

The Ecosourcing Code of Practice & Ethics



Preliminary Statement

This is not a legal document, nor is it a set of immutable rules. Rather, the Code sets out guidelines which those businesses, public authorities, community groups and individuals choosing to work with ecosourced plant material can use as a starting point for a common understanding. Nor is it expected to be the final word, but will evolve as the consensus viewpoint changes on key aspects of professional standards, responsibilities to the wild resource and sustainable practice. Continuing debate on the Code's clauses is to be encouraged and submissions are welcomed.

It is intended that this Code Of Professional Practice and Ethics will assist in guiding the provision of ecosourced plants to all including the general public, casual customer and by contract.

Information is the key. This means accurate information is collected along with the propagative material, stored, and then openly shared and passed along with the plant material from seed collector to the final customer. Thus this Code provides guidance among peers as to the expectations and responsibilities of their peers and themselves with regard this information and its communication.

A basic starting point for this Code is the question "What are the ecological, population and genetic influences and boundaries within the region that should be acknowledged?" The answers to this as we understand them, can then be used to guide collection of plant material and to determine what information is relevant to have recorded.

Also, there are issues to do with the protection of knowledge, property rights and sensitivities of differences between peoples. Thus this Code provides guidance as to the responsibilities of the collector to all interested parties.

Charter

Introduction

In the following sections, the word "must" implies an obligation for which there should be no exceptions; the word "shall" indicates a situation where virtually no exceptions are allowed; and the word "may" carries an indication of direction but no sense of obligation.

Charter Statement

Collection, propagation and distribution of plants, accompanied by appropriate information shall be undertaken by rigorous methods. Those undertaking these tasks must do so with integrity in order that the impact of their operation on the wild resource is sustainable. Information and batching systems for plants shall be open to scrutiny and verification from any competent quarter and must comply with accepted standards of integrity, honesty and professional practices.

Title

The Code may be cited as "The Ecosourcing Code Of Practice And Ethics".

Application

This Code is available for use by all those interested or involved with New Zealand native plants by way of collection, propagation, sale, distribution or specification (eg contract, landscape design), estate management, conservation (being in-situ or ex-situ) or education and training.

Adherence to the Code may be achieved by:

- Signing up to this Code
- Developing an Ecosourcing Strategy for your operation that guides the setting up of systems within a specified time period, including the development of awareness by staff. This Strategy must ensure the requirements of this Code are implemented as a matter of normal operation.
- Producing evidence upon request that shows the implementation of this Code.

General Purposes and Principles

The natural environment cannot advocate for itself. Nor do we fully understand the natural environment, but patterns and boundaries are apparent.

We live in a time when interest in and concern for the health of natural New Zealand is growing. People want to know more and are generally happy/keen to implement their new understanding. In this setting new information and the sharing of information for the best advantage will flourish when we operate in an open way that values honesty, criticism and communication, in work environments that support the ethos, and where adherence to the highest professional standards and ethics prevails.

Our understanding of the horticultural propagation and distribution of NZ native plants should work for the well being of society and the sustainable use of the natural environment.

Members should maintain awareness that in cultivating and distributing plants there are potentially significant environmental impacts - both benefits and disadvantages for New Zealand's natural environments, and habitats of our cities, towns and rural communities. Horticultural activities should be balanced against the potential negative consequences of unrestricted activity. Members thus recognise that they have a variable, but definite, measure of responsibility for the wider outcomes of their horticultural activity.



Competence and Standards

1. Integrity and Professional Standards

Members must behave with integrity, using their knowledge, skills and abilities to serve all sections of the wider community.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Endeavour to obtain and present facts and give interpretations about NZ plants and natural history in an objective and open manner;
- b) Maintain a level of professional competence and make every endeavour to become familiar with recent advances in the field;
- c) Manage the health or welfare of all people affected by your operation, including those directly associated with seed and cutting collection, growing, distribution or planting;
- d) Avoid or declare real or apparent conflicts of interest;
- e) Accept a responsibility to avoid compromising the health, safety or sustainability of the natural environment;
- f) Allow the highest standard, as defined by maximum benefit to the community or the environment generally, to prevail whenever there is any discrepancy or conflict in standards.

2. Ecology and Diversity Standards

Members shall perceive natural boundaries in the landscape and represent diversity of NZ native plants within those areas to the best practicable effect.

Natural boundaries may include remnant bush area, population boundaries, habitat boundaries (eg wetland, dry land, exposed, sheltered), catchment, ecosystem boundaries (eg coastal, harbour, lowland, upland ranges), and ecological district.

Other representations of diversity are discussed below.

If you know the intended planting site then sub clauses a) - c) and e) - l) apply.

If you do not know the intended planting site then sub clauses d) - l) apply.

Specifically, Members shall at all times either:

- a) Know the intended planting site (eg growing for a planned revegetation project) and have a basic description of its physical, microclimatic and ecological characteristics at the time of collecting propagative material;
- b) Collect, have collected or specify for use, plant material from as close to the expected/known planting site as possible according to the plants availability;
- c) Record, have recorded or request accurate information about the location and situation of the parent population according to the boundary descriptions listed above.

OR

- d) When the intended planting locality is unknown (eg retail sale), record, have recorded or request accurate information about the location and situation of the parent population according to the boundary descriptions listed above and look to plant or have planted accordingly. As a bottom line, plants collected from within the Ecological Region may be labelled and marketed as ecosourced as long as they are also being marketed as for the Region and/or displayed within the Region. In this case the label must contain specific information about the source of the plants such that customers can make an informed decision.

ALSO:

Members shall at all times:

- e) Collect, have collected or specify the use of seed in preference to cuttings. Cuttings may be collected when low fruiting levels in a season have resulted in sparse seed, or when the collection of cuttings will result in additional diversity being represented (eg time of flowering).
- f) Collect, have collected or specify for use, seed collected from many individuals, including those of different form, size, and other indications of diversity.

- g) Collect, have collected or specify for use, seed collected from different habitats and locations within any defined area.
- h) Collect, have collected or specify for use, seed collected on several occasions during the season.
- i) Collect, have collected or specify for use, seed collected from a broad range of trees that varies from season to season.
- j) Collect, have collected or specify for use, seed sourced from larger, more remote sites. When no such sites are available, or the species desired are not present in the available areas, then urban sites including those previously planted with ecosourced material may be used with discretion.
- k) Make particular effort to remove from plants any fertilised flower heads or viable seed that could be deemed non ecosourced or of a different provenance to the parent plant. This may happen when plants have been grown-on in a locality significantly removed from their collection site and are now being transported back to their home provenance. Such removal of flower heads or seed should occur prior to being transported.
- l) Source and propagate threatened plant species according to the appropriate Threatened Species Recovery Plan, and where this does not exist, then in discussion with and following the guidelines of the local conservancy of the Department Of Conservation.

3. Record Keeping, Labelling and Customer Information Standards

Members shall maintain records and labels that enable accurate and informed reference for themselves, members of the organisation, colleagues and customers.

Specifically, members shall at all times:

- a) Record or specify the recording of full details at the time of collection of propagative material in order to accurately describe locality and habitat. (Natural boundaries may be used, eg remnant bush area, population boundaries, habitat boundaries (eg wetland, dry land, exposed, sheltered), catchment, ecosystem boundaries (eg coastal, harbour, lowland, upland ranges), and ecological district. Human boundaries may also be used, eg town, suburb, address).
- b) Maintain or specify the maintaining of plant records during propagation, growing-on, storage and display so that information relating to all plant batches remains clear at all times.
- c) Display and communicate the status of ecosourced plant material and information about its source, so that potential customers are aware of the geographical area within which it should be planted in order to fulfil its ecosourced status.

4. Access and Landowner Relationship Standards

Members shall respect the rights and sensibilities of landowners and land stewards at all times.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Consult and gain permission from landowners or stewards prior to any collection from their land. (In the case of public authorities this is likely to take the form of a license or permit). (Landowner information can be gained from Land Information New Zealand – see ‘Contacts’ in the Appendix);
- b) Inform landowners or stewards of the intent to use the propagative material collected for the propagation and supply of ecosourced plants.
- c) Use material collected under an ecosourcing mandate for the purpose of production and sale of ecosourced plants.
- d) Restrict activities involving selective or cross breeding practices (eg cultivar development) to stock other than that collected, procured or grown as ecosourced stock.

13
14
15

5. Relationship With Iwi

Members shall acknowledge the status of manawhenua that iwi have within their rohe and endeavour to have a respectful working relationship between themselves and the iwi.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Invite liaison with iwi prior to collection within the rohe (include in these discussions information about the intended use of collected material, and issues of waahi tapu);
- b) Acknowledge and seek acknowledgement of cultural practices associated with the collection and use of plant material;
- c) Invite discussion regarding both group's aims, objectives and issues, with the intent of gaining mutual understanding or agreement and providing for a collaborative approach to activities within the rohe wherever possible;
- d) Avoid collection from areas identified as waahi tapu, if so informed by tangata whenua;
- e) Implement the principles of the Treaty Of Waitangi to their best understanding (for example, with regard to requests and guidance received from tangata whenua).

6. Collection Methods and Environmental Risk Standards

Members shall ensure the health or viability of a natural area or of any plants is not damaged due to activities connected to access or collection of propagative material.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Have an up-to-date risk assessment for preventing damage, based on collecting sites or collecting activities.

The assessment should include, but not be restricted to:

The amount of seed or cuttings collected from one plant or one area – to prevent damaging the plant, natural regeneration in the site or food sources for wildlife;

Methods of climbing trees – to prevent damaging branch or trunk structures, or bark;

Disturbance of wildlife – including insects, birds, lizards, etc or their nests and burrows;

Disturbance of non-target plant species – especially ground cover or epiphytic threatened species;

The introduction or spread of weeds and/or pests.

It should include vehicular transport routes as well as the collection sites.

7. Relationship with Colleagues

Members shall support ethical behaviour, and high professional standards, in relationships with their colleagues.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Support the transfer of data and information accurately, openly and in full re ecosourced stock, its source, volumes, etc as needed for appropriate management.
- b) Co-operate in the supply of ecosourced plants to ensure that as far as possible, there is sufficient supply to meet the demand of those wishing to plant ecosourced plant material.
- c) Provide encouragement and support for others wishing to learn about ecosourcing.

8. Relationship with the Community

Members shall endeavour to communicate openly with the public with regards to information, activities and the results of their work in an understandable form.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Display and discuss openly and respectfully, their authority to collect propagative material when doing so on public land.
- b) Take all appropriate opportunities to explain ecosourcing, what is involved, the environmental benefits and the precautions taken to ensure the sustainability of our use of the wild resource. This also includes listening to comment from the community, and reporting of such comment to colleagues for the potential benefit of the ecosourcing operation.
- c) Be aware of ethical, environmental, cultural, social, and legal implications and consequences of their work with New Zealand native plants; in particular, be respectful towards the historical basis for differing perspectives, present or emerging, within the bicultural and multiethnic structure of our nation; seek to reconcile these differences in the interests of New Zealand society generally.

9. Relationship with Paying Clients

When Members undertake work for paying clients, the interests of the clients should take priority. Should the interests of the client conflict with the law, bylaw, accepted ethical standards, interests of stake-holders (eg landowners), or the broad public interest, the work should not be undertaken.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Ensure that clients are aware of the legal and ethical obligations of the horticulturalists whose services they are purchasing;
- b) Not undertake work that they know to be in conflict with the general purpose and ethics of this Code.

10. Environmental Considerations

Members shall consider the environmental implications of their work, and draw the attention of those affected and of decision makers, to the significance of the activities and to the perceived immediate and potential consequences involved.

Specifically, Members shall at all times:

- a) Seek to observe the principles and practices of sustainable management in relation to needs of future and present generations.
- b) Strive to identify impacts of their work on the environment and on people and communities; endeavour to assess and report on such impacts; seek to avoid or mitigate adverse environmental impacts.
- c) Strive to encourage within the wider community the avoidance or minimisation of adverse effects of horticultural activity on the environment.
- d) Pay due regard to resource agreements and protocols on the sustainability of the horticultural activities.
- e) Foster environmental awareness within the professional and volunteer horticultural/conservation communities, and among the public.

11 Educational Responsibilities

Members in formal teaching settings, as mentors to junior colleagues, during interactions within their professions including volunteers, or in their dealings with politicians, the press and the public, shall participate as educators advancing sustainable horticultural practice, knowledge and understanding.

Specifically, Members shall endeavour, as opportunities permit, to:

- a) Provide high-quality, up-to-date instruction and guidance, including reference to established knowledge, recent developments and areas of controversy;
- b) Illustrate the value of observational and interpretation skills for working with plants in relation to the natural environment or sustainable environmental objectives;
- c) Strive to educate all other members of the community, thus making it clear how people generally benefit directly or indirectly from conservation science and horticulture; in so doing, accept responsibility for stating objectively known risks and known benefits of particular developments and practices. In particular, strive to present NZ native plants and their biodiversity as part of the knowledge, culture and heritage of all New Zealanders.