

RSA-POM Herbarium Etiquette and Instructions for Proper Handling of Herbarium Specimens

Each specimen sheet is irreplaceable: It is a permanent voucher record and should be handled accordingly.

Specimen sheets and folders should be handled carefully, i.e., when carried always hold parallel to the ground. Use both hands to hold a specimen. Never hold a specimen with one hand (some specimens are very fragile).

Never turn specimen sheets or folders upside down. Avoid leafing through folders like pages of a book. Avoid holding specimen sheets and folders at an angle more than 30°.

When working through a folder of specimen sheets, place the folder on a flat surface, open the folder, and go through the sheets one at a time; move the top sheet to an open area to the right or left of the original stack, then place each subsequent sheet on top of the one previously moved. When finished with the stack of specimen sheets, simply reverse them one-by-one to return them to the order in the original stack.

If you find specimens or folders out of order, you should carefully place them in proper order. *If you are not sure, then ask the Administrative Curator!*

Specimens in the collection are organized by class and subclass: Psilotopsida, Lycopsida, Sphenopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Angiospermae (Basal Angiosperms, Magnoliids, Monocots, Eudicots).

Within each of these units families are arranged in alphabetical order. Within each family, genera are arranged in alphabetical order. Within each genus, the collection is organized according to geographic regions, and is represented by different folder colors. A key to the geographic regions can be found inside each cabinet door.

Within a particular genus and geographic region (colored folder), species are arranged with indets first, then identified species arranged in alphabetical order. Specimen sheets are normally organized in folders alphabetically by state, then alphabetically by county within each state. A—Z folders are used for species for which there are fewer than three sheets and follow the folders of identified species. Hybrids are filed at the end of each genus and region.

Specimen sheets should be carefully placed in folders, squarely aligned with one another and with the folder.

Genus folders should be placed on the cabinet shelf, squarely aligned with one another and with the shelf.

When loose fragments are discovered, and they can definitely be assigned to an individual specimen sheet, carefully use forceps or a small brush to retrieve them and place them in a fragment packet. If the specimen does not already have a fragment packet and it needs one, select a packet of an appropriate size and neatly glue it to the herbarium sheet. Loose fragments that accumulate in the common fold of the genus folder and **cannot** definitely be associated with an individual specimen sheet should be discarded. *If you are not sure, then ask the Administrative Curator!*

When you remove a folder from the herbarium cabinet, mark the location with a slip of paper or drop tag in order to ensure that the folder is returned to its proper position in the cabinet. **Do not leave specimens out overnight on benches.** Specimens left out overnight **must be frozen** before being filed back into the collection.

Always keep doors of herbarium cabinets closed, except when removing specimens and returning them to the cabinet. If you notice insects or evidence of insect damage on herbarium sheets, *inform the Administrative Curator immediately.*

When moving compactors, move no more than two rows (i.e., carriages) at a time. Moving more than two carriages will unnecessarily tax the compactor system. Always check that the aisle is clear before moving the carriage. Once the desired row is opened, always engage the locking mechanism on the compactor.

Always wash your hands with warm soapy water before and after handling specimen sheets. Food consumption is not allowed while working with specimen sheets. Open drink containers are prohibited; only drink containers with a screw cap are allowable.