

Herbaria exist because people care enough to collect. Some collect to understand a flora, some to understand a species or genus. Each specimen connects back to an instance of attention.



A plant becomes an herbarium sheet when it is pressed, then dried, then mounted to rag paper. It may be sewn, glued, or taped. It is labelled, so we know who collected it, and where, and when.



L. Worcester (MOR)

Intentions and accidents intersect in the shelves of the world's herbaria. The first herbarium sheets were made in early 16th century Italy. Herbaria yield a portrait of the world's flora and our understanding of that flora, both changing as we alter the planet.



An herbarium is a museum of dried, pressed plants. Each specimen was once alive. Each comes from one individual plant collected at a particular time in a particular place. Each has its own story.



Herbarium specimens document the rate at which species spread when they are moved between continents. They record flowering dates creeping forward as the earth warms. They allow us to answer questions about the past that no individual collector could have anticipated.



# What is an herbarium?



by Andrew L. Hipp, Herbarium of The Morton Arboretum (MOR)

An herbarium is a place to learn and to document. It is a library for researchers, students, educators, artists, gardeners, plant enthusiasts. It is a place to work individually and together.



There are more than 3100 herbaria in the world, collectively housing an estimated 390,000,000 herbarium sheets. The world's herbaria form a global library of biodiversity. They are one of humanity's great successes, transcending politics and individual lives. They remind us what humans can accomplish working together.



Herbaria will be here as a document of Earth's plants long after we are gone.

Map of the world's herbaria. Thiers, B (NY). 2020. *Index Herbariorum*. url: <http://sweetgum.nybg.org/science/ih/> [accesssd 2020-08-29].