



## Colorado Native Plant Society Statement Ethics of Collecting Native Plants

The Colorado Native Plant Society (CONPS) encourages the ethical collection and use of Colorado and regional native plants. Because of the present lack of commercial availability of many potentially useful species, greater use, as well as the reestablishment of native plants, requires that seed and/or cuttings of certain species be judiciously collected from plants in their native habitats.

The hardiness and adaptability of many native plants makes them ideal for use in the Colorado landscape. They have evolved over long periods of time in the soils and harsh climate that characterize the Rocky Mountain region. We must, however, recognize the sensitivity of these plants as well as the environments in which they grow. Adverse ecological effects of escaped exotics or misplaced natives can occur either through the competitive replacement of native species or through the alteration of the genetic composition of native plant populations. Furthermore, vegetative communities are being encroached upon by urban growth and becoming reduced at an increasing rate.

The CONPS has developed the following guidelines for the ethical collection of native plant seeds and cuttings so as to maintain healthy plant communities:

1. **Become informed** about Colorado and other Rocky Mountain species that are Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, or otherwise of Special Concern. Such plants should **never** be collected unless special circumstances exist, such as recommendation for public salvage (see #9 below).
2. Collect **only** if you are accompanied by, or are a trained individual who is knowledgeable of species being collected, is knowledgeable of the proper methods of collecting and can later propagate the plant material collected.
3. Collect seeds or take cuttings; **do not collect whole plants** unless salvage recommendations have been made.
4. Keep good records of the location, habitat and the geography of the environment in which a collection is made. Transfer this information whenever the plant materials change hands.
5. Always consider preparing a voucher specimen or deposit in a recognized, publicly accessible herbarium, so as to provide absolute identification of the plants collected.
6. Avoid propagating species that have shown tendencies to compete with and possibly replace other plants.

7. For large-scale rehabilitation, revegetation and projects that specify large plantings of "wildflowers," use plant materials derived from nearby sources of similar habitat. CONPS stresses the importance of protecting the genetic integrity of the surrounding native species and natural vegetation. The introduction of non-local genetic material may irrevocably alter the native flora.
8. **Be sensitive** to any area in which you collect plant materials. Do not trample areas outside of designated trails, or disturb the environment by over-collecting from a single species. Use good judgment if only a few plants are available. The standard rule is to leave no trace of your visit, which may mean passing up a plant for seed or cuttings if it is not abundant or if the stand is not in good health.
9. When special circumstances exist in which an area is to be disturbed such that plants will inevitably be destroyed, salvage collection of those plants (whole, but only if plant is known to transplant) is encouraged. Collection should not be made in anticipation of possible destruction that could occur months or years in the future. The same records (see #4 above) of plants should be made at the time of plant collection, and should document the circumstances leading to the salvage.

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

Revised 5/2001