Sustainable and Ethical Seed Collecting Protocol

Seed collecting is an inexpensive and fun way to increase the number of natives in our yards. But like anything in life, collecting seeds in the wild has some guidelines that must be followed to keep all plant populations safe and healthy.

Here are a few questions to consider before you collect:

1. **For what purpose are you collecting?**
2. Are you collecting to add species to your yard?
3. Do you wish to share seed with others or organizations?
4. Do you intend to use the seed as soon as possible as most seed expires after a few years?
5. Is the plant population from which you are collecting in imminent danger of destruction?
6. How much seed do you actually need?

**II. Why does my purpose for collecting matter?**

1. Too many of our local ecosystems are fractured and are no longer resilient.
2. Consider that others are also out collecting seeds from the same population.
3. Taking more seed than you really need endangers plant populations, hurts the wildlife which relies on these seeds for food, and most important, it breaks the “cardinal rule” of seed collection by the North American Native Plant Sociey.

***North American Native Plant Society “cardinal rules” or guidelines:***

1. The NANPS states, “Take no more than 10% of the available seeds. If there are signs that someone else has already collected (trampled grass, stripped or removed seed heads) you should not take any more.”

2. The NANPS website continues, “Never collect seed from rare species. (plants with status G1 and G2, as ranked globally and sub-nationally in a methodology developed by The Nature Conservancy) except as part of an authorized species recovery program approved by the appropriate government regulatory body. Seed from G3, S1 and S2 status plants should only be collected when they are to be used to establish a regenerating seed source for future seed production and not for direct commercial sale of the wild collected seed itself.”

The above guidelines, therefore, require that you:

\*Make sure you have permission (**a permit**) to collect seeds first on public lands. **National Park Service** (Barataria Preserve), **National Wildlife Refuge system** (Big Branch, Bayou Sauvage, etc.), and **state wildlife management areas** (Pearl River, Lake Ramsey, Sandy Hollow).

\*Never collect on **Nature Conservancy** properties (Lake Ramsey, Abita Creek Flatwoods) without a permit

\*Never collect in **state parks** (Fountainbleu, Bogue Chitto) without a permit.

**III. General guidelines of seed collecting:**

1. First, before collecting seed, check local nurseries to find the plant first, or ask other native gardeners if they already have seed they can share.
2. Always be familiar with what is a native plant as opposed to a non-native so that no exotics are introduced into the landscape.
3. Be sure to know the time at which seed heads turn brown and “crispy.” Never collect green seeds that clearly are not ripe. Often, the seed heads will easily release seeds when they are ripe.

**IV. Plant removal from the wild:**

1. Plants in the wild can be dug up ONLY if they are in immediate danger of destruction due to development. Fearing immediate danger and knowing there is immediate danger are two different issues.

Digging up plants further degrades the fragile existent habitat. It also removes plants that can be used by wildlife.