

NEW ENGLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY – PLANT COLLECTING ETHICS

The NEBS encourages field botanists to collect native and introduced plants to provide permanent herbarium records of the New England flora. We ask that all collectors adhere to these guidelines.

- Collect plants in a respectful, responsible manner that does not impact the population's capacity to reproduce and thrive, and that does not negatively impact the condition, ecological processes or aesthetics of the habitat and surrounding environment.
- Be aware of and follow all state rare or endangered species laws and regulations. Know what plants are rare.
- Where collecting is allowed by permit only (typically for federal or state-listed plants, on state parklands, on some federal lands), be sure that you have the appropriate permit. Know what the collecting regulations are at your locality.
- Be sensitive when collecting in highly visible public locations or along heavily-used trails.
- Don't trample vegetation or sensitive habitats; if you disturb any soil, replace it carefully.
- Common species – collect one plant (or several small plants) adequate to fit on a single sheet. Where collectors in the past collected duplicates for distribution to different herbaria, this is no longer really necessary since most collections are digitized and available over the internet. For native plants, collect a whole plant only if there are more than 20 individuals in the population.
- In some groups of plants, reproductive maturity is reached only after years of vegetative growth. Collecting whole plants (including roots or rhizomes) of perennial species may affect the long-term viability of the population. For this reason, do not collect roots/rhizomes of perennials unless there are more than 20 plants in the population.
- Rare species – collect (with appropriate permits) only if necessary to document a new location, or to document a population where the last record was more than 50 years ago. Check on-line resources to determine if a new specimen is necessary. Collect a whole plant only if there are more than 100 individuals (ramets or genets) in the population. If there are more than 10 but fewer than 100, collect only a diagnostic portion of the plant. Good quality photos showing the diagnostic features will also be accepted as vouchers, particularly where there are fewer than 10 individuals.