

Conservation Horticulture Working Group (CHWG)

Wednesday 23rd September 2026 (16:00 to 18:00 BST) via Zoom

Attendees:

Neil Alderson	UK	RBG, Kew
Keith Bensusan	Gibraltar	Gibraltar Botanic Garden
Creightanya Brewley	BVI	National Parks Trust for the Virgin Islands
Torika Christian	Pitcairn	Pitkern Botanic Garden
Nicholas Coelho	Bermuda	BZA (Bermuda Zoological Association)
Alison Copeland	Bermuda	Durham University
Myles Darrell	Bermuda	Bermuda National Trust
Emily Ferguson	Bermuda	Bermuda Botanical Gardens
Danielle Frohlich	Hawaii	SWCA
Naqqi Manco	TCI	DECR
Sarah Mercer	Isle of Man	Shuttleworth Botanic Garden
Leigh Morris	UK	The Wildlife Trusts / UKOTCF Council (CHWG Chair)
Taj-Rae Outerbridge	Bermuda	Government of Bermuda
Martina Peters	St Helena	St Helena National Trust
Jodey Peyton	UK	UKOTCF (CHWG Administrator)
Chris Sealys	Montserrat	Montserrat National Trust

CHWG Agenda (23 September 2026):

1. Welcome and introductions (Chair and all)
2. Introduction to the topic of pest & diseases and biosecurity (Chair)
3. **Pests on the UKOTs, what they are, where they are found and how new ones appear** ([Chris Malumphy, Fera](#))
4. **Best practice in tropical nursery pest management at RBG, Kew, control and guidance for pest control** ([Neil Alderson, RBG, Kew](#))
5. Horticultural Training in Bermuda – Daniel Batie, RBGE Edinburgh
6. Topic for the next CHWG: Plant sourcing (Chair/all)
7. AOB (all)
8. Close

Materials of interest for meeting:

- <https://www.bgci.org/resources/bgci-tools-and-resources/ipsn-manuals/>
- <https://castlehowardarboretumtrust.org/treehealthresourcehub>
- <https://www.rhs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/rhs-state-of-gardening>

1. & 2. Welcome and Introductions:

Leigh opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and introducing the topic of pests and biosecurity in UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). Leigh reaffirmed that the meeting was being recorded and will be shared online via the UKOTCF CHWG webpage. If any attendees wish to be omitted they must contact Jodey.

3. Pests on the UKOTs, what they are, where they are found and how new ones appear (Chris Malumphy, Fera)

Chris Malumphy presented an overview of invertebrate plant pests in UKOTs, focusing on key pest groups, the long-tailed mealybug, and new pests detected in the Caribbean, emphasizing the role of climate change and trade pathways in pest introduction. He stressed the importance of biosecurity measures and provided resources for further information, including fact sheets and diagnostic services offered by FERA. The session concluded with an invitation for questions and a reminder about recording and privacy policies.

The group discussed various invasive pest issues across different territories. Danielle highlighted the coconut rhinoceros beetle as a major pest in Hawaii, while Naqqi shared that Turks and Caicos Islands faced significant challenges with pine tortoise scale, leading to a 97% decline in Caribbean pines between 2005 and 2015. Creightanya described biosecurity challenges in the BVI, particularly with flatworms in nurseries, noting that environmental conditions like dry spells appeared to affect their presence. The discussion focused on the impact of imported plants and trees, including Christmas trees, as vectors for invasive species.

4. Best practice in tropical nursery pest management at RBG, Kew, control and guidance for pest control (Neil Alderson, RBG, Kew)

Integrated pest management approach. Neil Alderson, Botanical Horticulturist at Kew Gardens, outlined four main pest-control methods used in the Tropical Nursery: cultural controls, centred on plant health and environmental conditions; physical controls, including hand removal and traps; biological controls, using predators and parasitoids; and chemical controls, used only as a last resort. He stressed the need to rotate chemical treatments to reduce pesticide resistance, with products such as pyrethrin and azadirachtin preferred before stronger chemicals are considered.

Application and operational challenges. Neil reviewed pest-management application tools and explained that ants can undermine biological controls by protecting mealybugs and attacking beneficial organisms such as *Macrolophus*. Effective management therefore depends on strong cultural controls, regular monitoring and well-timed interventions. He also noted that rising glasshouse temperatures linked to climate change are making spider mite control increasingly difficult.

Monitoring and group discussion. Neil explained that, although ornamental growers may use sophisticated AI-based monitoring systems, Kew's diverse plant collections make uniform monitoring more difficult. He described successful work to identify ant species and map pests across growing zones. In response to Creightanya's question about resistance to neem oil, he said that resistance is less likely because neem oil contains multiple chemical components and is less potent than isolated compounds such as azadirachtin. Participants also discussed natural and introduced biological controls: examples from St Helena included neem-based treatments and insect biocontrols sourced through the Department of Agriculture, although the exact import process was unclear; Chris Malumphy highlighted successful projects in St Helena and Tristan da Cunha using whitefly parasitoids and controls for scale insects. Responding to Alison's question about spider mites in humid outdoor conditions, Neil recommended softer products such as SB Invigorator, maintaining adequate moisture and removing affected leaves to reduce the drought stress in which spider mites thrive.

5. Horticultural Training in Bermuda – Daniel Batie, RBGE Edinburgh

Daniel presented on a training program delivered in Bermuda in February, focusing on conservation horticulture and aimed at improving standards and best practices at the Bermuda Botanical Gardens. The three-week RBGE Certificate in Practical Horticulture (CPH) course covered topics including propagation techniques, pruning, soil management, composting, record keeping, and biosecurity, with particular attention to maintaining genetic diversity and managing pests like scale insects on juniper and olive wood plants.

Taj-Rae confirmed the training was well-received by staff at different career levels, and Leigh expressed satisfaction seeing the Certificate in Practical Horticulture course, which he wrote c.20 years ago while at RBGE as part of a Darwin Project in Istanbul (and subsequently taught in locations around the world) being successfully delivered in Bermuda to support plant conservation.

The discussion concluded with Chris Malumphy asking about the current status of scale insects on olive wood, though this question remained unanswered in the transcript.

6. Group Discussion:

Discussions about olive wood scale infestation in Bermuda, with participants noting its impact on older growth trees, particularly at Botanical Gardens. Chris Malumphy requested additional samples for sequencing and suggested it might be an undescribed species, while Miles highlighted that damaged trees from trimmer wounds are more susceptible to the scale. The group also discussed pot sterilization methods, with Neil describing their use of an engine cleaner at Q Botanical Gardens and Chris sharing a low-tech alternative using bleach solution. The next meeting on December 10th will focus on plant sourcing, with Alison and Jim already volunteering to present.

7. Topic for the next CHWG:

Plant sourcing (Chair/all) – Thursday 10th December 2026

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83493400737?pwd=JfyJm87VbNBbyCYekRjUbCdbnINQoN.1>

8. Summary of Agreed Actions

- **Chris Malumphy, Neil Alderson and Daniel Batie** - Provide slides from his presentation to Leigh/Jodey for uploading to the UKOTCF / CHWG website.
- All – let Jodey and Leigh know if you want to present at the next meeting on 10th December on sourcing plants.
- Bermuda participants: Submit a repeat sample of the scale insect affecting Bermuda olive wood to Chris Malumphy at Fera for further identification and sequencing.