

People reminded not to bring in orchids without licence

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department today (January 21) reminded people not to bring orchids into Hong Kong without a licence when returning from visits to other places.

A department spokesman said it was common for travellers returning from Mainland China to bring back orchids without a licence, particularly around Chinese New Year.

"There were 30 seizures of orchids at customs checkpoints during the Chinese New Year last year," the spokesman said.

As orchids are facing the threat of extinction, import and export of the species are regulated under an international convention.

"Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, trade in highly endangered wild orchids, such as slipper orchids, is prohibited," he said.

"The import, export, re-export or possession of other wild orchids, including their parts and derivatives, requires a licence, which must be obtained in advance from the department.

"Artificially propagated orchids including their parts and derivatives, prior to the import and export of these items, also require a valid export permit issued by the exporting country."

Any person contravening the provisions is liable, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$100,000, one year's imprisonment and mandatory forfeiture of the specimens, the spokesman said.

To remind travellers about the controls on importing orchids, the department has put up posters at control points.

For details, please call 1823 Call Centre or visit the related website on

<http://www.cites.org.hk>.

Ends/Wednesday, January 21, 2009

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