



Plant rescue is a special event organized to “rescue” vital native plants from a threatened area to be re-located to a “safer” location. Digging plants from wild areas that are not threatened is not ethical and is highly discouraged.

To Obtain Permission

Write letters to landowners and developers explaining your mission of encouraging natural landscaping and ask for help in allowing us to rescue plants.

If available, enclose a third party endorsement letter or newspaper article on the Backyard Wildlife Habitat program. This is consciousness raising time. Remind people to work with friends who are landowners, realtors, builders, developers and excavators. Ask them to inquire about land to be developed and pass their names on to the Dig Committee members. Urge members to encourage landowners to minimize land damage and utilizes natural landscaping.

Develop a relationship with the local and state road planners for rescues at future construction sites.

Any discussion of the plant rescue must be made with the legal owner and the property or his/her legal agent. Be sure you are both talking about the same site. Procure legal forms from the landowner if necessary.

Site Survey

Conduct a survey with the owner/agent if possible and the Dig Committee. The following should be noted:

- Species of plant and plant communities-trees, shrubs, forbs, grasses, prairie, wetland, woodland
- How many people the site will accommodate - this will determine how extensive the phone tree will be
- Soil conditions: dry, wet, rocky, sandy
- Exposure: sun, shade, wind protected
- Obvious safety issues- ditches, holes, steep grades, barbed wire, construction equipment, poison ivy

- ease of access to site including parking space
- traffic and speed of vehicles
- boundaries within which we can rescue—if these are not clearly defined, ask permission to leave some markers until after the dig.
- After the survey, prepare a simple map showing boundaries and hazards.
- Make copies for distribution on dig.

Telephone Tree

Sometimes rescues occur at the last minute and the time is of the essence. In addition, a site might be small and allow only a few people to collect.

- At your meetings ask attendees if they are willing to participate in a telephone tree.
- In a metropolitan area you may want to organize the phone tree according to exchanges or geographical sections, i.e. north, south, etc.
- Ask specific people to head specific branches. Let him/her organize the branch, possibly having three to four people phoning three to four others.
- When ready to utilize, notify the branch heads of:
 - dig date and time, stress promptness
 - meeting place
 - types of plants and habitats available
 - members on phone tree should have previously received the Equipment/Procedures list. If not, review it with them.

Dig Day

Meet at the agreed upon meeting site. A team leader must supervise all digs. Some people will dig the wrong plants and some will dig outside the boundaries. Try to prevent these situations. [If the rescue area is extensive, have experienced volunteers located at several designated sites

ahead of time to meet and supervise the diggers. Dig chairperson at the meeting site will funnel members to each specific site].

On a highway, team captains should set a safety cone behind their vehicle to warn approaching traffic. If a roof safety light is used, make sure you have jumper cables in case of battery drain. Members should park ahead of the captain's car.

- Have each dig participant sign in as name appears on newsletter label and give phone number. Obtain signature on waiver for each participant.
- Review safety rules and boundaries. Distribute safety vests if appropriate.
- Distribute maps showing boundaries and hazards.
- Ask that more experienced members assist beginners with plant ID.
- Encourage everyone to share information and plants.
- Have someone at a specified place to collect rented or borrowed equipment [vests, cones, lights] and inform participants to return all equipment by a specified time.

Post Dig

- Return any borrowed or rented equipment to proper person.
- Write thanks to the owner for the opportunity to rescue plants.
- Mention how many people participated and that the plants will receive good care.
- Express interest in any future rescues the landowner might have.

Equipment/Procedures

- Publish or distribute to each member on a phone tree
- Prepare new site at home prior to dig if possible. This will mean less work on dig day and allow prompt replanting at the new site. For a fall dig, use vegetable garden space to heel in for spring planting.
- Allow enough time and energy. All plants dug must be replanted promptly for success.

Sprinkle dug plants with water if replanting can not be done on the same day.

- Note soil type, exposure., companion plants at the dig site and mark plants accordingly. Do not try to force transplants too far from their original site situation.
- Take enough soil to disturb roots as little as possible. Put plant into snug carton or bag so soil is not disturbed during transport.
- Water regularly until established.
- After ground freezes, mulch to prevent winter heaving.

What to Wear

- Long sleeves, and long pants
- Sturdy work boots, gloves
- Visible colors if site is next to a busy road
- Cap with visor, gear if necessary

Equipment

- Sun screen, insect repellent, drinking water, snack
- Sharp shovel, pruning shears, collapsible saw. Mark all tools with visible plant or ribbon. An unmarked tool left in leaf debris is easy to overlook.
- Plastic toboggan, saucer, or rectangular laundry basket with comfortable (thick) rope handle. Wheeled carts are often clumsy and difficult to maneuver over rough terrain.
- Marking pen, plastic bags or boxes for temporary holding
- Old shower curtain or tarp to protect trunk or prevent wind damage in truck bed

Just in Case

Know what poison ivy looks like in its various forms and seasons. If you think you may have contacted it, wash exposed areas with Fels Naptha soap ASAP Also be sure your tetanus booster is up to date-every 8 years.

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