

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL IS NOT THE BEST POLICY

Allenstein, Pamela¹; Lobdell, Matthew²; Meyer, Abby³; Highland, Amy⁴

¹ American Public Gardens Association, Kennett Square, PA ² Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL ³ Botanic Gardens Conservation International, Pasadena, CA ⁴ Mt. Cuba Center, Greenville, DE

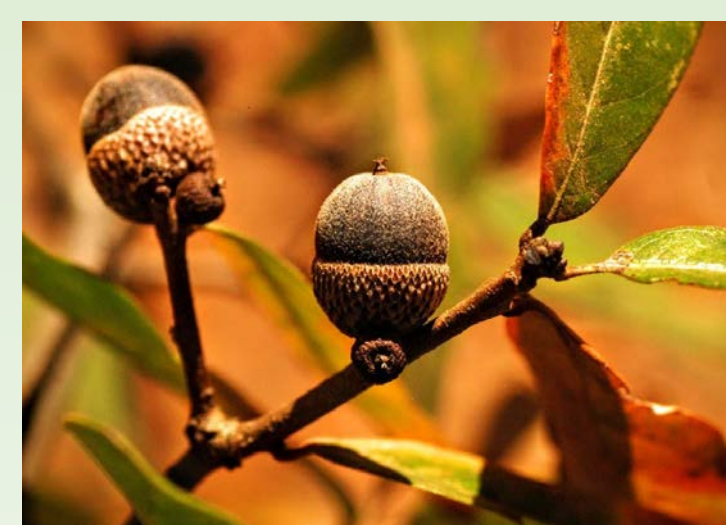
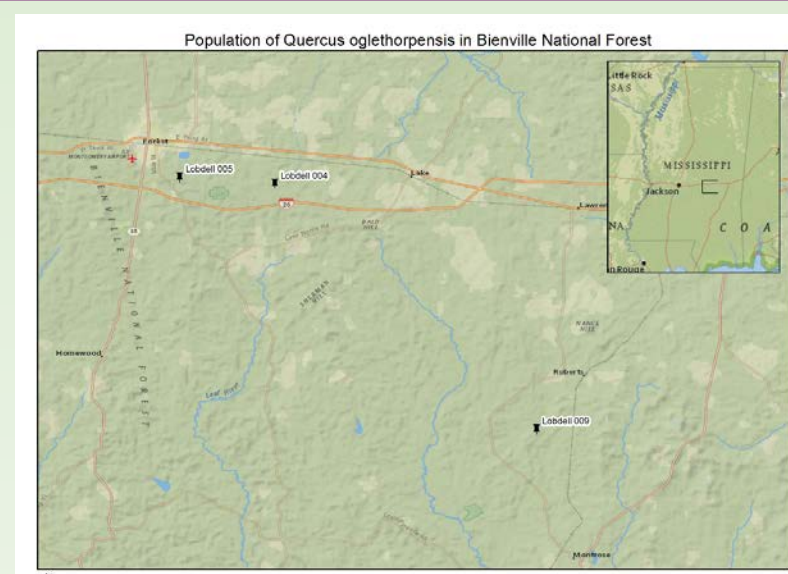
INTRODUCTION

It matters how and where public gardens obtain plants. As responsible stewards of plant collections held in public trust, they commit to accountability and transparent documentation in their policies and operations. Best practice documents provenance, linking permits and agreements which demonstrate legal and ethical plant acquisitions, use, and distribution.



PROVENANCE MATTERS

Knowing a plant's origin, whether it's a species from the wild or a cultivar from a commercial source, increases its value. Provenance can add value to a broad range of garden activities, including conservation, education, horticulture, and research. If your garden's collections include a high percentage of "origin unknown" plants, retroclassify the accessions if feasible, or replace them over time with those of documented origin.



MS-Jas-A-1	Lobdell 009	2	0	0	MS Jasper	Bienville National Forest	32.19828	-89.25672	147m
SC-McC-A-1	Lobdell 014	2	0	0	SC McCormick	Sumter National Forest	33.97656	-82.103	156m
SC-McC-B-1	Lobdell 016	2	0	0	SC McCormick	Sumter National Forest	33.83528	-82.18683	129m
SC-McC-B-1	PCC15-SEUS086	0	7	0	SC McCormick	Sumter National Forest	33.83511	-82.18689	129m

LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH

Ask to see provenance documentation such as collecting field notes or purchase receipts when offered plant donations. These will help verify plant identities and their origins. Be sure to ask if the plants were obtained legally and with permission, and ideally obtain copies of written agreements or permits governing acquisition, use, or distribution. Ensure plants were legally propagated and buy only from reputable sources. If the origin of certain plants is suspect or known to be obtained without permission, be ready to decline their acquisition for your garden's collection.



DO NO HARM

No public garden or plant professional wants to cause a plant to become extinct, even inadvertently. Asking for permission or applying for permits to collect has the added benefit of safeguarding against over-collecting from wild populations. Communicating intent can help coordinate actions among different parties, and save resources when targeted populations produce few or no seed.



Franklinia altamaha

IGNORANCE IS NO DEFENSE

Know the laws guarding against illegal trade of plants and wild collecting without permission. Do not propagate or distribute plants protected through patents. Don't be complicit to illegal or unethical practices by making assumptions without asking for verification. Resist the temptation to "greenwash" plant records when plant procurement is suspect. Use staff training, plant sales, interpretation, and tours as opportunities to raise awareness about plant smuggling and collecting from the wild.



Paphiopedilum kovachii



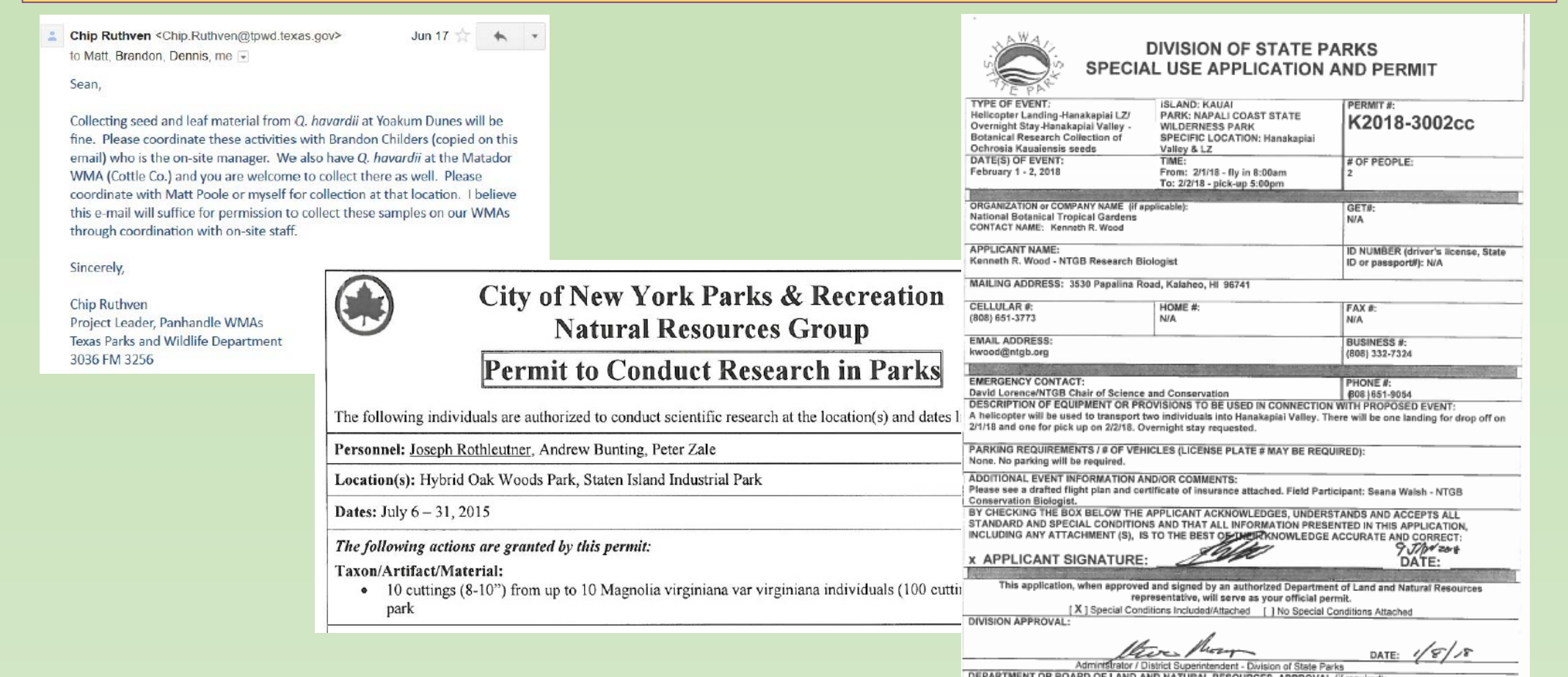
FOSTER COLLABORATION, NOT ISOLATION

Don't go it alone. Obtaining permission for sourcing desiderata is easier when working with partners and in collaboration with landowners. Be prepared to give something in return. Offer propagules back to the host site, share expertise and acknowledge their contributions. This builds trust, brings access, and sometimes attracts additional resources.



PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING & PERMITS

Retain written documentation of any agreements, permits, and material transfer agreements associated with plants you acquire in your collection. Ideally, these will be linked to accessions within your garden's plant records system. Be prepared to provide these upon request, as demonstrated evidence that plants were obtained legally and ethically.



TRANSPARENCY IS A BETTER POLICY

Ensure that your organization's living collections policy reflects its core values of integrity, and stipulates adherence to all laws and ethical guidelines. Align procedures to create clear processes with supporting documentation, and communicate these through all levels in your organization. By standardizing practices and cultivating a culture of open communication, your garden will build trust among collaborators. This in turn will strengthen your living collections program.

IV. Legal and Ethical Considerations

Activity related to the development, management, and use of the Garden's living collections will comply with all relevant local, state, federal, and international laws. This includes compliance with all necessary documentation and phytosanitary requirements during acquisition and distribution activities. The Garden will follow all international trade agreements that relate to plant collecting, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Plants must come from reputable vendor, be from nursery propagated material, or be collected with the permission of the owner or government.

Plants must have documented characteristics to affirm their identity and information as to their source of origin. The Arboretum will not knowingly acquire/purchase plants that have been illegally collected or imported, nor will it through its acquisitions of plants, encourage the over-collection of plants in the wild. The staff of the Arboretum shall abide by the national and international laws and the relevant international conventions on acquisition and disposal of plants like Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

PASS IT ALONG

When you share plants with others, obtain written prior informed consent when possible, then provide copies of all documentation related to those plants upon transfer. Make sure recipients are aware of any restrictions on the plants' use or further distribution. Be a good ambassador for your organization, and abide by all agreements affecting plants in your collection. Raise public awareness about the consequences of illegal collecting, and educate entities issuing permits about the conservation work done by public gardens.



ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES CHAMPIONING PROVENANCE DOCUMENTATION AND COLLECTIONS BEST PRACTICES:



PHOTO CREDITS: Matt Lobdell, Shannon Still, Carrie Radcliffe, Joe Rothleutner, Seana Walsh, Kenneth Wood, Sean Hoban, Harvey Bernstein, Patrick Thompson, Dalton Holland Baptista, TJ Potterfield, Barnes Arboretum, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, United States Customs & Border Protection, United States Fish & Wildlife Service