

Conservation Corner for May 2020

I knew the minute I hit the send button for last month's corner, that I was taking a risk of Orchidfest being cancelled this year. And sure enough, the day our newsletter came out, I also received notification that the event would be cancelled for this year.

So this month I am going to turn to one of the things that we can do, even if we are isolating. I know many of us are avid gardeners and this is an area that can help to preserve your peace of mind when everything else looks overwhelming. On a recent birthday, I was given a Spring 1994 Wildflower magazine. Near the back of the magazine was a full page from the Canadian Wildflower Society on Gardener's Guidelines – as appropriate today as it was then. There are 14 listed, but these are of particular interest for orchids. I have left the number from the list in front of each entry.

1 Do not disrupt native plant communities.

3 Buy only wildflowers and ferns certified by the vendor as: Nursery Propagated.

8 Transplant wild native flora only when the plants of a given area are officially slated for destruction example: road construction, subdivisions, pipelines, golf courses, etc. Obtain permission before transplanting. (In the case of native orchids with sensitive root systems, be sure to dig up as large a piece of soil as possible. Remember - this is only when the area is slated to be destroyed.)

12 Exercise extreme caution when studying and photographing wildflowers in order not to damage the surrounding flora and fauna.

14 Openly share your botanical knowledge with the public but ensure that native plant species or communities will not be damaged in the process.

The last two that I have listed are what usually sparks the comment "we love our orchids to death". When photographing, we are often too close to the plant. When you lie on your stomach (which you should never do), think of all the habitat that you are crushing and add an additional two to three feet all around you if you are trying to photograph orchids. That's a lot of habitat destruction! When you are thinking of photographing an orchid, keep in mind the new term we are all becoming accustomed to – physical distancing. Then see how little space you can take by squatting or kneeling at least three feet away to minimize your footprint.