

Public Land Sources for Native Plant Materials in the Southcentral Alaska Region for Personal Landscaping Use

This paper describes where AKNPS members and/or members of the public may collect native plant materials (seeds, cuttings for propagation, whole plants for transplant) from public lands for use in home landscaping, floral arrangements or other related uses. This article DOES NOT address the collection of these materials for scientific or commercial use. Collection of plant materials for non-personal use generally requires a permit from land management agencies prior to collection, if allowed at all. AKNPS advises contacting the appropriate local land management office if you wish to collect material for scientific or commercial purposes. AKNPS can also help advise non-profit scientific researchers about the practicality of making certain collections and/or assist with the gathering of materials; the Society can be reached at admin (at) aknps (dot) org. Other good sources of native plant materials include via purchase from local growers, commercial collectors and nurseries (see this website for a list of suppliers: <http://plants.alaska.gov/nativeplantindex.htm>, or by salvaging plants in advance of development projects on private land.

Management, Boundaries and Location

Land ownership in the State of Alaska was relatively simple prior to 1959: land was either privately owned due to a homestead conveyance or similar grant, was withdrawn, or otherwise reserved for some public purpose (i.e., national parks, military facilities, etc.), was included within a federal wildlife refuge or national forest or was managed by the Bureau of Land Management / General Land Office as a part of the federal Public Domain. Most lands in the then-territory were under the management of the BLM/GLO as open to entry public land, including much of the land around the territory's population centers. Most the BLM's land holdings in Alaska that are within reasonable ground travel distance of a road have subsequently been conveyed to the State of Alaska, Alaska Native corporations (which are private corporations), or have been designated as national park or wildlife refuge.

Whereas an individual who wishes to make a native plant material collection may have encountered only two or three public land management agencies (and associated rules, if any, pertaining to plant collection) within a few hours of Anchorage, that number has now grown to 15 or more, and includes the US Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, State Parks, Department of Fish and Game, DNR Division of Mining Land and Water, Mental Health Trust, University of Alaska, Alaska Railroad, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Municipality of Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Matanuska Susitna Borough, numerous city government entities, and any number of administrative divisions within these agencies.

It is your responsibility to know what agency manages the area you wish to collect plant materials from! While most of us are not land surveyors and no one carries a comprehensive map of land ownership with them when traveling in Alaska, ownership can and should be determined in advance of a collecting trip. If uncertain, plan to collect in an area that you know to be managed by one agency only, such as the Chugach National Forest or the DNR Division

of Mining, Land and Water, and know the rules of that agency in advance. But even here, ownership is not guaranteed, as inholdings may exist within larger blocks of property. A diligent land ownership search should also include a check of land ownership records, if readily available. Alaska's boroughs (i.e., counties) all maintain online GIS portals that show up to date land ownership information that is generally reliable. See <https://geohub.kpb.us> for the Kenai Peninsula, <https://muniorg.maps.arcgis.com> for the Anchorage area, <https://data.matsugov.us> for the Matanuska Susitna area, and <https://www.kodiakak.us/339/Map-Center> for the Kodiak area. No comparable map is available at this time for lands east of Eureka Lodge on the Glenn Highway or north of Denali State Park on the Parks Highway.

Plant Material Collection Etiquette

AKNPS recommends that individuals collecting native plant material collect seed only. While this guide notes what public land management agencies allow for full plant collection and transplant, AKNPS advises against this practice. It is far too easy to depress or fully extirpate populations of native flowers by removing some for transplant. Likewise, cuttings can be taken for propagation for home landscaping use, but extreme care should be used to ensure that native populations are not harmed in the process of making cuttings. Too often, plants require their surrounding soil to survive due to established mycorrhizal relationships and will die if transplanted to a new location. Conversely, plants grown from seed may fare better in a new location and will leave little or no trace of collection and little or no impact to the source population's viability. AKNPS recommends that no more than ¼ of seed immediately available be collected, collections be made evenly across the source population, and that a mix of larger and smaller seed be left in the collected-from population to ensure continued population viability.

Southcentral Area Public Lands

The following agencies manage public lands located within a four- or so-hour drive of Anchorage:

USDA USFS Chugach National Forest. The Chugach National Forest covers 5.4 million acres generally south and east of Anchorage, with access primarily via the Seward Highway. Small quantities of special forest products, including seed, cuttings and transplants, may be gathered for personal use on CNF lands. People collecting special forest product resources on the National Forest System lands in Alaska are expected to exercise reasonable care in protecting the resource from damage. Exercise control where necessary to prevent destructive gathering, over-harvesting, or damage to resource values. The Forest Service may require a free-use permit to mitigate site or species-specific concerns.

Destructive removal of special forest products, including the collection of transplants, may not occur within:

- Any area with sensitive, rare, threatened, or endangered species or their critical habitat

- Wilderness Study Areas
- Research Natural Areas
- Developed recreation areas, such as campgrounds, picnic areas and restrooms.
- 500 feet of Cabins
- 500 feet of cultural or heritage resource sites
- 60 feet of trails
- 60 feet of highway or road corridors
- 50 feet of the National Forest Boundary
- 50 feet of the banks of the Kenai River, Quartz Creek, Russian River, Trail River, and the shore of Kenai Lake.
- The Portage Valley area south of Portage Creek

If you are uncertain to whether your proposed gathering activity falls outside of this allowance, please contact either the Seward Ranger District at 907-288-3178 or the Glacier Ranger District at 907-783-3242. See <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/chugach/maps-pubs> for a map showing the approximate boundaries of the forest.

USDOI FWS Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge covers 1.9 million acres generally south of Anchorage, with access primarily via the Sterling Highway. Seed may be collected anywhere in the refuge. USFWS regulations prohibit the digging of native plants for transplant or the making of cuttings in congressionally designated wilderness areas but allows these practices in non-wilderness areas. See <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/map> for a map showing the approximate boundaries of the refuge and wilderness designation within it.

USDOI Bureau of Land Management lands. The BLM manages about 72 million acres in Alaska. While much of this land is extremely remote, the agency does administer a number of remnant parcels of land on or near the highway system throughout Alaska that have been selected for conveyance to other entities but are not necessarily approved for transfer to another entity at this time. BLM does not permit the taking of cuttings or transplants without a permit but does allow for limited collection (100 seeds per species) of seeds annually without a permit for personal use. Any research or commercial use of seeds, cuttings or transplants does require a permit. Please note that BLM prohibits collection of any native plant materials (including seeds and berries) within the agencies' 730-acre Campbell Tract area (i.e., the area around the Campbell Tract airstrip). See <http://sdms.ak.blm.gov/isdms/imf.jsp?site=sdms> for a map showing the location of BLM managed lands.

DOD Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The DOD managed about 1.7 million acres of land in Alaska; near Anchorage, JEER covers approximately 84,000 acres between the north edge of the city and the Matanuska River. No plant collection is allowed within this area for personal use.

DOTPF Right of Ways. Department of Transportation highways cover an extensive though unquantified acreage and can be found crossing lands located throughout Southcentral Alaska. DOTPF holds a less than full ownership interest in most parts of the state highway system, i.e., an easement interest. Plant material collection rules are determined by the underlying landowner when plant materials are not part of managed landscaping, i.e., when they are native plants that are unrelated to the highway. Permission to collect should be obtained from the underlying landowner but will also require approval from DOTPF if the collection activity may impact the use of the highway in any way. Care should also be taken with respect to any adjoining roadways; please remember to be safe near our public highways.

DNR DPOR Chugach State Park. Chugach State Park covers 500,000 acres generally directly east of Anchorage, with access via the Seward Highway, Glenn Highway and municipal streets. Other state park land in the Southcentral area include the Kenai River Special Management Area, Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area, Denali State Park, Kachemak Bay State Park, and Caines Head Recreation Area, etc. Please consult 11 AAC 12.170 (disturbance of natural objects) and 11 AAC 18.010 (special park use permits) for information about the limited activities involving native plants allowed on state park lands.

State Public Domain Lands. The Division of Mining, Land and Water manages approximately 100 million acres throughout Alaska, both in both large multi-million-acre blocs and small remnant parcels. Reasonable quantities of Non-Timber Forest Products, including seeds, cuttings and transplants may be collected without permit on DMLW-managed general state lands. For additional information, please review the DMLW permitting page for the harvest of non-timber forest products, available at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/ntfp/index.cfm>. Visit <https://mapper.dnr.alaska.gov> to view state land ownership boundaries.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough owned lands. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough manages approximately 350,000 acres scattered throughout the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys. No seed collection, cuttings or transplants may be taken for personal use without the prior approval of the Borough Manager, via a Personal Intermittent Use Permit. The permit application is \$25 per adult, allows for collection for a week only during a twelve month period, and can be obtained by contacting the borough via the MSB webpage at <https://matsugov.us/department/community-development#landmanagement>.

Municipality of Anchorage owned lands. No information is available currently.

Kenai Peninsula Borough owned lands. No information is available at this time.

Privately and pseudo-privately owned lands (including DNR MHTLO, Alaska Railroad and

UA lands). No collection of plant materials is allowed without prior landowner permission.

Other Non-Profit Sources of Plant Materials

The Alaska Native Plant Society. (PO Box 141613, Anchorage AK 99514, <http://aknps.org>) AKNPS has an annual seed distribution program. Contact AKNPS at seeds (at) aknps (dot) org for more information.

The Alaska Botanical Garden. (4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage AK. 907-770-3692, <http://www.alaskabg.org>) ABG sells a diverse array of hard-to-find native plants that the organization grows on site at the ABG garden.

The Alaska Plant Materials Center. (5310 South Bodenbug Spur, Palmer, Alaska 99645, 907-745-4469, <http://plants.alaska.gov>) The Alaska Plant Materials Center is a research facility and does not sell or otherwise provide materials to the public. However, the staff at the center are very knowledgeable and may be able to offer advice on unusual inquiries or research projects. Additionally, the Center maintains a directory of Alaska business that offer native plants for sale at <http://plants.alaska.gov/nativeplantindex.htm>.

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