

Code of Conduct for the Conservation and Enjoyment of Wild Plants

The above code has been published by the Botanical Society of the British Isles. The main points relating to pteridophytes are outlined here. Members are urged to follow these guidelines. Although the information provided here relates only to the British Isles, similar legislation exists abroad. Members are urged to follow the same standards abroad as they do at home and always to act within local legislation.

Legal protection

All wild plants are protected by law in the United Kingdom. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is illegal to uproot any plant without permission from the landowner or occupier. Similar protection is given to plants in Northern Ireland under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order, 1985. Furthermore, many nature reserves, including National Trust land, have bylaws in force making it illegal to pick, uproot or remove plants. Several of our rarest plants are specifically protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act against intentional picking, uprooting and destruction, unless damage is a result of a lawful activity and could not reasonably have been avoided.

The pteridophytes listed on Schedule 8 are *Cystopteris dickieana*, *Equisetum ramosissimum*, *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*, *Trichomanes speciosum* (including its gametophytic form), *Woodsia alpina* and *W. ilvensis*. In Northern Ireland *Gymnocarpium dryopteris*, *Lycopodiella inundata*, *Pilularia globulifera*, *Polystichum lonchitis* and *Trichomanes speciosum* are similarly protected. In the Republic of Ireland the following pteridophytes are specifically listed: *Asplenium obovatum*, *A. septentrionale*, *Cryptogramma crispa*, *Gymnocarpium robertianum*, *Pilularia globulifera* and *Trichomanes speciosum*.

Responsible conduct

Collecting small amounts of plant material for private study, research or as voucher specimens is usually acceptable, except in the case of protected or rare species. However, no collecting of any plant material should be undertaken on a nature reserve or protected site without first obtaining permission, and in no circumstances should the bulk of a population be collected.

Habitat conservation

Rare plants are often rare because they require specific conditions, and unintentional damage to their habitats can easily occur. A particular threat is soil compaction. Should you visit a rare plant then please avoid doing anything which will alter the site conditions, such as disturbing the surrounding vegetation for photographic purposes, or excessive trampling of surrounding vegetation.

Introducing plants to the wild

It is an offence to introduce certain plant species into the wild. However, none of the listed species are ferns. Nevertheless, non-native plants should never be introduced into the wild, and one fern, *Azolla*, is now becoming a pest on some nature reserves in SE England, so particular care should be taken if wellingtons etc have been used previously where *Azolla* occurs.