



North Carolina Native Plant Society

Promoting the enjoyment and conservation of North Carolina's native plants and their habitats through education, protection, propagation, and advocacy since 1951

Guidelines for Ethical Wild Seed Collection

The North Carolina Native Plant Society (NCNPS) is dedicated to the appreciation and conservation of North Carolina's native flora. We support the use of native plants in landscaping and ecological restoration and encourage the collection and sharing of seeds, spores, and cuttings from native plants on your property. We must, however, recognize the sensitivity of many of these plants as well as the wild environments in which they grow. With the goal of plant conservation and maintaining healthy native plant populations in mind, NCNPS has developed the following guidelines for the ethical collection of native plant propagules from natural areas. We encourage you to adopt these guidelines and promote their use among your gardening friends.

1. Collecting and sharing seeds from propagated plants is preferred over sharing wild-collected seeds. If you collect from natural areas, know and abide by all regulations. Only collect what you can clearly identify and only the amount you need to start propagating the plants. Collect discreetly and be prepared to explain what you are doing and why.
2. Know which plant species are **Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, or Species of Special Concern**. Such plants should not be collected from the wild. If you want to share seeds from such plants found or propagated on your property, you are required to submit documentation of their origin. Contact us for the form to fill out.
3. Obtain necessary **permits** for collecting on **public lands**. Collecting seeds is prohibited by regulation on some public lands (e.g., National and State Parks). Other public land management agencies require a Special Use Permit (e.g., U.S. Forest Service).
4. Obtain **permission** from the landowner beforehand to collect seeds on **private land**. It is best to get written permission and carry it with you, in case you should be questioned about your activities in the future. Do not trespass on private property to collect seeds.
5. **Respect and protect habitat**. Avoid trampling vegetation or features susceptible to erosion such as trailside slopes and switchbacks. Stay on designated trails wherever possible and avoid sensitive habitats (e.g., rock outcrops, bogs).
6. Know which plants rely on seeds as their primary mode of reproduction, such as annuals/biennials and short-lived perennials. Be aware of how seed collection can reduce the survival and reproductive success of such plant populations. **Collect sustainably** from no more than 5% of the population (1 plant for every 20 plants).
7. Keep a permanent **record** of your collection activities. Complete records of location, habitat, collectors, and date should be transferred with plant materials whenever they change hands. This seed provenance data is valuable for habitat restoration projects.

Native Plant Seed Collection and Sharing Protocol

The NCNPS promotes the sharing of native plant seeds through seed exchanges and seed libraries. Contact your local NCNPS chapter for more information.

1. If you would like to **share seeds for others to grow**, please follow our guidelines to help us ensure that seed growers get accurately labeled seeds from healthy plants to minimize the chance of spreading plant diseases or invasives. Sharing seeds from propagated plants that you have observed in bloom to confirm plant ID is preferred over sharing wild-collected seeds. Follow the guidelines on how to ethically and sustainably collect seeds from natural areas for propagation. Take pictures and contact us if you need help identifying your plants.
2. Save seeds from healthy, strong plants successfully propagated locally. Do not collect from plants that are diseased or show evidence of pathogen or invasive insect infestation. Even if a disease is not passed through seed, this encourages selection for disease resistance and plants adapted to grow well in the soil and climate of our area.
3. To preserve the genetic diversity of open-pollinated straight species seeds, collect and mix seeds from at least a handful of different plants per population. If you are selecting for genotypes with unusual characteristics (e.g., different flower colors), label your seeds accordingly so growers know they're getting a selection instead of straight species seeds.
4. Clean and dry your seeds properly before storing or depositing them to avoid mold and bug issues. This will not only reduce the amount of space needed to store them but also ensure the longevity of the seeds in storage. Keep seeds that need to be stored moist separate from others.
5. Please bag and label your seeds with as much information as possible before sharing them. At a minimum, have the species name, year of collection and your initials on the label. Scientific names are preferred as common names can be misleading.