

California Native Plant Society

POLICY WITH REGARD TO PLANT COLLECTING FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

Adopted June 1993

The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) supports the use of plant and wildflower collections as a valid means of providing students at many educational levels with knowledge of and appreciation for the wonder, diversity, and beauty of plant life. However, to avoid breaking the law or damaging the viability of populations of plants, the instructor must make known several important points to the students who will be making the collections.

There are two levels of collection for educational and scientific purposes which are considered in this policy: (1) Collection of plant specimens for herbaria, and (2) Collections of plant and wildflower specimens for lower level science and biology classes. Most of the considerations discussed apply to both levels.

It is illegal to collect plants along a highway right of way, in National Parks, National Monuments or National Forests, State Parks, or most local parks without a collecting permit. Plants and wildflowers growing in such locations are part of a natural system designed for public enjoyment, and in most cases should be left to natural processes. Permits for collecting plants must be obtained from the appropriate supervising agency.

It is legal and permissible to collect wildflowers on private lands provided that permission of the landowner is obtained. Particularly appropriate sites for collection are lands slated for development.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to ensure that the students are made aware of rare plants endemic to the area in which the collecting is to take place, and to caution the students against collecting these plants. It is not appropriate (and there are substantial penalties) to allow collection of rare or endangered plants, and areas known to contain rare plants should be avoided. The instructor may contact CNPS to find out about rare plants in the area in question.

To increase the environmental awareness associated with making the collection, the students should be requested to observe and describe the habitat in which the plant was growing.

Collecting (at the high-school or lower division college level) should be limited to the taking of as little of the plant as necessary to allow identification.

All collecting activities should be done inconspicuously, so that casual (uninformed) observers are not encouraged to do likewise.

CNPS encourages all botany and science instructors to use common, especially weedy or garden, species for demonstrating collecting techniques, plant structures, and diagnostic features.

The primary reason for collecting plants for herbaria is to increase knowledge of California's flora. Repeated collecting in well known areas may serve no useful purpose. While it is important to document the distribution of plants, including rare species, it is critical to first evaluate the impact of collecting on the plant population. Known and documented populations of rare plants should not be subject to additional collection.

A key to ensuring preservation of California's diverse flora and fauna is to develop a public informed about the value of these natural resources. For this reason, CNPS encourages limited and discriminating collection of plants as part of the educational process.





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This policy revises and replaces the Educational and Scientific Purposes section of the earlier "Guidelines for Chapters to Reduce the Impacts to Native Plants"

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