

# Job: Government Senior Plant Pathologist



## What do you do?

I work for the Scottish Government and manage a lab which diagnoses quarantine plant diseases. Much of my work is about finding/adapting diagnostic methods for new invasive plant diseases.

I have worked a lot with various diseases caused by *Phytophthora* pathogens, so that is my main research area. But I have to diagnose whatever arrives in my lab, which means I have to be careful not to become too specialized.

## What is your average day like?

I do a whole range of jobs, such as: diagnosing samples from our plant health inspectors, advising colleagues on plant health policy and issues. I also have to write reports, review papers and prepare talks.

## Who do you work with?

I work in a small team of three people and so collaborating with others is really important! For example, we work with people from the Forestry Northern Research Station at Roslin and the Food and Environment Research Agency in York.

I am also a member of the European Mycological Network, which brings together mycologists from labs all over Europe. We meet once a year to exchange experiences and problems.

## Dr Alexandra Schlenzig



## CV

- Senior Plant Pathologist/Team Leader Horticultural Pathology, Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture, The Scottish Government.
- Post-doctoral Researcher, Syngenta Crop Protection, Switzerland.
- Post-doctoral Researcher, Forest Pathology, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich.
- PhD Technical University of Munich.
- MSc Horticulture, Technical University of Munich.



## When did you become interested in plant pathology?

I always had a passion for horticulture and from there it was only a small step into finding out what makes plants ill and what we can do to keep them healthy and in good condition.

## What are the perks?

I love getting to meet scientists from lots of different countries. I have been to disease outbreak sites in many parts of Scotland and the UK and I quite regularly present papers at meetings and conferences within the UK and Europe. Sometimes, I attend conferences outside Europe.

My work can be pretty unpredictable. When there is an outbreak of a new quarantine disease suddenly large numbers of samples come in and it becomes a bit hectic. However, I have a flexible work pattern and can also take time off at short notice.

## Why is plant pathology important?

Keeping plants healthy and avoiding losses through diseases is not only crucial for food security. Plants also supply valuable natural resources, such as wood or fibre and are important for biodiversity and human well-being.