

GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTING NATIVE PLANT SEED

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#1: Be sure to obtain permission before collecting seed. Most natural areas & prairies are Nature Preserves or Forest preserves where seed collecting is not allowed.

#2: The best place to collect native seed is your own yard where you know what species you are growing & can watch them & collect seed when you see they are ready to fall.

#3: Always be careful not to damage the site in any way when you collect seeds. Stick to paths if at all possible. Do not pull up plants or break off living parts. Avoid trampling & never walk into a prairie when it is raining or the ground is soft and wet.

#4: Study the plant whose seeds you plan to collect so you can recognize it when it is dead & gone to seed. Ripe seeds will come off with a gentle tickle. No hard pulling should be needed. You may have to mark the plant in some way to be able to locate it again weeks or months later when everything looks different.

#5: Sometimes it is easier to collect the whole fruit or pod & separate the seeds from the pods at home where they can't blow away. This works good for Milkweed pods, wild sennas, & many plants in the bean family.

#6: Never mix different seeds together in the same container unless they are supposed to be planted together like seeds for river banks, wetlands, sandy areas etc. Most people want to plant the seeds in their preferred habitat or combine them for color & beauty reasons.

#7: You should also keep the same species from different habitats in separate containers with proper labels. Labels should always contain the botanic name for the species as well as the common name, where it was growing, name of area, county, State, the date, & your name.

#8: Never collect all the seeds from one plant but collect from different plants to get more genetic diversity. Always leave at least half of the ripe seeds un-collected so the site can retain it's diversity of species.

#9: The best thing to collect seeds in is paper bags. These come in a variety of sizes, can be written on, & allow the seeds to dry. Envelopes are also good. Plastic sandwich bags are poor choices because they hold moisture, making the seeds mold more easily, & they also produce static electricity which makes the seeds hard to handle. Small glass or plastic jars could be used if the seeds are 100% dry, but paper is always way better.

#10: Store your seeds in a cool (38 to 45 degrees), dry place until you are ready to plant them. Some seeds will germinate better if they are given a cold-wet treatment (stratification) before planting. Others will do just fine with cold-dry treatment only. Do not let your seeds get warm or wet until you are ready for them to germinate. Make sure there are no mice, chipmunks or squirrels able to get at your stored seeds or they will have a picnic with your cache.