



The CSB | SJU Bailey Herbarium

by

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The CSB/SJU Biology Department Bailey Herbarium is one of the finest collections of preserved plants in the state. In fact, our herbarium, which is located on third floor of the Peter Engel Science Center, has more than 32,000 specimens of pressed, dried, identified and labeled specimens of plants, fungi, lichens, mosses and ferns. This makes it the largest private college herbarium in the state and third largest, overall.

For those unfamiliar, an herbarium is much like a library that contains plants rather than books. The collections in the herbarium, like those in the library, represent a vast wealth of information that is invaluable for teaching and research. Our herbarium is used heavily by students in Plant Systematics (BIOL308) and other classes (*i.e.*, Plant Diversity, Plant Ecology) and our collections have been consulted in a variety of research projects including studies by the botanists working on the Minnesota County Biological surveys.

Our herbarium is a wonderful place to study or read. After the renovation of the St. John's science facilities, the herbarium is arguably the nicest of our public science spaces. The newly remodeled herbarium houses about 30 cabinets of specimens.

We have networked computers, swivel arm and standard dissecting microscopes for studying specimens, an extensive work area and seating, and even a boom box to enjoy your favorite music. Anyone is welcome to "hang out" in the herbarium.

The herbarium houses a variety of interesting collections including our permanent research collection. This collection comprises the bulk of the herbarium and features specimens collected by many individuals including Dr. N. Zaczkowski,

Sister Remberta Westkaemper, and Fr. James Hansen. These collections include plants from all over the world and especially central Minnesota.

We own one isotype specimen, which

is an important specimen used when naming a new plant. We are also lucky to possess 2000 specimens from the *Flora Exsiccata Austro-Hungarica*, which is a collection that was made at the turn of the century by European botanists including two Benedictine monks from the Abbey Seitenstetten in Austria. St. John's purchased this scientifically important and historically valuable collection from the Abbey in 1926 for \$100. In



addition, we have a large collection of fungal pathogens that was donated to us by the University of Wisconsin Department Of Plant Pathology, an extensive collection of dried weeds and grasses, a small but growing collection of botanically-accurate silk flowers, and a large collection of laminated specimens that are used primarily in teaching.

To maintain an herbarium such as ours requires much work. I serve as the Curator (or Director) and usually have several work-study assistants to help.

So, what is the value of the herbarium? Our herbarium is a priceless storehouse of botanical information. For example, by examining our specimens you can learn whether a particular plant is growing on campus, what it looks like, where it grows, when it flowers, how common it is, and so on.

Let me give some recent examples of the value of the herbarium. While giving a tour to a prospective student and her family I was asked whether ginseng grows on campus. This family was interested in holistic health and knew that ginseng has a long history as a medicinal plant. In fact, the Chinese value this plant so much that ginseng commands very high prices and as a result, wild ginseng is nearly extinct because of overzealous commercial collecting. In checking our herbarium records, we have at least two specimens that were collected on campus many years ago, but none recently. In fact, I have only seen a handful of specimens in my three decades of tramping around. The cause for its decline is not clear but could be due to over collecting, deer browsing, habitat loss, or other reason. However, without the herbarium, we wouldn't have any verifiable evidence that ginseng does, in fact, grow on campus.

More recently, Arboretum staff performed similar analyses for orchid specimens on campus and arrived at similar conclusions about the decline of these species. Another study by Steven McGreevy in 1999 showed that the prairie restoration project

at St. John's has been reasonably successfully in restoring to campus species that once thrived in this area.

I invite you to visit the herbarium. It's one of the true treasures of our campuses.

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