

# The National Plant Specification – Origin and Provenance

---

## Usage

The terms origin and provenance have not been widely used by specifiers and providers in amenity sectors of the plant supply chain where the bulk of trading has been in vegetatively propagated varieties. The terms have however been in constant use in forestry. Here, most plants are grown from seed collected from populations of unimproved trees.

'Origin' and 'provenance' are relevant to plants raised from seed, and not to vegetatively propagated material, nor stock raised from controlled-hybrid seed or of improved cultivars.

## Amenity Plant Usage

For plant supply for amenity purposes, the Horticultural Trades Association, with the backing of the Joint Committee of Landscape Industries, produced the National Plant Specification (NPS) as the basis for standard practice by specifiers.

'Origin' and 'provenance' are defined in the NPS and refer to known sources of propagation material. These definitions are repeated in sections covering shrubs and herbaceous species raised from seed.

## Amenity Plant - 'Country of Origin'

The NPS reports a 'British Standards' definition of 'Country of origin' as the country where plants have been growing in the latter half of the most recent growing season. The definition is relevant to vegetatively-propagated cultivars

## Forestry Usage

For commercial forestry, plant supply since 1977 has been governed by 'Forest Reproductive Material regulations' (FRM regulations) which include definitions of origin and provenance. While the regulations are derived from a European Community directive which applies to a limited number of species, in Britain, the FRM definitions of origin and provenance have in practice been applied to all commercial forestry stock.

The EC Directive on which these definitions were based, has recently been revised. The definitions of 'origin' and 'provenance' in the new directive are the same as in its predecessor. While the number of species to which it applies has been increased, this increase does not affect current forestry usage.

While the exact wording differs, the meaning of the definitions of 'origin' and 'provenance' in the NPS and the FRM directives, old and new, are the same.

'Seed Origin' as Applied to Forestry and Woodland Seed Sources

The concepts underlying the current use of 'origin' for tree seeds are:

## Relevance of Origin

**(a)** Knowledge of origin is relevant and important wherever attempts are being made to maintain or re-create native woodland/woodland habitat, using plants raised from seed rather than relying on natural regeneration. First choice is plants from origins local to the planting site in preference to origins from farther afield.

For other planting, especially amenity planting in parkland or similar 'open' landscapes, knowledge that plants are of local origin is a reassurance that plants have grown successfully in the locality in the past. If plants are known not to be of local origin, it is prudent to ensure that information about origin is noted in long term records for the relevant woodland.

**(b)** Knowledge of origin is also relevant where plants are being introduced, so that site conditions on the planting site can be related to site conditions of the seed origin and the subsequent performance of the plantings.