

Rare Plant Code of Conduct

Mission Statement of the Hawai'i Rare Plant Restoration Group (HRPRG):

To prevent the extinction of native Hawaiian plants and provide for their recovery through a cooperatively administered off-site plant conservation system in collaboration with on-site management partners to sample, propagate, and reintroduce rare plants, and to advance the preservation of native plants and their habitats through effective communication and public education. HRPRG is a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, participating as the Hawai'i Plant Specialist Group.



Guidelines for the Responsible Viewing of Rare Native Plants in the Wild

Hō'ihi aku, hō'ihi mai

Give respect and you will receive respect

As concerned plant conservationists, our mission is to ensure respect for all native plant life and their habitats, and the rights of future generations to enjoy them in perpetuity. In any conflict of interest between rare native plants and visitors to their habitats, the welfare of the plants and their environment should come first.

The volcanic origin of Hawai'i, its varied topography and climate zones, and extreme isolation have provided an incomparable environment for the evolution of over 1,200 species of native plants, about 85% of which occur nowhere else in the world. Our flora evolved without pressure from ungulates and human activities, so native plants and ecosystems are extremely sensitive to trampling and disturbance, and highly vulnerable to invasion by non-native plants and animals. Over thirty percent of Hawaiian native plants are federally listed as threatened or endangered, underscoring the need for responsible, respectful behavior when encountering rare plants and visiting the habitats on which they depend. Be a considerate guest!

The state agencies and programs that manage rare plants in Hawai'i visit rare plant habitats only when absolutely necessary (e.g., when management is needed to help a plant). Managers accept that a certain level of impact may occur when they visit areas in order to carry out essential and beneficial recovery efforts for a species, but they always take precautions to minimize that impact. We encourage plant enthusiasts to limit visits to rare plants and abide by the guidelines outlined below.

1. Promote the welfare of rare plants and their environment.

1(a) Support the protection of native plants and their habitats.

1(b) Stay on official established roads, trails, and paths; keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

1(c) To avoid exposing rare plants to harm by trampling or disturbing their roots, seedlings, and seedling habitats, do not approach them within 10 feet. Be aware that the spread of a plant's root system is often 2-3 times that of its crown. If you are within viewing distance of a rare plant, then it is likely that you are standing in habitat containing its seeds or seedlings, and you could be unconsciously jeopardizing the next generation of plants. Use viewing equipment such as binoculars and telephoto lenses to enjoy the beauty of a plant. Do not use any apparent unofficial trails leading to a plant because this will increase traffic to the plant.

1(d) The sites of rare plants should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.

1(e) Leave weed control around rare plants to the designated managers. Improper weed removal/control methods can result in unintended damage to rare plants.

2. Respect the law and the rights of others.

2(a) Follow all State and Federal laws protecting threatened and endangered plant species. To cut, collect, uproot, destroy, injure or possess any part of a threatened or endangered plant is considered a "take" and is illegal in the State of Hawaii and prosecutable by law.

2(b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas.

2(c) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.

2(d) Practice common courtesy toward other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with other users of natural areas and with land managers and conservationists.

3. Do not collect plant material, seeds, or seedlings.

3(a) Collecting any part of a threatened or endangered plant on public or private land in Hawai'i without the proper permits is illegal and harms the plant's ability to survive, grow, and reproduce. Seeds should be left in place so plants can regenerate naturally or so seeds can be collected by designated managers, handled and cared for appropriately, and grown by state-approved horticulturalists for use in ecological restoration. A permit is required for collecting any type of plant material from public lands; State Land <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dofaw/permits/> and Federal Land <http://www.fws.gov/permits/?ref=topbar>.

4. Practice hiking protocols that protect rare plants and their environment.

4(a) Clean your hiking gear thoroughly before and after visiting a natural area. Harmful plant diseases and invasive plants can be transported through soil on your boots and clothing (e.g., seeds, spores, and even plant parts that can grow vegetatively). Clean your gear and clothing when you return home. Special care should be taken if you have used your hiking gear on another island or outside of Hawai'i.

5. Be mindful when photographing and sharing photos of rare plants.

5(a) Posting photos of rare plants on social media can be counterproductive to management by increasing visitor traffic and leading to habitat degradation. Each visit adds to the cumulative impact.

5(b) If photos of rare plants are shared on social media, the plant's location and habitat should be described only in broad terms. An example of an appropriate location tag for a site on O'ahu would be "O'ahu, Ko'olau Mountains."

5(c) Photos taken with smartphones and some cameras often contain embedded GPS/location information. Turn off "Location Services" on smartphones and any GPS feature on cameras to avoid inadvertently storing and divulging sensitive location data when sharing images.

5(d) Individuals who share photos of rare plants on social media are encouraged to acknowledge the managers of a particular species or land area in the photo description when known (see list of managers with links below).

6. Encourage ethical and responsible behavior.

6(a) If you witness unethical plant viewing behavior, assess the situation and intervene if you think it safe and prudent. Do not become confrontational! When interceding, encourage ethical behavior around rare plants and their habitats.

6(b) If you witness illegal activity, document it with as much evidence as possible and notify the State's Division of Conservation Enforcement (DOCARE) at 643-DLNR (24-hour hotline).

Please follow this code. Distribute it and teach it to others.

Every day, more and more people are developing an appreciation for the unique and precious flora found in Hawai'i, and many dedicated professionals and volunteers are working for its conservation. Please join them in safeguarding the future of our islands' plants and their natural environment.

Downloadable and printable copies of the Rare Plant Code of Conduct can be obtained from:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/ecosystems/rare-plants/>, <http://www.pepphi.org/reference-info.html>, and

<http://Laukahi.org/hrprg/>. The Rare Plant Code of Conduct may be reprinted, reproduced, and distributed

without restriction. Please acknowledge the role of the HRPRG in developing and promoting this code.

HRPRG acknowledges that this code of conduct was adapted from the American Birding Association's Code of Ethics.

Rare Plant Management Programs in Hawai'i:

- Rare Plant Program, State of Hawai'i, Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Native Ecosystems Protection and Management Program: <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/ecosystems/rare-plants/>
- Plant Extinction Prevention Program: <http://www.pepphi.org/>
- Oahu Army Natural Resources Program: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/hpicesu/dpw.htm>
- National Tropical Botanical Garden, Conservation Program: <http://ntbg.org/>
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands: <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>