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Plants with Special Requirements and Prohibited Plants

Last Modified:

Buying or selling plants online? E-commerce itself may seem harmless, but some plants pose a significant risk to the United States. These products may carry plant pests and pathogens or be a noxious weed. To safeguard U.S. agriculture, APHIS prohibits certain types of plants from entering the United States and enforces special requirements for others—from permits and certificates to specific shipping and labeling needs.

Importers must check if plants have special requirements before they can be shipped to the United States. Visit eFile, create an account (1.45 MB), and apply for a PPQ 587 permit to find out. This process can take up to 2 months, so plan accordingly with your exporter.

Plants With Special Requirements

Expand All

Plants in Growing Media

Plants for planting shipped to the United States must be free of sand, soil, earth, and other growing media.

For plants to be shipped in a growing media, they must meet requirements of APHIS-approved plants in growing media programs and all of the following conditions:

- Be APHIS-approved taxa (see APHIS-Approved Plants in Growing Media below)
- In APHIS-approved growing media
- From an APHIS-approved facility
- Be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate issued by the national plant protection organization of the country where the plants were grown, with an additional declaration that the plants meet the conditions of the APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Plants in Growing Media Programs

Exceptions to Growing Media General Restriction

These specific plants may be imported in growing media:

- Epiphytic plants (including orchid plants). These may be imported on the following growing media:
    - Coconut husks
    - Coconut fiber
    - New clay pots
    - New wooden baskets
- Plants from Canada that meet Canadian-origin plants in growing media requirements.
- Plants growing solely in agar or in other agar-like tissue culture media

Go to the Plants in Growing Media Programs in the Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements (ACIR) portal to view lists of approved taxa and growing media and learn more about the exceptions. Use the ACIR facilities search engine to find all up-to-date facility lists.

Size and Age Restrictions

Plants for planting offered for importation must meet size and age requirements. There are two size and age restrictions based on whether the whole plant or part of a plant is offered for import:

1. Whole plants shipped into the United States should not be older than 2 years.
2. Plant parts are not eligible for importation if the stem diameter exceeds 4 inches and the plant is taller than 6 feet.

For specific size and age restrictions and other variations, visit the ACIR portal.

Propagative Plants With Additional Treatments

The following propagative plant parts must be treated at a U.S. port of entry before they will be released to the importer:

- *Allium sativum* (garlic) bulbs
- *Dioscorea* (yam) tubers

Artificially Dwarfed Propagative Plants

Artificially dwarfed plants (such as bonsai or penjing) under two years old are allowed under the general import requirements for size and age. Artificially dwarfed plants over two years old from any country except Canada can be imported into the United States under certain conditions. Refer to the ACIR portal for the full list of commodity import requirements. These requirements are summarized below:

- Any growing media, including soil, must be removed from the artificially dwarfed plants (bonsai or penjing) prior to shipment to the United States.
- Artificially dwarfed plants must be grown per the following requirements:
    - Grown for at least 2 years in a greenhouse or screenhouse in a nursery registered with the government of the country.
    - Grown in screenhouse or greenhouse with screens no greater than 1.6mm mesh size. Entryways must have automatic closing doors.
    - Grown in sterile growing media.

- Grown on benches at least 50cm above the ground.
- Grown in a nursery the government of the country inspected in the last 12 months and found free of quarantine pests.

Endangered Plants

Plants of certain endangered species are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). To import protected seed species, the buyer must obtain a PPQ 587–Permit To Import Plants or Plant Products. They may also be required to obtain a PPQ 621–Permit To Engage in the Business of Importing, Exporting or Re-Exporting Terrestrial Plants or Plant Products That Are Protected.

In addition, the seller must obtain a CITES Certificate/Permit from the country of origin. This document must accompany the shipment.

To view lists of plants protected under CITES and ESA, please visit the following links:

- CITES.org: See "Flora-Plants" toward the end of the list.
- Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements Portal

Plants That Require Postentry Quarantine

Postentry quarantine restrictions may be placed on the importation of certain taxa of plants for planting based on an identified pest risk. Plants are required to grow in quarantine for 2 years. Some are grown for less than 2 years. Seeds are exempt from postentry quarantine.

Plants required to enter a postentry quarantine must:

- Be accompanied by a valid postentry quarantine permit (form PPQ 546)
- Be destined to a State that has completed a State postentry quarantine agreement with APHIS
- Be imported under an importer postentry quarantine growing agreement

Refer to the Plants for Planting Manual for the list of plants that require postentry quarantine.

Prohibited Plants

Expand All

Plants That Are Not Authorized Pending Risk Analysis

Not Authorized Pending Pest Risk Analysis (NAPPRA) plants is a category of regulated plants that cannot be imported into the United States until APHIS completes a pest risk analysis and puts mitigation measures in place. Small quantities of NAPPRA plants may be imported for experimental, therapeutic and development purposes under strict quarantine conditions with a controlled import permit (PPQ 588–Application for Permit to Import Prohibited Plants or Plant Products for Experimental Purposes).

Some plant species from a few countries are exempt from the NAPPRA restrictions based on pest risk assessment and trade history. Please refer to the ACIR portal or the NAPPRA page (see the "NAPPRA Lists" section) to view lists of NAPPRA plants and country exemptions.

If you are importing a plant from a country for which there is a NAPPRA exemption, you'll need the following:

- Import permit for propagation (PPQ 587–Application for Permit to Import Plants or Plant Products)
- Phytosanitary certificate from country of origin

Federal Noxious Weeds

All propagatable plant parts of Federal Noxious Weeds (283.98 KB) are prohibited from all countries. These plants may only be imported for research in an APHIS-approved containment facility with a PPQ 526–Permit to Move Live Plant Pests,

Biological Control Agents, or Noxious Weeds.

Parasitic Plants

Plant parts (including seeds) of parasitic plants are prohibited from all countries. These plants may only be imported for research in an APHIS-approved containment facility with a PPQ 526–Permit to Move Live Plant Pests, Biological Control Agents, or Noxious Weeds.

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