



Pest and disease 'TreeCheck' App

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Plant health is regulated in Ireland and the rest of the EU under the EU Plant Health Directive (Council Directive 2000/29/EC). In the EU and worldwide there are numerous harmful pests and diseases which are a threat to our forest estate. Globalisation and the increasing movement between countries of plant material and wood products such as logs, sawn timbers, pallets, crates and ship's dunnage increases the risk of spread of potentially very damaging invasive forest pests and diseases. There is also the increasing impact of climate change on pests and diseases. Additionally there are new risks posed by newly described pests and diseases previously unknown to science such as *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (Chalara ash dieback). It is vital that our increasingly valuable forest estate is protected from similar exotic threats and early detection is critical in our efforts to prevent serious tree pests and diseases becoming established on the island of Ireland.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Northern Ireland have co-operated closely in developing and launching a smart phone web based App called TreeCheck. The App will enhance the ability of tree and forest owners and the public to accurately report ill health in trees to both Departments and this public engagement is welcomed. DAFM and DARD have developed, refined and tested the application on an all island basis, with the co-operation of the Forestry Commission.

The TreeCheck App allows members of the public throughout the island of Ireland to use their Smartphones to photograph and report signs and symptoms of tree pests and diseases. Using any GPS enabled Smartphone, the location of the suspect tree will also be captured by the App to allow inspection if required. Once received, the ill health reports will be assessed by plant health officials and will be followed up as appropriate. The App will help in the early detection of new and existing harmful pests and diseases. The Departments are particularly interested in reports of any **unusual** pests or diseases.

Tree owners without smart phones can continue to report ill health in forests to DAFM by emailing forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie or by phoning 01 6072651. Queries regarding trees in gardens, horticulture nurseries and other non forest locations may be sent by email to plantandpests@agriculture.gov.ie or by phoning DAFM at 01 5058885. Queries regarding ill health in

trees in Northern Ireland may continue to be phoned in to DARD at 0300 200 7847 or email planthealth@dardni.gov.uk . The App will be subject to ongoing development and in this regard, faults or suggested improvement to the App can be reported to these contact points.

The App provides for the following inputs: species (where known); obligatory contact details; signs or symptoms observed of the pest or disease (visual aids provided); possible abiotic causes (frost, exposure, poor drainage etc); mandatory photograph(s) of the signs or symptoms; automatic location on Google maps (with option for accuracy to move pin location); indication of ownership; category of tree planting (forest, hedgerow, garden etc); number of trees affected; optional - age, tree height; and an optional general comments box where comments are welcome.

To access the TreeCheck App the attached QR can be scanned with your smart phone or type the address <https://www.treecheck.net> into your mobile web browser. You will be presented with the App and dependent on the maker and the operating system of your phone, the option to save the link to your home screen. Follow the directions for your phone. Please note that you may be asked to “Share Location”. Choosing to share your location enables accurate geo-location data to assist the Department’s inspectors in the event that a field inspection is carried out. All reports will be acknowledged and those of particular concern taken forward for follow up by specialist plant health inspectors.

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