Collecting Flora and Fauna for Schools in Western Australia

A Practical Guide for Teachers and Laboratory Technicians

Disclaimer
This guide is intended as a practical summary for school staff and should not replace advice from DBCA. Requirements may change and staff should consult current DBCA licensing information before undertaking collection activities.

Myths and Mistakes



Schools sometimes approach collecting with assumptions that can lead to unintentional non-compliance. Here is what those assumptions get wrong — and what can go wrong as a result.

Common assumption	The reality	The mistake this leads to
"We're collecting for education, so licences don't apply to us."	Educational use does not automatically exempt schools from licensing requirements.	Collecting on school grounds or private land without a required fauna licence or collecting plants from Crown land without a Flora-taking Licence.
"It's only one specimen — surely that's fine."	Legality depends on the species, location and activity, not the number collected.	Accidentally collecting a threatened or priority species, which carries significant penalties under WA biodiversity legislation.
"Local government reserves are public land — anyone can collect there."	Crown land and local government reserves require both a licence and written permission from the land manager.	Collecting from reserves without a licence or without obtaining written landowner permission.
"We have a licence, so we're free to collect wherever we go."	A licence and land access permission are two separate requirements. Both must be in place before collecting.	Collecting from National Parks or Nature Reserves without authorisation or collecting on any land without written permission from the owner or manager.
"The students are covered under my teacher's licence."	Licences are issued to individuals. Students are not automatically covered, though they may participate under direct supervision.	Allowing large groups of students to collect independently, without understanding that the licensed person remains responsible for all activity.
"Nobody will notice — it's a small school activity."	Schools are public institutions. Complaints or reports can trigger investigations, and penalties can be significant.	Proceeding without licences or permission on the assumption that minor breaches go undetected.

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Three Important Rules

Before collecting any plant, animal or fungus specimen, ask yourself:

1. **Is it a threatened or priority species?** Use iNaturalist to check.
   If YES — stop and seek advice from DBCA. Threatened and priority species have special protections under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and generally cannot be collected for school activities. For most school activities, only common, non-threatened species should be considered.
2. **Whose land is it?**
   Collection rules differ depending on whether you are on:
   - Private land
   - Crown land (local government reserves, road reserves, unallocated Crown land etc.)
   - DBCA-managed land (National Parks, Nature Reserves, Conservation Parks, State Forests and other CALM land)
3. **Do you have permission to be there?**
   Even if you hold a licence, you must still obtain written permission from the landowner or land manager before collecting. A licence and land access permission are two separate requirements.

Flora (Plants)

Collecting flora from private land

Licence required?	**NO** — schools may collect flora from private land for educational purposes without a flora licence.
What is required?	Written permission from the landowner or occupier. The permission should be in writing, identify the property, state the period of access, and be signed and dated.
Examples	School grounds (principal approval recommended) A parent's or guardian's farm A privately owned bush block

Collecting flora from Crown land

Examples include: local government reserves, bushland reserves, road reserves, unallocated Crown land.

Licence required?	**YES** — a Flora-taking (Other Purposes) Licence is required. The licence is issued to an individual person, usually the teacher or laboratory technician responsible for the activity.
Land access required?	**YES** — written permission must also be obtained from the relevant land manager or owner.

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Collecting flora from National Parks or Nature Reserves

Important
In most cases, collection for school teaching purposes is not allowed. These areas are managed primarily for conservation. If there is a genuine need to access DBCA-managed land, contact wildlifelicensing@dbca.wa.gov.au before planning the activity.

Fauna (Animals, Insects & Spiders)

Important difference
Unlike flora, all wild fauna is considered property of the State. This means the rules are essentially the same whether you are on private land or Crown land.

Collecting fauna for educational purposes

Examples: sweep-netting insects, pitfall-trapping invertebrates, collecting spiders, pond dipping for aquatic invertebrates, temporary classroom observation of animals.

Licence required?	**YES** — a Fauna-taking (Scientific or Other Purposes) Licence is required. This applies whether collection occurs on school grounds, private property, local government reserves, or Crown land.
Land access required?	**YES** — written permission from the landowner or land manager is also required. Both the licence and the permission document should be brought to field activities.

What About Students?

Licences are issued to teachers or laboratory technicians, not to large groups of students. However:

Fauna	General rule
Students may participate in supervised activities, particularly invertebrate sampling, when directly supervised by the licensed teacher or technician. Large groups of students are not individually covered by a teacher's licence.	The licensed person remains responsible for ensuring all activities comply with licence conditions.

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What About School Grounds?

Plants	Animals
✓ No flora licence required ✓ Principal or school approval recommended	✓ Fauna licence required ✓ School approval required

Quick Summary

Activity	Licence Required?	Permission Required?
Collecting common plants from private land for teaching	No	Yes
Collecting common plants from school grounds	No	Yes
Collecting plants from Crown land	Yes	Yes
Collecting insects from school grounds	Yes	Yes
Collecting insects from private land	Yes	Yes
Collecting fauna from Crown land	Yes	Yes
Collecting threatened flora or fauna	Special approvals required	Yes

Useful Links

DBCA Wildlife Licensing Portal	https://wildlifelicensing.dpaw.wa.gov.au
DBCA Licensing Information	https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/licences-and-permits
Licensing enquiries	wildlifelicensing@dbca.wa.gov.au

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