

Copy of RHS Email sent to Charles Williams,

Dear Edwina

I'd be very grateful if you could pass this information onto Charles and Jaimie.

Some time ago now, in 2015, Caerhays kindly provided three samples for the RHS research project investigating the correct identity of large-leaved *Gunnera* growing in the UK.

We have now concluded what turned out to be an interesting, but complex project, and found that what has previously been identified in the UK as *Gunnera manicata* is either *G. tinctoria* or a hybrid between *G manicata* and *G. tinctoria*, which probably arose not long after the introduction of the two species into cultivation in Europe. Our research also produced the unexpected result that genuine Brazilian *G. manicata* appears to have been lost from cultivation not long after its introduction, with the hardier hybrid being mistakenly thought to be *G. manicata* ever since. These results are based on data using verified wild origin material of the two species involved. In a paper published last year, we named the hybrid *G. × cryptica* and in a paper that has just appeared we set out further evidence of its hybrid origin.

Other researchers have also found this replacement of *Gunnera manicata* by the hybrid in mainland Europe.

For your information, our DNA investigations showed that the three samples you supplied are all *Gunnera × cryptica*.

No doubt you are aware that *Gunnera tinctoria* is listed in Schedule 9 of the amended UK Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981 (England and Wales). However, since our project started, it has been listed as a species of Union Concern under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation (2014). This legislation has been retained in UK law, and species listed as of Special Concern are banned from sale among a range of other restrictions.

Arising from our work to clarify the taxonomy of *Gunnera manicata*, we have recently been advised by Defra that, because it contains genetic material of *G. tinctoria*, the hybrid *G. × cryptica* also comes within the scope of this legislation which will have implications for the horticultural industry and plant collections in the UK.

The RHS is looking to address this in its gardens, retail and shows and we recommend you to check the current Defra guidance for any implications for you: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/invasive-non-native-alien-plant-species-rules-in-england-and-wales>.

Kind regards

Dawn

Dr Dawn Edwards

Senior Botanist

RHS Garden, Wisley

The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK's leading gardening charity. We aim to enrich everyone's life through plants, and make the UK a greener and more beautiful place. This vision, expressed through our Greening Great Britain campaign, underpins all that we do – from inspirational gardens and shows, through our scientific research, to our education and community programmes. We are committed to inspiring everyone to grow.

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