

A pink alien plant with a human-like face and sunglasses is confined in a prison cell. The cell is made of rusty metal bars. A wooden sign on the wall reads "Horticulture Penitentiary Cell 05". A metal lock with the number "05" is attached to the bars. The background shows a tunnel with more bars.

Horticulture  
Penitentiary

Cell 05

# Code of Conduct

Horticulture &  
Invasive Alien Plants (IAP)



## **Code of Conduct - Horticulture of Invasive Alien Plants (IAP)**

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## Introduction

Many of the plants used in the horticulture sector in Malta are not native but have been introduced deliberately over the past years from other countries. Most of these introductions have not caused problems through their becoming invasive. However, a small percentage of these introductions escape from cultivation, become naturalised and invade natural, semi-natural or man-made ecosystems. They are known as “Invasive Alien Plants” (IAP) and have significant ecological, social or economic impacts, also leading to the loss of native biodiversity.

Ornamental horticulture has been recognised as the main deliberate pathway of plant invasions in the Maltese Islands. Accidental pathways include discarded garden waste, compost heaps, packaging materials, soil growing media, and machinery and equipment. Moreover introduced or imported plants can also carry with them plant pests or harmful organisms, which may in turn be invasive.

## Code of Conduct – Aims and Targeted Audience

The European Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO)<sup>1</sup> and the Council of Europe (CoE) under the framework of the Bern Convention<sup>2</sup> have jointly published in 2009, a Code of Conduct on Horticulture and IAPs for European and Mediterranean Countries<sup>3</sup>. This booklet is an abridged version of the Code and includes information relevant for Malta. It mainly addresses the horticultural sector (including plant and seed introducers/importers, plant nurseries, garden centres) and those entities engaged in landscaping and afforestation. Its aim is to enlist their cooperation to adopt good practices in:

- raising awareness on this topic among professionals,
- preventing the introduction of possible new plant invaders into Malta, and
- preventing the spread of IAPs already present in Malta.

Although this Code is voluntary, the horticulture sector and all those engaged in the supply chain of potential IAPs should be encouraged to adhere to this Code while being committed to abide by national legislation.



## Be aware of which species are invasive in your area

Ascertain that plants (including seeds and plant parts thereof) you are selling, or planting, are not known to be invasive in Malta. Check against the priority list developed by EPPO<sup>4</sup> and relevant databases such as DAISIE<sup>5</sup>, which includes data for Malta<sup>6</sup>. If a species is declared invasive in the Euro-Mediterranean area or areas with a similar climate, it is likely to become invasive in Malta (if conditions are favourable).

Risk of invasion is assessed in the form of a “Pest Risk Analysis” (PRA) and should be done following the International Standard on Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) no 11 on Pest risk analysis<sup>7</sup>. No species should be planted in natural and semi-natural habitats unless prior authorised by a nature permit.

## Work in cooperation with other stakeholders, both in the trade and the conservation and plant protection sectors

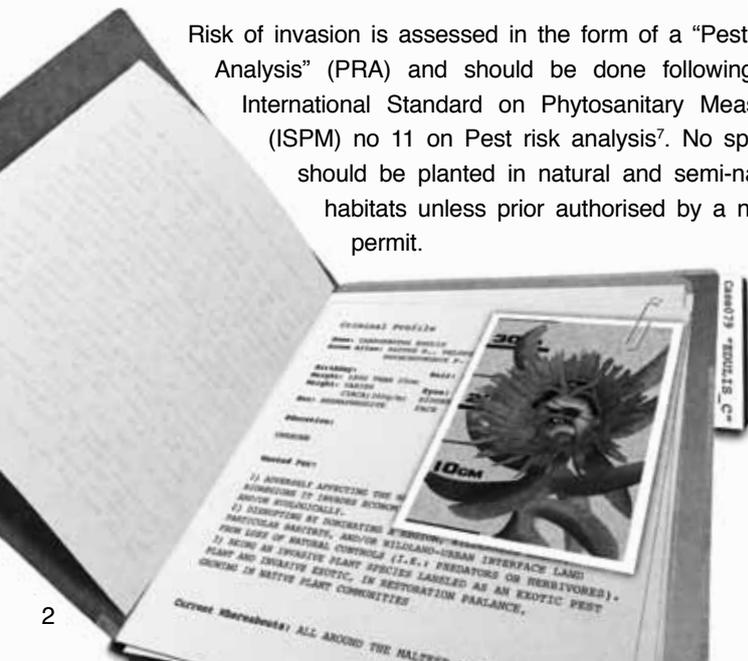
Cooperate with national competent authorities to prevent the spread of IAPs that are already in cultivation and to prevent the introduction of new IAPs into Malta through the horticulture pathway.

## Be aware of regulations concerning invasive alien plants

Ensure that you are aware of relevant national legislation enacted under the Plant Quarantine Act<sup>8</sup> and the Environment and Development Planning Act<sup>9</sup>. These respectively regulate the introduction and control the spread of plant pests which pose a phytosanitary risk (harmful organisms) and, regulate the import, control, keeping and release into natural environment of IAPs.

## Agree which plant species pose a threat and cease to stock them or make them available

Once it has been determined which plant species represent a threat, agree to voluntarily destroy existing stocks and no longer make them available for purchase, or, at least provide advice on proper use and appropriate disposal to prevent spread<sup>10</sup>.



## Avoid using invasive or potentially alien plants in large scale public plantings

Ensure that before introducing new species in villages and towns or planting them on a large scale, the “Guidelines on Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Planting and Landscaping in the Maltese Islands”<sup>11</sup> are consulted and used, as well as any other guidance that may follow.

## Know exactly what you are growing and stocking by adopting good labelling practices

All species offered for sale should be labelled by specifying the scientific and common names, and also the variety or cultivar, as appropriate. For potentially IAPs that are traded, information should be added on origin of the species, including a cautionary note not to allow it to escape from gardens and not to plant it where it can spread to natural and semi-natural habitats. A positive initiative is to withdraw the plant from production and indicate this in the nursery catalogue, if such a catalogue is published by the nursery to inform what plants are available for sale. Bear in mind that species can have several different names (synonyms), as a consequence of it having been described more than once or as a result of changes in taxonomy.

## Engage in publicity and outreach activities

Work with the public and national competent authorities to confer messages about the significance of IAPs and the damage that they can cause. Indications should be given on seed packets and on labels attached to other plant parts, trees and pot plants about species that are invasive and the risks that sowing and planting them might pose.



## **Make substitutes for invasive plants available**

Consider suggesting and offering substitutes for IAPs that are no longer sold and hence offering an innovative and green image to your customers. These substitutes may be native species or non-invasive alien species, bearing in mind that under certain environmental conditions these may also have the potential to become invasive. Refer to national legislation to see which native species are strictly protected. In selecting substitutes, advice should be sought from national competent authorities.

## **Be careful how you get rid of plant waste and dispose of unwanted stock of plants and plant-containing waste**

Discarded garden waste, compost heaps, packaging materials, and, waste water (in the case of aquatic plants), are well known pathways for the escape of garden plants into nature. To avoid such accidental introductions and their possible spread, strict procedures should be employed to mitigate the risk.

The EPPO Guidelines for the management of plant health risks of biowaste of plant origin<sup>12</sup> should be followed where appropriate. National regulations for the safe and effective disposal of waste should also be followed. Plant waste should never be dumped in the countryside or in places where there can be spread of any discarded living plant material into the wild.



## Take into account the increased risks of alien plant invasions due to global climate change

Altered climate patterns can have significant effects on the spread of IAPs. Climate change is likely to put increasing pressure on the horticulture industry and is likely to affect production, selection of species grown, fuel and water efficiency and competition. It is clear that the professionals will need to adapt their activities to climate change, especially rising temperatures, by developing pre-emptive and reactive adaptation strategies or options in cooperation with national competent authorities.

## Adopt good production practices to avoid accidental introduction and spread

Take great care to prevent contamination of soil<sup>13</sup> and growing media, machinery, tools, equipments, footwear, gloves, packaging and containers by IAPs thereby avoiding spread and damage to the environment and also avoiding management costs. For newly introduced and imported plants and plant parts, adopt the good practice of keeping such plant material isolated from locally produced plants and from those growing in the wild. During the production of aquatic plants for ponds or for aquaria great care should be taken to ensure that these species cannot escape from growing tanks or closed ponds into the wild.

## Endnotes

1. [www.eppo.org/](http://www.eppo.org/)
2. Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats - [www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/bern/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/bern/default_en.asp)
3. Full version of the Code: <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=1519375&SecMode=1&DocId=1430652&Usage=2>
4. [www.eppo.org/INVASIVE\\_PLANTS/ias\\_plants.htm](http://www.eppo.org/INVASIVE_PLANTS/ias_plants.htm)
5. [www.europe-aliens.org/](http://www.europe-aliens.org/)
6. [www.europe-aliens.org/regionFactsheet.do?regionId=SIC-MA](http://www.europe-aliens.org/regionFactsheet.do?regionId=SIC-MA)
7. [www.ippc.int/file\\_uploaded/1146658377367\\_ISPM11.pdf](http://www.ippc.int/file_uploaded/1146658377367_ISPM11.pdf)
8. Administered by the Plant Health Directorate (Malta's National Plant Protection Organisation)- All legislation is available from: [www.agric.gov.mt/acts-legal?l=1](http://www.agric.gov.mt/acts-legal?l=1)
9. Administered by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority – All legislation is available from: [www.mepa.org.mt/lp/legislationpolicymain](http://www.mepa.org.mt/lp/legislationpolicymain)
10. Waste regulations should be followed.
11. [www.mepa.org.mt/file.aspx?f=3895](http://www.mepa.org.mt/file.aspx?f=3895)
12. Standard PM 3/66 (2) - <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2338.2008.01167.x/pdf>
13. See EPPO PM3/54 (1) [http://archives.eppo.org/EPPOStandards/PM3\\_PROCEDURES/pm3-54-e.doc](http://archives.eppo.org/EPPOStandards/PM3_PROCEDURES/pm3-54-e.doc)

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