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# MODEL CODE OF PRACTICE

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for community-based collectors and  
suppliers of native plant seed

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# Model Code of Practice for community-based collectors and suppliers of native plant seed

## *Outcomes*

In committing to this code, we will:

- 1 Establish and operate for and on behalf of the community.
- 2 Address the needs of the community for replanting native vegetation and where appropriate:
  - 2.1 be guided by a steering committee comprising broad representation of community interests; and
  - 2.2 work to complement regional strategies for landcare, revegetation, catchment management, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.
- 3 Provide a supply of local and indigenous plant seed to a wide range of users in the community.
- 4 Ensure that ecologically sustainable collection practices are used, that seed is not over-collected from any site or population and that damage to the natural environment is minimised.
- 5 Develop and use a system of quality assurance for products and services and maintain the highest quality (physical and genetic) native plant seed practicable through collection, storage and distribution.
- 6 Operate in a responsible manner, without discrimination or unfair practice.
- 7 Encourage and develop local capacity for more efficient and wider use of native plant seed, including, where appropriate, to:
  - 7.1 encourage wider use in the community of all types and species of indigenous vegetation, including understorey, wetland, heath and native grass species;
  - 7.2 place highest priority on the wise collection, storage and use of plant species indigenous to the local areas covered by the seedbank, including consideration of the genetic diversity inherent in plant seed collected;
  - 7.3 promote the wise selection of native seed sources for use in revegetation and environmental restoration projects, including the matching of environmental conditions at planting and collection sites;
  - 7.4 contribute to extension, education and basic training in the community; and
  - 7.5 share information and experiences about native seed widely with others.

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## *Outcomes*

In committing to this code, we will:

- 8 Fulfil all legislative and regulatory obligations and cooperate with relevant government agencies.
- 9 Keep thorough records of seed collection, storage and distribution. Each seedlot collected and stored in the seedbank is uniquely identified (numbered) and, as a minimum, the species, collection location, number of plants from which seed was collected, collection date, collector's name, accession date, weight of seedlot in storage, recipient and weight of seedlot dispatched, is recorded.
- 10 Not source seed of native species from outside Australia.
- 11 Collect, process, store and distribute native seed in accordance with occupational health and safety requirements.
- 12 Ensure that prior to collection:
  - 12.1 all relevant permits (or written permission) for seed collection on local authority, state, territory, Commonwealth (Crown) and private lands are obtained;
  - 12.2 any written permission for collection of native seed of protected, rare or threatened species, or collection of native seed in protected habitats, as may be required under relevant state or territory legislation, is obtained;
  - 12.3 verbal permission (as a minimum) from landowners for collection of native seed is obtained and such landowners are informed of collection that involves lopping vegetation;
  - 12.4 newcomers and volunteer collectors are provided with basic induction and training wherever possible; and
  - 12.5 local police and landowners are notified if firearms are used for collection.

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- 13** Ensure that at the collection site:
- 13.1* collection is carried out under the supervision of an experienced seed collector wherever possible;
  - 13.2* cultural values are treated with respect and not compromised;
  - 13.3* roads, gates, powerlines and other facilities are not damaged or misused (any damage is reported to the landowner immediately);
  - 13.4* recognised precautions are taken to minimise the spread of weeds and pathogens (including dieback fungus); and
  - 13.5* native seed is only collected from plants that have been positively identified or where a voucher specimen (sample of leaves, buds, flowers or fruit, and plant description) is collected.
- 14** Maximise genetic quality of seed collections by ensuring that wherever possible:
- 14.1* seed is collected from at least 10 widely spaced, healthy parent plants (not diseased) that are representative of the larger population;
  - 14.2* seed is not collected from isolated plants unless this seed is combined with seed from other local plants to increase genetic diversity in the mix; and
  - 14.3* seed is collected only from plants separated from one another by a distance of at least twice the plant height in order to reduce the probability of sampling related plants.
- 15** Unless the site is to be cleared of vegetation:
- 15.1* vegetation is not unnecessarily damaged or understorey plants trampled;
  - 15.2* nesting sites, tree hollows or other recognised animal habitats are not disturbed;
  - 15.3* no more seed or plant material is removed than required;
  - 15.4* no more than 20% of the fruit from any one plant is removed; and
  - 15.5* no more than 10%\* of plant material from any one plant is removed (larger seed quantities will be obtained by collecting from more plants).

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## Who does the Model Code of Practice apply to?

The Model Code of Practice applies only where it is adopted; it states outcomes and a range of practices that you can choose to comply with. The code is entirely self-regulatory; that is, there is no intention that the code be enforced in any way nor is there a basis in legislation for its enforcement.

The term ‘community-based’ is used here to refer in an all-encompassing way to individuals, landholders, community groups and other grassroots organisations involved in landcare or revegetation with Australian native plants. It is a general term including a wide range of people and a variety of operations. An important distinction is that the term implies both an independence from government (though perhaps supported by programs of government) and an approach that is largely amateur rather than commercial or business-oriented.

The Model Code of Practice may be adopted by any community-based person or organisation involved in

native seed collection or supply, including seedbanks. ‘Community seedbanks’ are facilities established and operated by community-based organisations or individuals to collect, store and distribute native plant seed.

Many such seedbanks have their origins in the landcare movement and revegetation or replanting work. A seedbank may be anything from a large fridge or cupboard full of native seed to a well-staffed laboratory with walk-in cold-rooms storing tonnes of native seed and an array of sophisticated equipment and facilities. It is usually intended as a permanent facility with some commitment to meeting seed needs in a region or state.

The Model Code of Practice is not intended to cover commercial native seed collectors and suppliers or those based in government agencies. However, some commercial and government operators may adopt elements of this Model Code of Practice.

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## Why adopt this Model Code of Practice?

We encourage all collectors and suppliers of native plant seed to adopt a code of practice. A code of practice is a statement about what we do, the way we choose to operate, our standard of service and the quality of our products. It assures others of a certain acceptable standard of practice that may be expected from those who adopt the code. It includes something of our motivations and ethical position, for example, adherence to ecologically sustainable practices.

The community expects ethical and responsible practices from people who collect, store or use native plant seed, for these activities affect our natural areas and flora and fauna. Similarly, the community expects ethical and responsible practices among people involved in publicly funded community programs. A code of practice is a high-profile part of promotion and marketing. It delivers a message to clients and the wider community about the standard of your practices. Any concerns about your practices may then be debated between you and the community and resolved. In this sense, the messages are delivered more strongly where a common code of practice is adopted across an industry or across those involved in a certain field of endeavour.

If you are a community-based native seed collector, supplier, or seedbank operator, especially one that receives funding support through Bushcare or other Commonwealth programs, we offer this Model Code of Practice for your consideration. FloraBank cannot write your code of practice. We can only suggest a *model* that you may agree is worth adopting as it is, or with minor amendments.

The Model Code of Practice was first presented as a draft in December 1998 and widely distributed for comment to people dealing with native seed. Many community seed operators consulted by FloraBank in early 1998 suggested that FloraBank develop a code of practice and guidelines for best practice on seed collection and storage, or were very interested in their development. The draft code also addressed issues and concerns expressed during consultation about community collection and storage practices.

Copies of the ‘Model Code of Practice for community-based collectors and suppliers of native plant seed’ may be obtained from the FloraBank Coordinator. Alternatively, the Model Code of Practice may be viewed or downloaded from the FloraBank Website: [www.florabank.org.au](http://www.florabank.org.au).

## Please register your adoption of this Model Code of Practice

We would be delighted to know if you, your organisation or group resolves to adopt this Model Code of Practice. Please complete the details below and fax to 02 6281 8590 or post to FloraBank at PO Box 74, Yarralumla ACT 2600.

I/we \_\_\_\_\_

Postal address \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation, company or group \_\_\_\_\_

adopted the FloraBank Model Code of Practice  
in full/with amendments (strike out as appropriate) on date \_\_\_\_\_

### Written by Warren Mortlock.

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### Development of this Model Code of Practice

The Model Code of Practice was first presented as a draft in December 1998 and widely distributed for comment to people involved with native seed. The draft began with consultation by FloraBank in early 1998. It built, in large part, on the results of a workshop to develop a code of practice, conducted by Greening Australia at Burrendong in August 1998 for staff involved in operating some 13 seedbanks in New South Wales. The session was led by Dave Watson from the Native Seed Savers in Western Sydney and drew greatly on the work by Dave and the group over the previous year.

### Acknowledgments

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### Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is provided for the purpose of general use only and should not be relied upon for the purpose of a particular matter. Legal advice should be obtained before any action or decision is taken on the basis of any material in this guideline. The FloraBank partners do not assume liability of any kind whatsoever resulting from any person’s use or reliance upon the content of this guideline.

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