EFG Code of Conduct

Version 2: Last reviewed and approved by the Committee on 21 April 2026.

The current version of this Code of Conduct is available at https://exoticferngroup.org/values.

1. Core Values

Exotic Fern Group (EFG) members embrace a set of standards of conduct and integrity that reflect the group's Core Values.

(1) Community

A shared passion for ferns unites us in fostering a supportive network. Our community embraces openness, kindness and respect, offering a safe space for enthusiasts globally to collaborate and share our diverse experiences, insights and opinions.

(2) Sustainability

We dedicate ourselves to sustainability through fern diversity and ecology. We ethically source, propagate and conserve fern species for future generations. Our responsible acquisition and cultivation practices minimise ecological impact, encouraging thoughtful expansion of public and private collections while demonstrating our commitment to biodiversity and stewardship.

(3) Knowledge

We advance horticulture through research and sharing expertise. By developing resources and documenting best practices, we empower our members and the community to appreciate ferns more. We inspire lifelong learning and a broader commitment to fern cultivation worldwide.

2. Scope

This Code of Conduct governs all interactions among members and between members and the public when representing the EFG. It applies to EFG-hosted events and all electronic communications.

3. Inclusion and Diversity

Members of the EFG are committed to non-discrimination and equal opportunities.

(1) Treat all people as individuals and with respect.

(2) If you witness or experience disrespectful or offensive behaviour or language from an EFG member and feel safe raising it, it is often best to address such behaviour at the time.

(a) Describe the behaviour or language in question to those involved.

(b) Explain the effect the behaviour or language has on you (e.g., it made you upset, uncomfortable, embarrassed or offended).

(c) With respect and politeness, suggest how things could have been handled differently and in the future.

(3) If this cannot be done, or if the situation requires it, please follow the process for reporting a breach of the Code of Conduct (refer to section 9).

(4) When receiving feedback about your behaviour or language, approach it constructively. Remember, the criticism pertains to the specific behaviour or language, not to you as an individual.

4. Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying

Members of the EFG do not tolerate bullying, intimidation, harassment, discrimination and victimisation.

(1) It is crucial to acknowledge that perceptions differ; actions deemed acceptable by one individual may be profoundly hurtful or offensive to another. All members should interact with each other and the public with sensitivity and respect.

(2) Share your thoughts, experiences, insights and opinions respectfully and courteously; be especially mindful when differing viewpoints emerge.

(3) Bullying and harassment are unacceptable behaviours, regardless of whether they occur as isolated incidents or repeated actions. This holds true whether the behaviour is intentional or not.

(4) If you observe behaviour that you think amounts to harassment or bullying, or if you believe you are being bullied or harassed, it's important to report the incident to the Committee with as much detail as possible. These reports will be taken seriously and kept confidential to the greatest extent possible.

(5) Individuals who report bullying or harassment in good faith will not experience adverse consequences. The EFG strictly prohibits any form of retaliation or victimisation against complainants. Such retaliation or victimisation breaches this Code of Conduct.

(6) False claims of harassment or bullying can severely impact individuals. If the Committee investigates and determines that a member knowingly made false claims, they are in violation of this Code of Conduct.

(7) When an allegation of bullying or harassment is made, the Committee will follow the process for managing a breach of this Code of Conduct (see section 9).

5. Sustainability

EFG members are committed to ecological stewardship by ethically sourcing, cultivating and conserving plantlife in a sustainable and responsible manner.

(1) Be sensitive to the impact of cultivation on the natural and human environment.

(2) Make responsible use of resources and adopt sustainable cultivation practices.

(3) Comply with all applicable laws regarding cultivating, transporting and exchanging plant material.

(4) Before sourcing a fern, check the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species™ to understand the global conservation status of the species.

(5) Exercise due diligence and understand the ethical standards of commercial partners and suppliers. Collaborate with organisations whose values are consistent with those of the EFG.

(6) Do not engage in any conduct or activities that discredit the EFG or intentionally bring it into disrepute.

6. Health and Safety

Members of the EFG are dedicated to creating a safe and healthy environment, fostering a culture of continuous safety improvement.

(1) Be familiar with the Health and Safety policies applicable to any events organised on behalf of the EFG, and of the policies of venues where such events are hosted.

(2) Appropriately deal with accidents or emergencies, keeping notes and advising the EFG Committee if any incident has occurred.

7. Safeguarding

The EFG fosters a safe, respectful and supportive environment where all members, especially vulnerable individuals, are protected and valued.

(1) Nobody who is involved in the EFG or who comes into contact with a member of the EFG should ever experience abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation.

(2) We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of our members and the public, treat them with dignity and respect, keep them safe, and operate in a way that protects them.

(3) We all have a collective responsibility to create a culture where EFG members feel safe and can speak up if they have concerns.

(4) All EFG members are over 18 years old. However, some may be adults who are at increased risk. During EFG activities, members might interact with vulnerable adults and individuals younger than 18.

(5) If a crime is in progress or an individual is in immediate danger, call the police, as you would in any other circumstances.

(6) The EFG Committee will manage any safeguarding concerns. Report any safeguarding concerns by email to committee@exoticferngroup.org. All Committee members are aware of the UK Government's guidance on managing safeguarding allegations.

(7) If the EFG Committee is not appropriately managing safeguarding issues, the concern should be passed to the police.

8. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing protects members who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within the EFG.

(1) Members should raise concerns about any suspected wrongdoing by the EFG and its members or concealment of such wrongdoing. This includes:

   (a) Criminal offences

   (b) Failures to comply with legal obligations

   (c) Failure to protect children or vulnerable adults

   (d) Miscarriages of justice

   (e) Health and safety risks

   (f) Environmental damage

(2) If a member knowingly or maliciously makes an untrue allegation, this will be considered a breach of this Code of Conduct.

(3) The EFG Committee handles whistleblowing concerns. All whistleblowing concerns should be reported by email to committee@exoticferngroup.org.

(4) If an individual raises a concern they believe to be true, the EFG Committee will take appropriate action to protect them from harassment, victimisation or bullying.

(5) If the member requests, the matter will be handled confidentially, and their name will only be disclosed with their consent unless the EFG Committee is legally obligated to reveal it.

(6) The way the concern is dealt with will depend on its nature. Further enquiries and investigations will likely be necessary. The concern may be investigated by the EFG Committee through the Breaches of the Code of Conduct process (section 9), or it may be referred to the police, other agencies such as Social Services, or an independent investigator. It may be necessary for the member to give evidence in criminal proceedings.

(7) If an investigation fails to validate the suspicions, the matter will be closed. Individuals who voice their concerns will not face any different treatment, and their confidentiality will remain protected.

9. Breaches of the Code of Conduct

The Committee of the EFG will investigate and manage any reported breaches of the Code of Conduct.

(1) REPORT
If any EFG member learns of a breach of this Code of Conduct by another member, they must inform the EFG Committee immediately. Breaches may also be reported to the EFG Committee by individuals who are not EFG members.

POSTAL MAIL:
Code of Conduct
Exotic Fern Group Committee
18 Wadworth Holme
Middleton
Milton Keynes
MK10 9JR
United Kingdom

EMAIL:
committee@exoticferngroup.org

Please provide information regarding the reported issue, along with your contact details. If you wish to report anonymously, consider using an email address that safeguards your identity, such as creating a new account with a free email service.

(2) DOCUMENT
The Committee will appoint a Committee Member to take the lead on the reported issue, and they will contact you within 14 days with information on the steps being taken. Documenting this reported issue will involve collecting clear, factual information from you about the breach, including any available evidence.

(3) NOTIFY
The Committee will then inform all members involved in or affected by the reported issue about the Code of Conduct breach investigation. Where legally possible, this will maintain confidentiality to protect those involved.

(4) INVESTIGATE
The Committee will assess the nature of the breach in light of this Code of Conduct. This may include interviewing anyone who witnessed the reported issue, reviewing any documentary evidence, and determining the severity and impact of the breach.

(5) ACTION
After reviewing the investigation, suitable actions will be determined through a vote of the Committee. These may involve providing support and mediation for the affected members, issuing a written warning regarding the breach of the Code of Conduct, and possibly revoking membership of the EFG. If necessary, the Committee will also report the issue to the police or other authorities, in accordance with UK law.

(6) REVIEW
Following any breach, the Committee will review the Code of Conduct and the management process used for the reported issue to identify improvements and enhance prevention strategies.

(7) APPEAL
Any EFG member subject to sanctions due to a breach of the Code of Conduct who wishes to appeal may convene a meeting of the EFG Committee. They will be allotted 30 minutes to present their case. Any supporting evidence and a list of any witnesses must be supplied at least seven days before this Committee meeting.

10. Supporting Resources

The following resources give more information and options for training and education in the areas referenced by this Code of Conduct.

(1) Bullying is unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or an abuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone. Bullying may be a regular pattern of behaviour or a severe one-off incident. Bullying may happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails, on calls and in all other interactions.

The UK's National Bullying Helpline has information and advice for anyone dealing with bullying at https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk.

(2) Ethical sourcing of ferns ensures they are obtained responsibly, protects natural habitats, supports fair labour and promotes sustainability throughout the supply chain.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species™ at https://www.iucnredlist.org can help you understand the global conservation status of a fern species.

TRAFFIC is a UK non-governmental organisation working to ensure that trade in wild species is legal and sustainable. It publishes information on ensuring your plant purchases are ethical, legal, and sustainable at https://www.traffic.org/views/how-can-you-ensure-your-online-plant-purchases-are-ethical-legal-and-sustainable/.

(3) Harassment refers to bullying or unwanted actions related to any of the 'protected characteristics' defined in the UK's Equality Act 2010. These characteristics encompass age, disability, ethnicity/race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, sex and gender transition. The behaviour in question must either violate a person's dignity or foster an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere for that person. The intention behind the behaviour is irrelevant. Harassment also includes actions that cause alarm or distress, such as stalking.

The UK's National Bullying Helpline has information and advice for anyone dealing with bullying at https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk.

Further information on harassment is also available from the UK's Citizens Advice at https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/taking-action-about-discrimination/taking-action-about-harassment/.

(4) Health and Safety resources are available from the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE), including event safety information at https://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/.

(5) Safeguarding means protecting someone's health, well-being and human rights and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Further resources on safeguarding are available from the UK's National Council for Voluntary Organisations at https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/safeguarding/.

(6) Victimisation occurs when someone is treated detrimentally because they made or supported a complaint related to a 'protected characteristic', or because someone believes they did or might do.

Within the UK, Acas provides further resources on victimisation at https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-the-law/victimisation.

(7) Whistleblowing is raising a concern with someone in authority (either within the EFG or externally) about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice that affects others.

Advice on whistleblowing is available in the UK from Protect at https://protect-advice.org.uk.

11. Code of Conduct Reviews

The Committee of the EFG will regularly review this Code of Conduct and communicate any changes.

(1) The EFG Committee will review this Code of Conduct on an annual basis.

(2) All members will receive information on any changes made to the Code of Conduct.

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