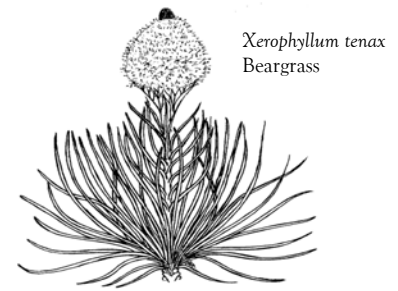


GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTING NATIVE PLANTS



Xerophyllum tenax
Beargrass

An important goal of the Montana Native Plant Society is conservation of the state's native plants and plant communities. Collecting plants and plant parts from the wild is a threat to rare species as well as small populations of more common species. The Montana Native Plant Society discourages the digging of native plants because transplants often do not survive. Digging can destroy native habitat and encourages invasion by introduced species such as noxious weeds. None-the-less, there are situations when collecting native plants may be justified.

The following guidelines were developed to help those wishing to collect native plant material to do so without damaging our native plant populations and communities. Some of the guidelines are general and apply to collecting for any purpose, while others are appropriate when collecting for a particular purpose.

There are three purposes for collecting wild plants or plant parts:

- (a) **Scientific study** (e.g., museum collections, research projects);
- (b) **Education** (e.g., class projects, college courses on flora); and
- (c) **Garden, personal or commercial use** (e.g., medicinal

herbs, food plants, reclamation, garden plants, native seed).

General Guidelines

(1) **Obtain permission to collect from the public or private landowner.** Permits are often required for plant collecting, especially commercial collecting from public lands (e.g., State and National Forests, etc.).

(2) **Know which plants are rare.** Use books and lists published by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (address on the following page) to familiarize yourself with the state's endangered, threatened and sensitive plants. Do not collect rare plants.

(3) **Photograph the plant for identification**, if possible, instead of collecting it.

(4) **Avoid collecting the same species from the same site in consecutive years.**

(5) **Collect only what is needed** for your purposes. Take proper care of collections; do not waste any plant material.

(6) **Set an example** by using proper and careful plant collecting methods. Teach others when leading field trips or collecting projects.

(7) **Avoid unnecessary damage to habitats** and their aesthetic values. Avoid collecting plants along trails

and in other areas that receive a lot of human use, or that may be viewed by many people.

(8) **Know which plants are noxious weeds.** Do not transport or transplant these species, or collect seeds of plant parts for propagation.

a. Guidelines for Scientific Collecting

(1) **From large populations, collect only the minimum amount of material necessary.** Do not collect so many plants, plant parts, or seeds that the population's reproduction and survival are impaired. Collect no more than 1 in 20 of the plants in any population.

(2) **If it is necessary to collect a voucher from a small population, collect only a single plant.** Do not dig up the whole plant if collecting just aboveground parts will serve your purpose. Try to leave behind some regenerative parts such as roots or rhizomes. Never collect whole plants from populations of fewer than 20 plants. Never collect the only plant at a site.

(3) **Deposit specimens in an appropriate, recognized public herbarium.** Provide adequate information on the label.

b. Guidelines for Educational Collecting

- (1) *Encourage nondestructive means of learning and enjoyment* such as photography, drawing, painting, and scientific description. Photographs of plants will often provide a good aid in identification and provide an alternative to collecting.
- (2) *Collect only above-ground parts*, and if possible, leave some leaves or stems that will help the plant recover.
- (3) *Avoid collecting from the same site repeatedly.* Never collect the same species from the same site in consecutive years.
- (4) *Do not allow large numbers of people to trample an area*, especially areas with fragile soil or where weeds are likely to invade.
- (5) *Collect only common species in large populations.* Do not collect more than 1 in 20 of the plants from any population.

c. Guidelines for Garden, Personal, and Commercial Collecting

- (1) *Obtain native plants from reputable nurseries* who propagate them from seed or cuttings collected according to these guidelines. In order to maintain the genetic diversity of natural populations of native plants, it is preferable to utilize local plant materials. (The Montana Native Plant Society Source Guide provides a list of suppliers for plant materials derived from local genetic sources).

(2) *Collect seeds or cuttings for propagation rather than whole live plants.*

(3) *Only collect seeds or cuttings from common species in large populations.* Collect from no more than 5% of the plants in any population.

(4) *Do not collect so much seed or so many cuttings from any population that the population's reproduction and survival are impaired.*

(5) *Conduct plant salvage projects only at sites that are scheduled for imminent destruction* and only with permission of the appropriate agencies or private landowners. Do not collect from portions of the site that will not be disturbed.

(6) *Do not sell, trade or purchase wild-collected plants or plant parts of rare or endangered species.* In some cases these activities are illegal, in all cases they are detrimental to the survival of rare species.

(7) *Permits are often required for commercial collecting on public lands.* Check with local public land management agency offices to secure permits.

Sources for Additional Information

For information on endangered, threatened, and sensitive plants, and plant communities write to:
Montana Natural Heritage Program
1515 E. Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620
(406) 444-3009

For information on noxious weeds contact your local County Extension Office.

Copies of the *Montana Native Plant Source Guide* are available for \$6 from:

MNPS Publications
1270 Lower Sweet Grass Road
Big Timber, MT 59011

*Make check out to MNPS.