Project Wingspan:

Landscape Enhancement for Imperiled Pollinators

Seed Collection Manual

POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP

Update: May 20th, 2024

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Introduction

Thank you for participating in Project Wingspan (PW). PW is a multi-year project sponsored by grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) through the non-profit Pollinator Partnership.

This training manual presents information that will help standardize the seed collection process to ensure sustainable, responsible collection and data integrity. Please use this manual as a reference to meet the needs of your level of responsibility (Team Lead, Seed Collection, or Data Entry Volunteer) as indicated by Pollinator Partnership.

See the accompanying training webinar for more detail:
(https://www.pollinator.org/wingspan/seed-collection)

Program Objective

This program is designed to increase the quality, quantity, and connectivity of monarch, rusty patched bumble bee (RPBB), and other imperiled pollinator habitat and to increase interest and skill in seed collection. PW has historically occurred throughout the Midwest and Great Lakes region for seed collection and distribution. All seed generated from this project will be used to support the development of geographically appropriate native plant materials for the enhancement of monarch, RPBB, and other imperiled pollinator habitats.

Project Goals

To successfully meet program objectives, the following tasks will be performed:

1. Facilitate a regional seed collecting program for target areas to help meet increased immediate needs for regionally specific pollinator-supporting plantings.

2. Provide training to volunteers and technical assistance to public and private land managers.

3. Enhance and establish long-term monarch & RPBB habitat.

Partners

Project Wingspan is currently partnering with Prairie Moon Nursery located in Winona, MN and Minnesota Native Landscapes in Foley, MN for program operations. These partners are responsible for processing volunteer collected seed, growing a portion of the cleaned seed into plant plugs, and distributing the seed and plug awards to habitat enhancement efforts across our active states.

PW success may also be attributed to additional partnerships with a variety of individuals and organizations who have taken on seed collection and volunteer engagement. With these critical partnerships, the program regularly meets or exceeds expectations.

Pre-Collection Protocols

1. Complete the online training and submit a Volunteer Waiver form

All forms should be submitted to Kaleigh Obrock, ko@pollinator.org

It is extremely important that groups and individuals collecting seed for PW are well trained so that plant species are properly identified, plant populations are not harmed during the collection process, and the protocol is followed to ensure data integrity. Before becoming a Team Lead, seed collection volunteer, or data collector, it is highly recommended that you participate in the training course. If you are a Team Lead and need to train a collection team, contact P2 or your State Coordinator for more information.

2. Obtain "Permission to Collect" documents

With appropriate permission, seed collection may take place on:

- Private Lands
- Public lands managed by a federal agency or state, county, or municipal agencies
- State lands
- Right of way areas, a right of entry permit must be obtained as well as notification of your presence regarding date, time and total persons that will be on site.

You will not get a permit overnight. A right of entry permit must be obtained as well as notification of your presence regarding date, time and total persons that will be on site. Right of entry permits can be obtained from district or county DOT offices or State Park offices. Sample Right of Entry Permit and Notification Documents can be found here.

If you are a Team Lead and have arranged for your State Coordinator to obtain your collection permit, you will need to have a copy of the permit on hand when you visit the site. Additionally, you will need to sign a Hold Harmless Document that will release your State Coordinator and Pollinator Partnership from any damages that may inadvertently occur while you are utilizing the permit in the name of a third party.

3. Conduct preliminary site visits (Team Leads only)

Preliminary site visits are often necessary to:

- Identify populations of target species
- Confirm the previous identification/location of specimens
- Estimate a likely harvesting date for species present. (It may be possible to make collections of multiple target species from the same site on the same day.)

How to identify a plant population:

- A *population* is a group of individuals (of the same species) living within the same collection site, continuous in range, and generally uniform in appearance.
- Consider plants within a 3-mile radius around your main collection site to be the same population.
- To avoid collecting from the same population in two separate collections (of the same species), do not allow the 3-mile radius of two sites to overlap. There should be at least ½ mile separation of the radii. If collecting different species from the sites, overlap is not an issue.
- To gain the most representatively balanced sample of seeds, collecting should be conducted in an even and random method from *a minimum* of 50 plants.

4. Prepare Field Documentation and Data Forms

- Prepare the necessary number of field data forms before entering the field. A Field Data Form is required for each species collected even if they are collected from the same location.
- Download the Survey123 App
- Team Leads and/or Data Collectors for each team will be given a link by their State Coordinator to use the Survey123 App to acquire specific data about the location of each seed collection, including latitude and longitude coordinates. Specific directions on how to download and use the GIS app can be found here.
- The Team Lead Collection Tracking Form is used to track Collection ID numbers collection and shipping dates on a centralized sheet. Notify your State Coordinator by email after a collection has been made to document the collection of the species.

Seed Collection Protocol

1. Prepare your tools

Before you leave for your seed collection trip, you will want to make sure you have the following items:

- Collection container such as paper bags (Sandwich lunch bags or grocery paper bags work well)
- Permanent black marker or pencil
- Pruners, heavy scissors, or garden clippers
- Heavy garden gloves
- Large storage container (to hold bags of harvested seed)
- GIS Application pre-loaded on your mobile device to acquire latitude and longitude (this information can also be gathered by using the Survey123 app while in the field)
- Data forms
- Permits (when applicable)

2. **Collect your seeds!**

In order to ensure genetically diverse collections, we will follow the guidelines recommended by Bureau of Land Management Seeds of Success Program (BLM-SOS):

- Collect no more than 20% of the available seed on the day of collection.
- Collect randomly from a diverse selection of plants regardless if characteristics are rare or common (do not select for only the plants with the largest blooms, unique colors, etc.).
- If the genetics are unknown, collect as broadly (in an area) as possible to collect the most diverse selection of material.
- When populations are abundant, collecting from every fifth plant is a good way to randomize collection.
- Prioritize sites where populations are of wild origin.
- Do not collect in the early morning, if possible, before the dew has evaporated. Seed should be dry when collected.
- While collecting, keep track of the number of plants from which you have harvested seeds and report that number to the data collector.

A list of target plant species and their approximate bloom period may be found online, or later in this document.

3. Collect data during your collection

- A Field Data Form is required for each species collected even if they are collected from the same location. Fill in all sections of the field data form while in the field to assure accuracy. An example of a complete field data form can be found here.
- The Team Lead Collection Tracking form is used to track Collection ID and date of collection and shipping on a centralized sheet. Notify your State Coordinator by email after a collection has been made to document the collection of the species.
- Complete a Survey123/ GIS App entry

Digital photos of the species being collected should always be taken while in the field. Data collectors can take photos with their smartphones and upload directly through the Survey 123 GIS app. Digital Photos not uploaded to the app should be labeled with the unique collection ID number and submitted to your State Coordinator via email by the end of the collection season. At least three photos should be taken for each collection, as follows:

1. Landscape level / population
2. Individual plants
3. Material collected (seed)

When possible, also photograph the flower or leaf structure, depending on what is most helpful in identifying the plant. You may also wish to take a photo of your field data form or any field notes as a backup.

In order to maintain genetic integrity and resilience across native milkweed and other plant populations, color-coded seed collection zones are identified for each target state. This information is automatically generated for you when filling out the state and county fields within the Survey123 app but must also be recorded on the Field Data Form.

Seed Collection Considerations

Do not allow collections to overheat, and do not leave them in a vehicle or in full sun. Exposure to sustained high temperatures can damage seed collections. Always maintain ventilation around the collections, if making more than one collection on a field day, bring the existing collections outside of the car and leave in a shady spot with little to no wind exposure. Damp collections should be spread out on newspaper to dry naturally in a well-ventilated area immediately after collection.

Preventing the Spread of Noxious Weeds and other Hazards

Come Clean and Educated

- Before leaving home, inspect your gear and remove dirt, plants, and seeds from clothing, boots, gear, and vehicles. When possible, wear low-tread footwear that doesn't hold soils, seeds, plant parts, or invertebrates.
- Learn to identify the problem weeds you might encounter. There are many websites available to learn about your local problem weeds and invasive species such as your state Department of Natural Resources (or equivalent), playcleango.org, or invasivespeciesinfo.gov

During the Collection

- Avoid parking in weed patches. Most weeds spread along roadways and corridors, as vehicles can easily transport many types of weeds and seeds. If you are driving off the pavement, try to identify a course that will avoid weeds.
- Avoid walking through weed patches. Many weed seeds will cling to clothes, shoes, and even hair. Make sure that if weed seeds get on your sleeves while navigating the site, then you brush them off before putting your arms in your container.
- Avoid unintended seed dropping into your collection container by keeping it closed or covered when walking through the site.
- If collecting with two hands and setting the collection container on the ground, ensure nothing weedy is above you and could drop in the container if you bump it.
- If collecting from numerous sites in one day, clean all gear between each site.

Leave Clean

- If possible, clean your gear on-site at the end of your trip.
- Carefully inspect yourself and your equipment at the end of your trip. Weed seeds will cling to most materials so be sure to carefully check everything for weed seeds before you leave a site and throw the seeds in the trash. Pay special attention to pant cuffs, shoes (including laces), and socks and use a stiff brush, stick, or small screwdriver to help remove soils, seeds, plant parts, or invertebrates; use boot brushes and other removal devices when possible.
- Do not clean clothing, footwear, or gear in or near waterways – this may promote the spread of invasive species downstream.
- Use a 70% alcohol solution to sanitize boots and equipment.
- Don't let weeds hitchhike away from the site. If you are not able to clean before you leave the site, make sure to clean in a place where there is no possibility of anything getting away, and dispose of removed materials in the trash.

- If you have parked or driven through weeds, go straight to the car wash without any delay. As soon as you drive out of the weeds, the seeds will begin to spread. Make sure to spray the undercarriage of your vehicle with high pressure water to wash off any seeds.

Additional Precaution

Incorporate invasive species prevention into planning for the collection event.

- Place cleaning stations at entrance and exit points
- If necessary, plan travel routes to avoid areas of heavy infestation.
- Identify species in the field to educate participants.
- Provide a 70% alcohol solution to sanitize boots and equipment.

Human Safety Concerns

- Bring plenty of water (minimum one liter).
- Wear bright clothes when working near roads
- Do not collect along busy highways.
- Wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes and socks, and bring gloves.
- Dress appropriate for the weather and season.

Be careful when handling milkweed plants, as the sap may harm your eyes. The initial irritation can be painful, followed by a cloudiness of the cornea, which can take a week to clear up. Take the following steps to avoid transferring milkweed sap to yourself or your fellow volunteers:

- Wear gloves while collecting milkweed pods
- Avoid contacting your face with your hands or gloves
- Wash your hands carefully after handling milkweed pods. If milkweed sap gets into your eyes, seek medical attention immediately
- Inform your team lead of any allergies, such as to latex
- Always check for ticks after leaving the field. Watch for poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, wild parsnip, and giant hogweed.

Post-Collection Protocol

1. Label Your Seed Collection

Like the data forms, the information you record on your collection bag will aid in the tracking of the seed throughout its life until it is planted at its final habitat restoration site. Write the information listed below on the outside of your collecting bag. If using a cloth

bag, write the information on a jeweler's tag (or similar) and tie it to the bag. It is imperative that this information is accurate so please label your seed collection bags in the field as you collect.

The following information should be clearly/legibly written on your collection container:

- Latin name

- Common name

- Collection date

- County, State

- State collection zone color (green, orange, or blue)

- Collector's name

- Unique collection team Seed Collection Reference Number which will be provided by your state coordinator.

- If multiple bags are needed to hold the seed from one collection, make sure to mark them 1 of 2, 2 of 2, etc.

2. Recommendations for Collection and Cleaning for Specific Target Plants

Estimated monthly collection periods for each species are detailed in the Plant Profiles. This will vary based on the region, weather, and annual growing conditions, but these periods can serve as an estimated timeline. Preliminary site visits will provide a more accurate indication of seed ripeness and will inform when collection should occur.

Asclepias spp., milkweed

Collection Time: Late summer

> Collect seed pods as they turn yellow or greyish brown and begin to split. White fluff will likely be visible. Seed should be brown and plump when harvested. Do not collect pods with holes as these seeds are likely nonviable due to insect damage. Put the entire pod in the collection bag. Split open pod to remove seed and fluff. If you clean the seeds inside, you will likely have the downy fluff floating around the room as it is quite buoyant.

Cephalanthus occidentalis, buttonbush

Collection time: Late summer to early fall

> Collect before the 'nutlets' start to fall apart. Seeds are ready for collection when they turn brown. Cut the 'nutlet' off the stem and put it into your collection bag.

***Chamaecrista fasciculata*, partridge pea**
Collection Time: Fall

Seeds ripen in pods. Pods turn from green to brown when they are ready for harvest. Spilt open some of the pods in the field to see if the seeds are brown and plump. If the seeds are still green, they are not ready. It is easiest to collect several pods and put them in your collection bag. When indoors, peel the pods to release the seeds.

***Echinacea purpurea*, eastern purple coneflower**
Collection time: Late summer to early fall

Seed is ready for harvest when heads turn dark brown to black. Place entire dried flower head into the collection bag. Most of the seeds will fall out readily with light shaking.

***Eupatorium perfoliatum*, common boneset**
Collection Time: Late fall

Seeds ripen about a month after flowering and should be collected when the white fluff begins to dry and expand and the calyx and stem begin to brown. It is easiest to cut off the entire flower head and remove the chaff and fluff from the seed in an area where you are sheltered from the wind. The white fluff acts as a parachute and the seeds will fly away. Seeds should be dark in color and plump, as flat seeds indicate the embryo has not developed and the seeds are not ripe.

***Eutrochium purpureum*, sweet joe pye weed**
Collection time: Fall

Seeds ripen about a month after flowering and should be collected when the white fluff begins to dry and expand and the calyx and stem begin to brown. It is easiest to cut off the entire flower head and remove the chaff and fluff from the seed in an area where you are sheltered from the wind. The white fluff acts as a parachute and the seeds will fly away. Seeds should be dark in color and plump, as flat seeds indicate the embryo has not developed and the seeds are not ripe.

***Heliopsis helianthoides*, ox-eye sunflower**
Collection Time: Fall

Seed will ripen about a month after flowering if the weather is mild. Seed is ready for harvest when the heads turn from yellow to brown. Ripe seed is grayish brown in color. Plants can be self-sterile, so crack some open before collecting to check for viability. Place entire dried flower head into the collection bag.

***Liatris* spp., blazing star**
Collection time: Fall

The seed is ready for collection when the white fluff begins to dry and expand and the calyx and stem begin to brown. It is easiest to cut off the entire flower head and remove the chaff and fluff from the seed in an area where you are sheltered from the wind. The white fluff acts as a parachute and the seeds will fly away. Seeds should be dark in color and plump as flat seeds indicate the embryo has not developed and the seeds are not ripe. Seed ripens at the bottom of the stem first, so when the top starts to dry out it is usually safe to start collection.

***Monarda fistulosa*, wild bergamot**
Collection Time: Mid through late summer

Seeds are ready for harvest when the flower head turns from green to brown. Ripened seed is tiny and inside the tiny calyx tubes that make up the flower head. Remove the petals (if there are any remaining) and place entire dried flower head into the collection bag.

***Oenothera biennis*, common evening primrose**
Collection Time: Late summer to fall

Seeds are ready for harvest when the capsule turns from green to greyish-brown. Ripened seed is small, angular, and dark brown/black. If whole stalk is mature – harvest every 5th flowering spike in the population. If only bottom seed capsules are mature on a stalk, either revisit site in 1-2 weeks or remove the mature bottom capsules from each stalk (no more than 20%) and place entire capsule into the collect bag. Once dry, capsules will open further.

***Oligoneuron rigidum*, stiff goldenrod**
Collection Time: Fall

Seeds ripen about a month after flowering and should be collected when the white fluff begins to dry and expand and the calyx and stem begin to brown. It is easiest to cut off the entire flower head and remove the chaff and fluff from the seed in an area where you are sheltered from the wind. The white fluff acts as a parachute and the seeds will fly away. Seeds should be brown and plump, as flat seeds indicate the embryo has not developed and the seeds are not ripe.

***Penstemon digitalis*, foxglove beardtongue**
Collection Time: Midsummer to fall

Seed ripens in upright capsules that turn from green to brown when ready to harvest. The dried capsules can be cut off stalk of plant and placed in the collection bag.

***Pycnanthemum* spp., mountainmint**
Collection Time: Late summer

Seed heads turn from green to brown when ripe. Cut off the entire seed head and put in the collection bag to dry. Seeds are very tiny and dark brown resembling itty-bitty mouse poop.

***Ratibida pinnata*, yellow coneflower**
Collection Time: Late summer

The seeds form on the inside of the brown or black cone in the center of the flower. When the cone becomes hard and turns grayish or dark brown the seeds are ripe. Remove the entire cone from the plant and put them in the collection bag.

***Symphyotrichum* spp., asters**
Collection Time: Late summer to fall

The seed is ready for collection when the white fluff begins to dry and expand and the calyx and stem begin to brown. It is easiest to cut off the entire flower head and remove the chaff and fluff from the seed in an area where you are sheltered from the wind. The white fluff acts as a parachute and the seeds will fly away. Seeds should be dark in color and plump, as flat seeds indicate the embryo has not developed and the seeds are not ripe.

***Tradescantia ohiensis*, Ohio spiderwort**
Collection Time: Early summer

Seeds ripen in capsules wrapped in the calyx. The capsules open when the seed is ripe and drop the seeds out quickly. It is best to start checking the seeds about six weeks after they bloom to see if they are ready.

***Vernonia* spp., ironweeds**
Collection Time: Fall

Seeds are ready for collection when the pappus (scales, bristles, or featherlike hairs that are attached to the seeds) is dry and the white fluff begins to expand. Like other members of the composite family, it is easiest to cut off the entire flower head and remove the chaff and fluff from the seed in an area where you

are sheltered from the wind. Seeds should be dark in color and plump, as flat seeds indicate the embryo has not developed and the seeds are not ripe.

***Veronicastrum virginicum*, Culver's root**
Collection time: Late Summer

Tiny seeds are produced inside small woody capsules along a spike. Capsules turn from yellow to brown when they are ready to harvest. Remove the whole spike and put it into your collection bag. The seeds can be removed from the stalk, once dried slide your fingers down the stalk and the seeds should fall off into your collection bag.

***Zizia aurea*, golden Alexander**
Collection Time: Summer

Seeds ripen into capsules on the umbel. The capsules turn from green to brown when they are ready to harvest. Remove the entire flower umbel and put into collection bag.

3. Store your Seeds

After your collection, let the seed dry for three days in a cool, dark, dry location before shipping. The optimal method for drying seed material is to spread it out in a single layer on newspaper and place a fan nearby on the lowest setting. If space is a concern, leave the seed in the collection bag, but leave the bag open and stir the seeds at least once a day.

Ship the seed immediately after drying and completing a preliminary cleaning. Leftover bits of plant material (leaves and stems) can promote the growth of mold which will ultimately affect the viability of the seed. While it is okay to hold onto seed for a couple weeks (in proper conditions) to allow for shipping collections in bulk, do not keep seed for long periods of time before shipping. Viability of seed can decrease quickly if improperly stored and delaying shipment of the seed also delays cleaning and processing.

Only ship seed Monday through Wednesday to ensure that it arrives to be cleaned before the weekend. If necessary, keep the seed in a cool, dark, and dry location until Monday morning. Do not freeze seed and never store or ship seed in plastic.

4. Ship Your Seeds

Background

It is critical to the success of the seed that it is shipped immediately following drying, together with the completed field data forms. The collection Team Lead should ship the seed directly to Prairie Moon Nursery unless otherwise instructed by the State Coordinator. In some cases, the collection Team Lead may need to send the seed first to the State Coordinator, who will then send the seeds in bulk to be cleaned. Do not mail seeds on Thursday or Friday so that they are not left in an uncontrolled (i.e., hot or humid) shipping center for a prolonged period over the weekend. Always check the estimated delivery date before mailing to make sure the seed will arrive before the weekend. If no one is available to receive mail over the weekend, the seeds may end up sitting for two days (or longer) in a boiling hot mailbox or on a doorstep in the direct sun.

Packaging

- If possible, ship each seed collection in one bag.
- Make sure that the seed bags are clearly labeled with your unique collection number and state collection zone.
- The field data form must be shipped with the corresponding collection. Tape or staple it to the bag, or put it inside the bag. (As an additional precaution, place a second label on top of the seed inside the bag.)
- Ship in a sturdy cardboard box, such as a USPS Priority Mail Medium Flat Rate Box. These boxes can be used to ship seed anywhere in the U.S. (with tracking) for a flat rate, regardless of weight – if it fits, it ships! Boxes can be ordered online at the USPS Postal Store (https://www.usps.com/) or picked up at any USPS Post Office, free of charge.
- Securely package the labeled paper bags for shipping (i.e., taped at the seams and padded with newspaper or loose bubble wrap inside the box). Woven PVC or nylon air freight envelopes can be used for smaller quantities of seed.
- Do not use any non-breathable bags (e.g. ziplock bag) or containers (e.g. tupperware with tight lid) for seeds as this may contribute to mold growth.
- If shipping multiple associated boxes at the same time, please include a note for staff letting them know, as all boxes may not arrive on the same day.

Shipping via USPS

To ship the seed, first log in to the project USPS account at www.usps.com (contact State Coordinator or Collection Team Lead for login credentials). From the homepage, select "*Mail & Ship*" and then "*Click-N-Ship*." From there, you will be able to fill out the shipping label using the following steps:

1. Where are you sending from?

You will need to edit the “Return Address” to reflect your own address, as the default address is the Pollinator Partnership headquarters in San Francisco.

2. Where are you sending to?

Unless instructed otherwise by your State Coordinator, all seed must be shipped to the following address:

Nieves Seaman

Prairie Moon Nursery

32115 Prairie Lane

Winona, MN, 55987

Under “Additional Actions,” check the box indicating “I would like to get tracking notification” so that Pollinator Partnership can be updated on the status of the package.

3. Enter a shipping date

Select same day shipping to ensure the seed is delivered ASAP.

4. Enter package details

Select “I am Shipping Flat Rate”

5. Enter package value

Leave this field blank.

6. Select a service type

Select “Priority Mail” under “Choose a Service Type.” Once all other fields are complete, you can click “View available Services and Prices” at the bottom. Then, select the option for “Priority Mail® Medium Flat Rate Box.” Be sure to check the scheduled delivery date to ensure it falls before the weekend. Depending on the amount of seed collected, feel free to use a larger or smaller box or envelope, but note that the price will change depending on package size.

7. Add insurance and extra services

Do not change anything in this category. Leave all fields set to the default options.

8. Label Summary

Review the label summary to ensure the address and delivery date are correct, then click “Add to Cart.”

9. Shipping Cart

Once again, review the order to ensure all the information is correct, then select “Next: Billing Information.”

10. Billing Information

Check the box indicating “*****I certify that my mailing complies with…” Select “Use PayPal,” and click “Next: Pay and Print.”

11. Printing the label

Now that you have paid for the postage, you can print the label. The label should be securely taped to the top of the box.

12. Mailing

Once the seed has been securely packaged in a USPS box and postage has been added, you can either hand deliver the package to any USPS Post Office, or you can schedule a pickup with your daily mail pickup (your office might have an outgoing mail receptacle which a postal worker takes from during your daily mail delivery). Regardless of how the package is received by the USPS, you’ll want to make sure: 1) it is received by a postal worker on the same day, and 2) it is never left in an uncontrolled or hot or humid environment.

Please contact your State Coordinator or info@pollinator.org to confirm when seed has been shipped. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the delivery of the package, please contact your State Coordinator.

Contact Information:

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