PHC Bulletin Newsletter

Updating you on recent activities of the Plant Health Centre

Issue 16, January 2025

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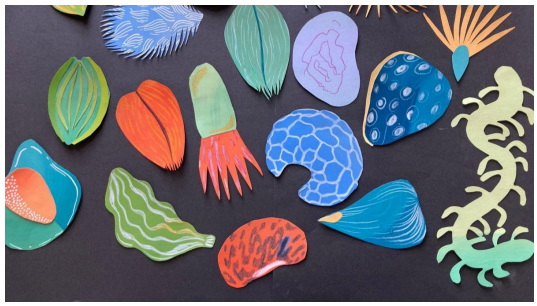

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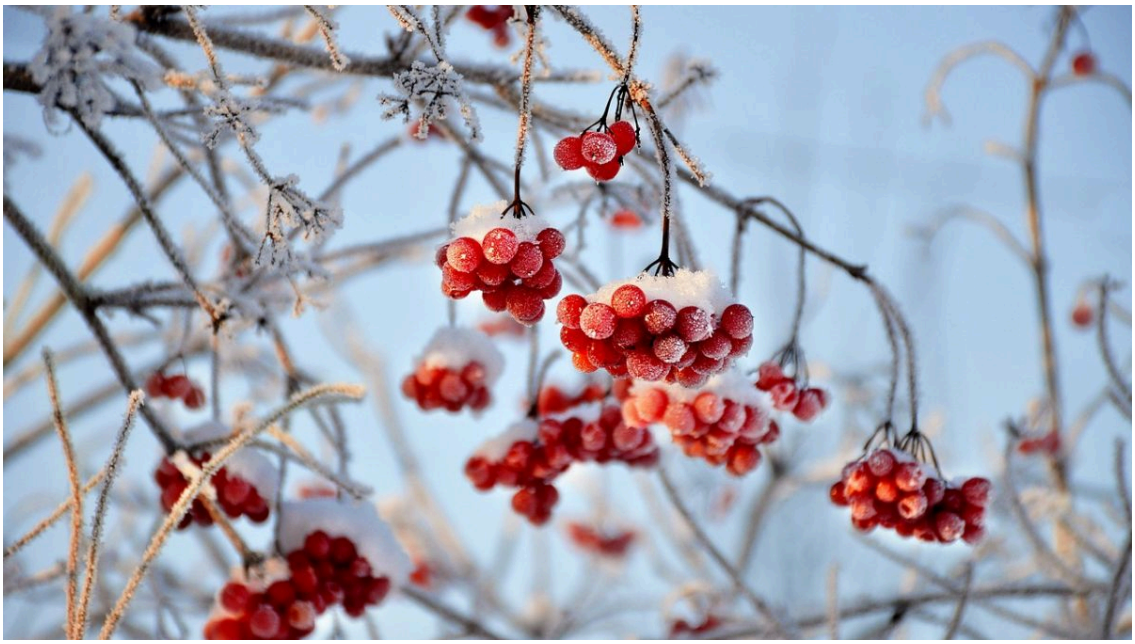


Welcome to Issue 16

Happy New Year! We are looking forward to a jam packed year of plant health activities.

Looking further into the future, the Scottish Government has recently published The Scottish Plant Health Strategy 2024-2029. The comprehensive five-year plan is aimed at protecting plant health across Scotland. The strategy sets out a clear vision for safeguarding the country's agricultural and horticultural crops, parks and gardens, forestry, and natural environments from plant pests and diseases. The strategy can be read here

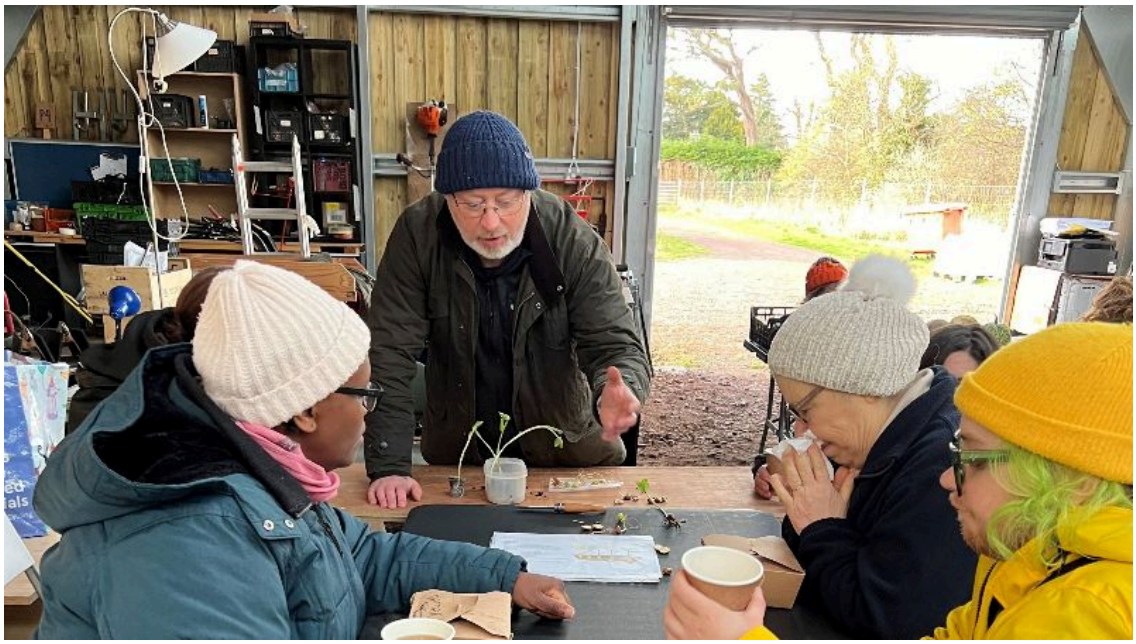
We have 2 new project calls available for you to apply to. Are you interested in the risk of firewood as a dispersal pathway or evaluating predator diet analysis as a monitoring tool for plant pests. Applications close on the **17th January 2025**

LinkedIn
A reminder to follow our LinkedIn page so that you can keep up to date with our latest project calls, publications and events.

Follow the page

-Katherine O'Donnell Plant Health Centre Communication Officer

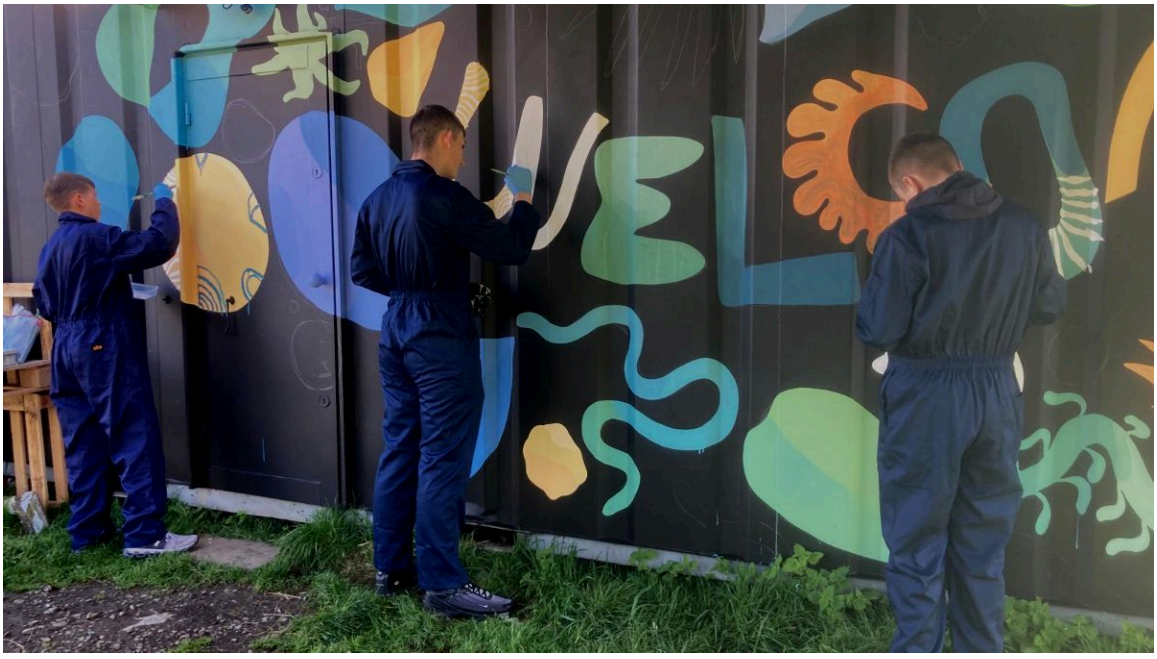
Events



Lauriston Farm

On the 16th of November the PHC joined Lauriston Farm as part a series of workshops. *Our Seeds: Intro to Politics and Practicalities of Seed Life Cycles* looked at seed biology, saving and stories.

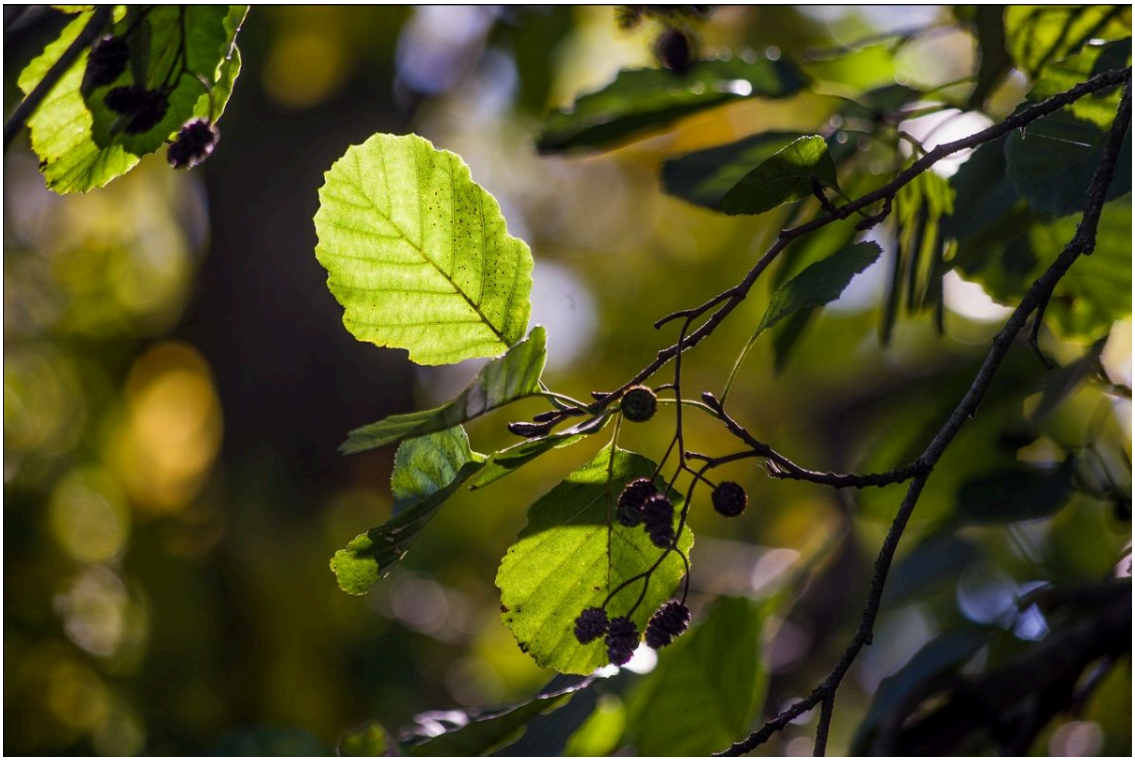
In November Lauriston Farm unveiled our joint PHCxLF mural. The mural was co-created by Spartans 'Art Offenders' and artist Natasha Russell and brings colour and a warm welcome to the entrance of the farm.



PHC EPIC Workshop: Building connections between the Centres of Expertise

In January the PHC will be running a joint workshop with one of Scotland's other Centres of Expertise EPIC (Centre of Expertise on Animal Disease Outbreaks). The workshop will provide an opportunity for the centres to learn more about each other's work and to identify ways to collaborate in the future.

Publications



Investigation into the causes of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) mortality in Scotland

The project investigated whether alders in Scotland have experienced a recent decline in health and identified factors affecting their condition. It also aimed to improve monitoring methods and address key issues for future management and regeneration of riparian alders. Alders play a crucial ecological role, particularly in upland areas where they are often the only tree species.

Project recommendations

- Improved surveillance of alder health problems in Scotland will be required to ensure that future declines are detected
- Natural regeneration or direct seeding instead of planting should be explored to reduce disease risks
- The current drive to restore riparian habitat should be carried out with the utmost care to ensure that further pests and/or diseases are not introduced into sensitive habitats such as the upper reaches of river systems.

Read the Report

Assessing long-term resilience of Scottish spruce forests to climate change and novel pests: *Ips typographus* as a case study

The resilience of Sitka spruce forests in Scotland to climate change and the potential threat posed by *Ips typographus* (the European spruce bark beetle) was investigated. The project evaluated the likelihood of beetle establishment and potential for damaging outbreaks under future climate scenarios using a combination of literature reviews, climate modelling, and expert workshops.

Project recommendations

- Continuing surveillance for the European spruce bark beetle in Scotland and eradication actions, if found
- Proactive management of storm damage and planning for diversification of timber species is recommended
- Further research is required to better understand the combined effect of windthrow, drought and other extreme events on the likelihood of establishment and potential impact on Scottish forests

Read the Report

Assessment and mitigation of the threat posed by root-knot nematodes to potato production in the UK

The aim of this project is to assess the risk posed by RKN to the potato industry in Scotland and to identify new sources of resistance in the Commonwealth Potato Collection (germplasm collection containing 1500 accessions of about 80 wild and cultivated potato species) that will help mitigate this risk.

Project recommendations

- Continue with current measures as they are sufficient to prevent entry of the most potentially damaging species, *M. chitwoodi* and *M. fallax*.
- Newly identified resistance sources should be included in future breeding programmes to determine utility.

Read the Report

Plant Biosecurity Resources – increasing the accessibility of notifiable plant pest information for Professional Operators

To support Professional Operators (businesses moving plants) in carrying out pest risk assessments and creation of plant passports, pest-specific datasheets and a prototype web tool that consolidates relevant information were created.

Project recommendations

- Useful as stand-alone resources, these can feed into current UK Plant Health Service workstreams looking at how to improve the accessibility of information on the UK Plant Health Portal

Read the Report

All PHC publications can be viewed on our website and also on the Zenodo Scottish Plant Health Community

Project calls

Evaluating the potential of predator diet analysis as a monitoring tool for plant pests of concern

Review the potential feasibility of predator diet analysis as a surveillance and monitoring tool for plant pests of concern in the Scottish context, offering guidance on pest target prioritisation and identifying which predator-prey systems may have a reasonable likelihood of success if deployed as components of novel surveillance strategies.

Maximum funding available: **£25,000**

Application deadline: 12pm on **Friday 17th January 2025**

The risk of firewood as a dispersal pathway for invasive forestry pests

Assess the biosecurity risks posed by the movement of firewood in Scotland. Research risk mitigation strategies by mapping current firewood supply and transport pathways, exploring effective treatment options for pest-infested firewood, developing best practice biosecurity guidelines, and creating a targeted awareness campaign.

Maximum funding available: **£40,000**

Application deadline: 12pm on **Friday 17th January 2025**

Apply Now

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

The Plant Health Centre is a virtual centre of expertise funded by Scottish Government through RESAS (Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division) to help

tackle plant health challenges for Scotland