

# PROTOCOLS FOR THE ETHICAL STORAGE OF TAONGA MĀORI SEEDS

At the highest level, the focus of seed banking should be on establishing a system which best benefits te taiao. To do this, Māori must be involved at every step in the process. This document outlines the important considerations and steps collectors should follow to build and maintain ethical and legal collections.

Accordingly, at a high level, seed collection and research must:

1. Involve Māori or relevant Indigenous Peoples at all levels of the project, from the moment of conception, throughout the project's life, and right up to any outcomes and/or outputs that come about because of the project.
2. Acknowledge the history of the peoples and places where research and collections are taking place, and the history of the institution leading the work and engagement with communities. Māori and Indigenous Peoples have long memories and there may be a history of positive interactions to lean on, or negative ones to resolve.
3. Build long term relationships, or be a part of ongoing relationships, both between the research or collection institution and iwi/hapū, as well as between individuals and members of Māori or Indigenous communities.
4. Allow kaitiaki/kaimahi to lead projects involving their taonga species; this ensures they can exercise their kaitiakitanga appropriately. When a project does not involve taonga native species but is relevant or significant to Māori it should aim for treaty-based co-governance models.
5. Involve and support benefit sharing as a core part of the project; anything less is exploitation, especially where mātauranga Māori is concerned.

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Below, a handful of specific considerations within the seed system are outlined.

They look at both historic issues and how to address them, as well as how to go about appropriate engagement for new collections.

## 1 Before collection, identify the mana whenua groups relevant to your collection site and engage with those members who hold authority relevant to your work.

- It is important to note that most Māori are not and have not historically been resourced to build local capacity to engage with most projects that are bought before them. This means that for those who wish to engage with and use Māori resources (people, expertise, or otherwise), funding and support for those they work with is required in the same way that they pay and support their own staff.

## 2 Observe the tikanga of the place where you are working. This may involve:

- The use of certain karakia
- The return of organic material to the place of collection
- Collection of plants at certain sites and not at others (avoidance of tapu sites)

## 3 For the physical storage of seeds

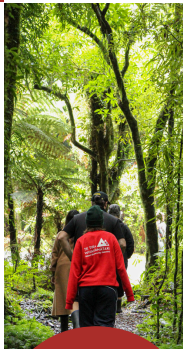
- Where possible, communities must be supported to store seeds at place; while also acknowledging the need for backups elsewhere, seeds should not simply be extracted from communities.
- The use of dark glass jars or foil bags to store seeds allows the mauri of each collection to be kept contained in the jar and stopped from interfering with other seeds in the same area.

## 4 The storage and dissemination of data from and of seeds

- While acknowledging the issues around the storage and use of Māori data, the already alarmingly large literature on data is sufficient to inform this work. In short, however, data collection must not be extractive, and benefit-sharing practices must be observed with communities.
- One data issue specific to seed banking is the use of 'black box policies' to hide data and give full control of collections to depositors. This must not be used as a way to deprive Māori of access to collections and data, but may be used in some cases to give Māori more control of seeds and their data.

## 5 Access of Māori to taonga seeds

Collections housed within institutions where unethical practices have occurred in the past need to address these legacies and work with communities to better manage, return, or otherwise make right past injustices.



These high-level protocols are a figurative 'line in the sand' they represent the things which Māori should never compromise

✉ admin@ttw.nz

🌐 www.ttw.nz

📍 48 Church Street,  
Rangiora 7400