

Extract from 'Activities on Reserves Policy' (BBOWT 2012)

Collecting fungi, flowers and fruits

Picking flowers, fruits and fungi for personal use whether collecting or consumption is not illegal with the exception of species or on sites that have special protection. A Code of Conduct has been produced by the BSBI which sets out these principles:

Generally, uprooting is harmful, but picking with care and in moderation usually does little damage and can foster the appreciation of wild plants, which in turn benefits their conservation. However, in some cases picking can be harmful and it may even be illegal.

- Wild plants (including fungi) are protected by law from removal by uprooting within both the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and also the Theft Act 1968.
- Picking flowers and fruits in the countryside is not illegal except those on Schedule 8 W&C Act 1981 and plants protected under the Habitats Directive.
- On SSSIs it is an offence to damage or destroy plants or other features if the person knows they are on a SSSI. The removal of 'plant material' without consent from Natural England is illegal. **N.B. Much of Greenham and Crookham Commons is SSSI.**
- The sale or trade of certain species is illegal under the W&C Act 1981 (e.g. bluebell, orchids) or CITES (snowdrop).

Picking of wildflowers, fruit and fungi on BBOWT non-SSSI nature reserves is therefore allowed as long as in appropriate moderation. On SSSI nature reserves it should be possible to prevent flower or fruit picking if it is harmful by means of the legislation in the W&C Act 1981 however this should only be used where damage is being done by excessive collecting or by targeting threatened species. The common practice of picking common wild fruits and small numbers of common plants may be tolerated and even encouraged in the appropriate circumstances. For example when learning plant identification it is normal to pick a sample of each species for reference, as long as the species is not uncommon.

Collecting of mushrooms (fungi fruiting bodies) is not known to cause declines in species populations but it may reduce their ability to spread by spores and will of course reduce the enjoyment for other visitors. It is accepted that small quantities of fruiting bodies may be sometimes collected for identification and learning purposes. Many groups carry out 'fungi forays' at any time of year, although most visits are in autumn. Samples are usually taken for identification purposes and to allow the whole group to see the variety of species found that day. Any such activities should be carried out without impact on the spectacle for future visitors and should follow the British Mycological Society guidelines

Collecting commercially or excessively for culinary use is not allowed on our reserves. Large-scale collection for commercial purposes is theft and is not permitted on any of our sites.

Enforcement of these rules should be applied sensitively to avoid alienating the people who support our work and enjoy our reserves.