



MONTANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Guidelines for Collecting Native Plants

Montana's law on wildcrafting

Commercial collection requires a permit or written permission from the landowner, whether it's private, federal, or state land. Work with land owners and government agencies when harvesting wild plant materials.

Respect private property and ask permission

Know whose property you are on. [Public and private land ownership maps for Montana](#)

Learn to accurately identify plants - Get training, then practice with experienced, knowledgeable people

- Learn which plants are rare, endangered, or at risk of overharvesting. The Montana Natural Heritage Program publishes a list of [Plant Species of Concern](#)
- Learn which weedy, non-natives can substitute for natives.
- Learn how to identify poisonous plants – the

parsley/carrot family is very challenging.

- Learn how to correctly identify medicinal & edible mushrooms – misidentification can be dangerous!
- Learn how to use plant identification keys by taking classes. The [Manual of Vascular Montana Plants](#) by Peter Lesica is the leading reference for Montana.
- [Join your local chapter of the Montana Native Plant Society](#) – you'll get to know knowledgeable people there.

Resilience, reciprocity, restoration & respect

- Collect no more than one in 20 plants from any population.
- Keep away from trails.
- Collect only what you need. Don't pull up roots unless you'll use them.
- Cover holes and distribute debris.
- Be discreet about sharing harvest locations. Find *new* places so the plants can recover. Some native species take years to mature!

- Be a good steward to the harvest area – return & spread seed to help maintain populations.

- Protect wetlands by walking carefully around them.

- Wash submerged plants to protect yourself from Giardia.

- Don't gather along railroad tracks or roads.

- Wilted plants that may have been sprayed with herbicide.

Grow & replenish nature

- Collect or buy native plant seeds & grow your own, instead of relying on wild plants. [Montana native plant source guide](#)
- Ask local farms if you can harvest weedy medicinal species from their fields.
- Forest farming on private land supports all species in the ecosystem.
- Rescue plants in danger of destruction and relocate them to similar habitats or gardens.
- Leave orchids in the wild. You *don't* want to reincarnate as an automatic door opener for a big box store!