



Colorado Native Plant Society – Ethics of Plant Collecting

The Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS) encourages the ethical collection and use of Colorado's flora. Lack of commercial availability of many plant species, greater demand for native plants in horticultural settings and the reestablishment of native plants in restoration efforts can require that seed and/or other plant material be prudently collected from plants in their native habitats. Likewise, plant material necessary for study and research purposes must also be collected under ethical guidelines.

Good land stewardship emphasizes that we recognize the sensitivity of native plants as well as the environments in which they grow. Picking wildflowers or collecting seed may reduce a plant's ability to reproduce and can affect pollinators, adversely impacting the long-term survival of a population. When plants are removed from their natural environment, habitat is reduced for animals that depend on that species for food and cover; further, many species do not survive being transplanted. Likewise, the ecological effects of escaped exotics or misplaced natives can occur either through competitive replacement of native species or through alteration of native plant population genetics.

CoNPS members who are collecting plants or teaching collecting protocols while representing the Society must first complete the CoNPS training "Ethics and Protocols of Plant Collecting." Members can satisfy this requirement by completing any Society-sanctioned training; one such avenue is the training module posted on the Society's webpage.

CoNPS has developed the following guidelines for the ethical collection of native plant materials (including seeds or flower parts, leaf or stem material, or any other plant part):

1. **Become informed** about Colorado and regional species that are Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, or otherwise of Special Concern. A listing of these species can be found at the Colorado Natural Heritage Program's website: <http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/list/vascular.asp>. Federal, State and local natural resource agencies often have additional listings. Such plants should **never** be collected unless authorized by the land owner or administrator and the collection would not result in a loss of population viability. The viability concern can be lifted if special circumstances exist (see #4 below).
2. Collect **only** if you are a **trained** individual, or are accompanied by a trained individual, who is knowledgeable of the proper collection methods and can propagate, curate or otherwise process all of the plant material collected.
3. Collect **only** if you have all **necessary permits and/or permissions** allowing collection on public and private lands, and adhere to all terms and conditions. It

is the responsibility of the collector to know property ownership at all times; obtain permission from private property owners before entering the property. There may be specific locations where collection is prohibited; seasonal or other restrictions may also apply.

4. Collecting methods should **conform to accepted industry standards**. Leave enough of each plant or an adequate number of seeds or propagules to allow for regeneration and for wildlife that may depend on the leaves, roots or seeds for food. **Do not collect whole plants** unless needed for appropriate reasons, such as research, salvage, or if underground parts are needed for identification purposes. When circumstances exist that will result in destruction of plants, salvage of those plants may be appropriate if authorized by the land owner or administrator.
5. **Keep good records** of the location, habitat and geography of the environment in which a collection is made. Transfer this information whenever the plant materials change hands. Always consider preparing a voucher specimen with proper labeling for deposit in a recognized, publicly accessible herbarium, so as to provide absolute identification of the plants collected and for scientific and biodiversity documentation.
6. **Leave no trace** of your visit. Be sensitive to any area in which you collect plant materials. Tread lightly when off designated trails and, whenever collecting, minimize collection material needed.
7. **Use good judgment**. You should pass up a plant for seed or collection if it is not abundant. If a plant or population looks weak or unhealthy, do not collect from it – the extra stress may harm the plant, and you may transport a disease to or away from the site.
8. CoNPS stresses the importance of **protecting the genetic integrity** of the surrounding native species and natural vegetation. Avoid collecting species for propagation that have shown tendencies to compete with or replace other plants, or that are listed as Noxious or Watch List in the State of Colorado and its Counties, unless for special purposes (research, documentation, eradication of noxious weeds, etc.). When collecting non-native species, use accepted precautionary measures to prevent seed or propagative plant parts from escaping the collection. Dispose of uncurated material in an accepted manner and at an appropriate disposal repository.

Colorado's native flora is one of our most valuable natural resources. We have the ability and knowledge to use it wisely and the ethical responsibility to protect it.

This version approved at CoNPS board meeting October 5, 2013; an effective date has not been set.