul Chessum	
1997-434	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Rubra'	01/11/1997	Paul Chessum	
1990-2838	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Belle Poitevine'	12/12/1990	Present when brought	house
1999-923	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Blanche Double de Coubert'	01/12/1999	Bob Hope	
1992-323	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Dart's Defender'	29/05/1992	Peter Beales	
2003-343	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'F. J. Grootendorst'	09/06/2003	Wyevale	
2002-349	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Fimbriata'	10/06/2002	David Austin Roses	
1996-432	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Fru Dagmar Hastrup'	20/07/1996	Wyevale	
1998-329	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Martin Frobisher'	31/05/1998	Paul Chessum	
1999-232	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Mary Manners'	01/04/1999	Peter Beales	
2003-097	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Mrs Anthony Waterer'	01/07/2003	Wych Crss	
2002-454	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Ausdor'	29/06/2002	Peter Beales	Selling name: Mrs Doreen Pike
2001-6754	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Nweidts White'	25/12/2001	Peter Beales	
2001-332	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Peach Grootendorst'	02/02/2001	Peter Beales	
2004-006	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Rugosa Atropurpurea'	01/02/2004	David Austin Roses	
2004-454	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Sarah van Fleet'	09/06/2004	David Austin Roses	
1999-920	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Scabrosa'	29/11/1999	Wych Crss	
1992-320	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Schneezwerg'	29/05/1992	Paul Chessum	
2003-340	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Snowdon'	06/06/2003	Wych Crss	
2002-340	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Therese Bugnet'	10/06/2002	Peter Beales	
1996-430	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'White Grootendorst'	20/07/1996	Not known	
1998-320	Rosa	<i>rugosa</i>	'Moyelrug'	31/05/1998	Paul Chessum	Selling name: White Dagmar Hastrup