11.6.1 Plant collecting permit

Most countries are signatories to the International Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD 1993–). Therefore, it is advisable to be fully aware of the laws applicable to the area from which you wish to collect and to obtain the necessary approval and permits. You can usually obtain collecting permits from government departments that are responsible for environment management within the area to be visited. Contact the nearest major herbarium or museum (see Thiers 1997– for contact information) and seek their advice prior to making the collection. Remember, in many countries, separate permits are required for different States or Provinces as well as separate permits for different types of management areas (e.g. conservation parks, national parks, and nature reserves). Finally, remember to obtain permission from local landowners or custodians so that you can undertake field studies on their land.

11.6.1.1 Special permits

Phytosanitary permits will probably be needed when transporting plants across borders of different countries. These permits must be obtained from the country of origin.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) legislation regulates and controls the international trade in material obtained from plants considered to be endangered. Remember: scientific material is not exempt from CITES regulations. Therefore, CITES-listed plants require a *CITES export permit* from the country of origin as well as a *CITES import permit* from the authority ↳ (herbarium or museum) receiving the material. Since not all botanical authorities are registered as an agency approved to receive CITES material, it is important to verify that your collections are being sent to a herbarium or museum that is legally allowed to receive these specimens.

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11.6.2 Pre-planning meeting: field hazard assessment

Possibly the most important aspect of field studies is the recognition, by all members of the field team, of the possible hazards that they are likely to encounter in the field. Careful planning and preparation can avoid many of the potential difficulties of working in remote areas. It is recommended that a ‘Field Hazard Assessment’ document be completed prior to any fieldwork. A copy of the completed document must be held by the principal organization involved with the work. This document should form the basis of a post-fieldwork evaluation of all aspects of the field study.

The topics and issues that should be covered by this document should include the names of participants, including Team Leader; description of project and area to be visited; dates when field team expected to be at specified localities; and insurance arrangements, especially for non-staff.

11.6.3 Emergency aids and contact schedule

Mobile/cell telephone numbers of all team members must be listed and held by all members of the team. However, since the work is in remote areas, a review of any expected areas of non-coverage is essential. If satellite telephones are to be used (and this is strongly recommended for remote areas), all members of the team need to be trained in their use. Likewise, if a two-way radio is to be used, then all members must be familiar with its operation.

Each member of the team must carry matches (in a water-proof container) or a fire lighting flint, a watch (for estimating time) and/or compass for estimating direction, a small reliable light (head-lamps are usually more convenient), survival blanket (especially recommended in alpine zones or high latitudes), and a whistle (for attracting attention).