



PRESS RELEASE

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Environment Monitors the Spread of Harmful Bacteria Affecting Plant and Trees

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change is closely monitoring the recent discovery of the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* on Myrtle-leaf Milkwort *Polygala myrtifolia* plants in Andalucía, Spain.

This disease is native to the Americas and was discovered in Europe for the first time in 2013 near southern Italy. It devastated olive plantations and destroyed more than a million specimens, either by their succumbing to the disease itself or as a result of the precautionary destruction by authorities in an attempt to prevent the bacteria from spreading. Although no trees appear to be affected in Gibraltar, officials are placing conditions on the importation of some species of plants, including Myrtle-leaf Milkwort, Almond, Oleander and Olive.

Xylella fastidiosa is transmitted exclusively by insects and there is presently no known remedy, which is why it is usually deadly to some plants and trees. Symptoms include the drying out of leaves and branches. Infected plants may, however, show no evident symptoms, especially when the infection is at an early stage.

The importation into Gibraltar of plants that are considered potential carriers will not be allowed unless accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate. More detailed information on *Xylella fastidiosa* is available on the European Commission's website:

https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/plant_health_biosecurity/legislation/emergency_measures/xylella-fastidiosa_en