

# GUIDANCE NOTES FOR SPORE DONORS

Each year we receive a number of donations that we cannot put into the exchange for various reasons, mainly because there were insufficient spores in the packets to allow us to divide up into shares for the exchange. So we would like to give current and prospective donors some guidance to help them to provide us with a usable donation of spores. We are sure that donors would like to know that their efforts are worthwhile and not a waste of both their time collecting and our effort cleaning only to find too few spores to share out and list.

We also may have caused some confusion in the past because of some ambiguity in our previous guidance notes. We're sorry about this and have reworded these guidance notes in the hope of making them clearer.

To clarify matters, we will use the word '**packet**' to mean the packet of spores sent in of **each** species/variety by a donor. We will use the word '**share**' to mean the little foil packet of spores of a particular species/variety that we send out to members who have requested that species.

We try to encourage donors by offering an additional allocation of 10 extra shares. To qualify for this full extra allocation we ask that the donor sends in at least 5 different species/varieties (taxa) of spores (ideally in one packet per species/variety), **each in sufficient quantity to be divided by us into at 5-10 shares for the exchange**. In the case of very rare species or varieties, smaller quantities are acceptable, but it is not worth listing a species if we have less than 2 shares to offer. A tiny piece of pinnule in an envelope is usually useless, unless it is a very rare species shedding a lot of spores and harvested at exactly the right time. Donors sending less than 5 kinds of spores will be able to request the same number of extra shares. If you are unsure how or when to collect spores, please ask for our free leaflet 'The Wright Way to Collect Spores'.

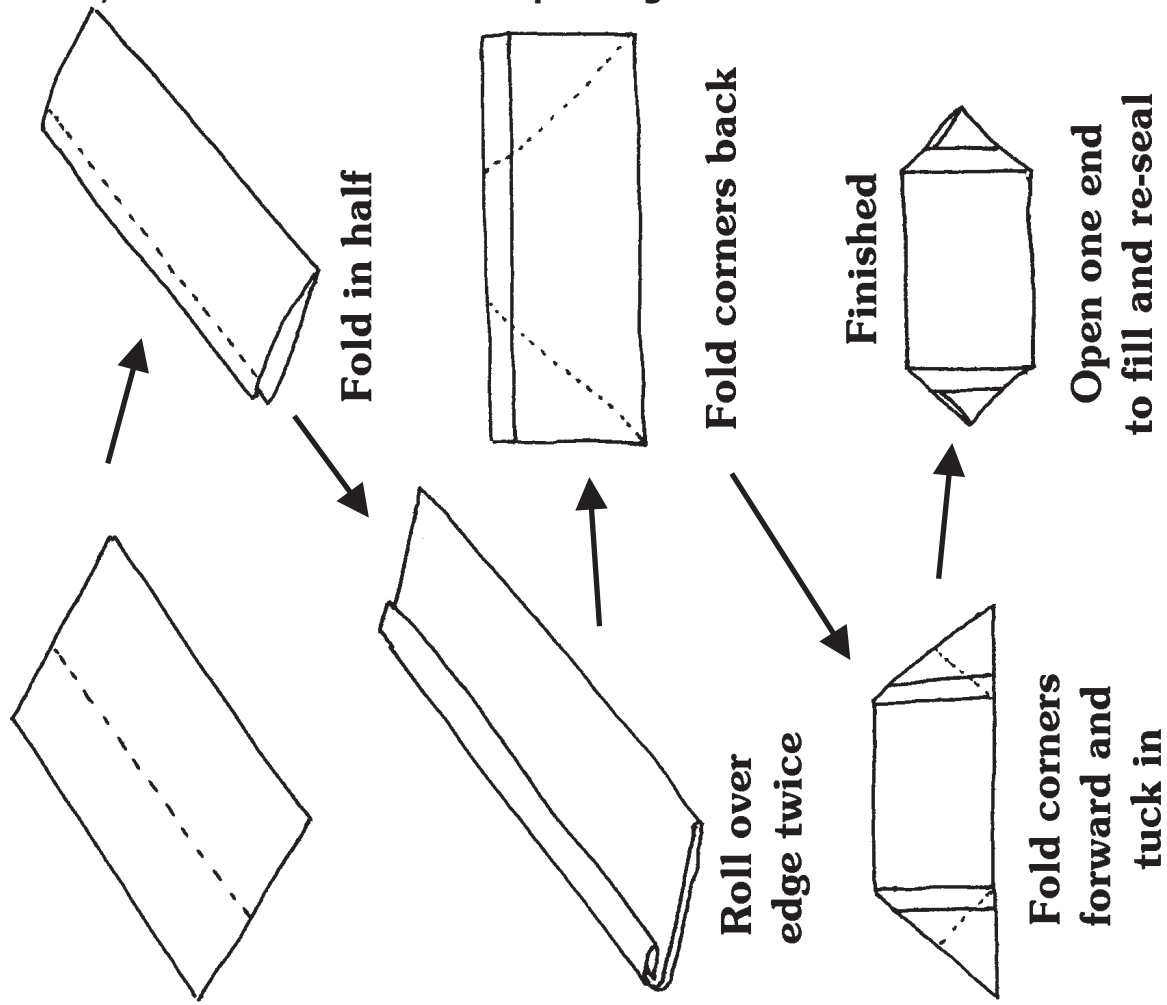
Here are some of the problems we have to deal with and suggestions of how donors can ensure their donation is usable and is sent in clearly labelled to make our job of cataloguing and processing the spores easier.

- **Please check that there are some spores in the packet!** Each packet received has to be logged in and given a 3-figure reference prior to our packeting stage, so it is very disheartening to find that 20 or so packets sent in provide no useable spores at all, especially since our equipment has to be cleaned between each packet checked. It also makes us sad to think that a well-meaning donor has gone to so much effort for nothing. Be careful as some species, collected late, shed empty sporangia into the packet, e.g., *Cyathea* spp (we often get huge quantities of *Cyathea* 'spores' sent in only to throw away 99% as 'chaff'). Most spores are black or dark brown when ripe, but some can be yellow, white or green. All appear as a very fine powder, as opposed to the 'fluffy' appearance of chaff.
- **A donor's donation of each variety/species should be sent to us in a single packet, if at all possible.** If the donation of a single species is sent in 5 packets, that is 5 times as much work for us in logging in, opening and extracting and cleaning the spores. Collecting over a period is a good method to ensure getting spores 'at the right time', but we would appreciate it if you would combine all these into one packet.
- **Choose your packet carefully.** Many donations are lost because they have leaked out of, or stuck to, the packets. Please don't use sticky tape to seal your packet as that is where most of your donation will end up! The easiest kind of packet for us to deal with is an 'origami-style' packet, folded out of smooth copier paper or shiny magazine paper or similar. Instructions for making 2 types of these can be found on the reverse of this sheet. Plastic bags are not normally desirable as the spores need to be perfectly dry when put in the packet otherwise they may turn mouldy, and also the spores stick to the plastic by static electricity and are difficult to extricate.
- **Please try and label the packets clearly in block capitals with the correct name.** We spend many hours each year checking unfamiliar names on databases that turn out to be spelling mistakes, or trying to work out unclear handwriting. It also helps us if you include your name or initials on each packet.
- **Try and avoid sending spores that you can only name as 'Fern sp.' or 'Dryopteris sp.'** Spores labelled like this are rarely requested. Some added detail like '*Polystichum* sp. Hardy, collected Nepal 2000m' is better and people will request these to 'have a go'. Also, we are unlikely to be able to name a fern from the frond/photo sent in with the spores hoping we can name it for you.
- **Please make sure you send in your spores before the closing date,** (or let us know if you will be sending a particular species later if not ready). In order to get the list out promptly, we work to a very tight schedule and once we have finished receiving and dividing the spores into shares, we go immediately to the next stage of compiling the list, so cannot take any further donations.

**Finally, please don't be put off by the above - the spore exchange cannot function without the generosity and effort of our donors, for which we are very grateful.**

**Thanks and Best Wishes from Anne and Barry**

**Origami-style packet for the collection of whole or part fronds to dry and collect spores. Paper sizes A3, A4 and A5 can be used depending on the frond size.**



**Small origami-style packet to store small quantities of spores once shed and collected. Paper is square and size normally cut from A5 into a square 150mm x 150mm**

