



Michigan State University Herbarium (MSC)

Acquisitions Policy

The Michigan State University Herbarium (MSC) collections serve as a repository for specimens and knowledge of the diversity and distribution of plants, fungi, lichens, and groups traditionally allied with plants. Our collection consists entirely of preserved specimens, and we do not accept living material, which is incompatible with our function as a museum. We strive to continue the growth of the collection, which reflects the continual growth in knowledge of plants and fungi, their distribution, systematics, and diversity. This acquisitions policy governs how we add new specimens to the collection. Final authority in acquisition decisions lies with the Director of the Herbarium.

Expectations for Acquisitions

All specimens that MSC acquires need to meet a basic set of requirements and fall within a range of expectations. Any specimen that does not meet these requirements will be rejected, unless exceptional circumstances require MSC to accept the specimen.

1. We prefer that specimens arrive unmounted. This allows us to mount the specimens following our own protocols following best practices.
2. Labels are not required, but we require information to produce labels (see *Data Requirements*, below, for details). If you wish to prepare your own labels, please ensure they are printed on acid-free archival paper.
3. Identification prior to submission is not strictly required, but the collector is encouraged to provide this information, if possible. Large numbers of unidentified species are not accepted.
4. Specimens must be dried or otherwise preserved.
5. The specimen must be legally obtained.
 - a. *“Legally obtained” means that any necessary permits were obtained, followed, and could be provided upon request. This includes local, regional, national, and international permits, as may apply. All laws of the locality and region of collection were followed in the collection of the specimen in question.*
6. The specimen must have arrived at the herbarium via legal means.
 - a. *Some specimens may be legal to obtain and collect in some areas but may be illegal to bring across state lines or international boundaries. If a specimen falls into that*

category, we require that any transport permits were obtained and could be presented, upon request.

7. The specimen should be collected ethically.
 - a. *Plants that are globally or locally rare should be collected in a fashion that does not harm the potential persistence of that population.*
8. The specimen should be scientifically valuable. It must be in a condition that future scientists could use the specimen for research.
 - a. *Sufficient material should be present to allow for identification and use of the specimen. Additionally, specimen condition is important for the longevity of the specimen in the collection. Specimens should be properly prepared for accessioning and meet scientific standards for use and care.*

Data Requirements

We require that specimens come to the herbarium with a basic set of information preferably in digital format (spreadsheet) though printed labels are accepted. This basic set of information includes the data below, though additional information is welcomed.

1. Location of collection
 - a. *This location should be specific enough that, given only the label, a future scientist could relocate the original collection location. Coordinates are preferred, and are best practice.*
2. Date of collection
 - a. *The exact date on which the collection of the specimen occurred in an unambiguous format, preferably “date, first three letters of month, four digit year” e.g. (13 Mar 1965”*
3. Collector information
 - a. *The collector(s) of the specimen should be specified. If multiple collectors were present at the time of collection, all names should be recorded and a primary collector should be designated. Any collector numbers associated with the collection should be recorded in a way that it is clear which collector is associated with which collection number.*

For the sorts of additional information that would be desired, please enquire with herbarium staff or follow best practices, described in the following publications, among others:

- Alexiades, M. N. 1996. Standard Techniques for Collecting and Preparing Herbarium Specimens. Pages 99–126 in M. N. Alexiades and J. W. Sheldon, editors. Selected Guidelines for Ethnobotanical Research: A Field Manual. New York Botanical Garden, New York City.
- Hill, S. R. 1995. How to Make a Plant Collection. Herbarium Supply Company, Bozeman, Montana.
- Smith, C. E. 1971. Preparing Herbarium Specimens of Vascular Plants: Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 348. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.

Categories of Materials

We accept specimens of plants, fungi, lichens, as well as groups traditionally treated with plants (like diatoms, assorted non-plant algae, etc). We accept the following sorts of materials:

1. Dried, pressed plant specimens
2. Boxed plant structures, for specimens that cannot be pressed (some seeds, fruit, cones, etc.)
3. Dried fungal specimens
4. Dried lichen specimens
5. Microscopic organisms and pollen samples mounted on slides with permanent fixatives
6. Fluid collections, for specimens that are not able to be dried

7. Tree cores and wood samples
8. Non-traditional specimens, including photographs and mixed media, associated with research activities. Digital media are only accepted when they are associated with a physical collection (i.e. we are not a repository for digital media *per se*, but only accept digital media if it is supplemental media associated with a specimen).
9. Where appropriate, we accept collection records and collector notebooks.

Sources of Acquisitions

MSC acquires specimens from a variety of sources. All specimens that MSC acquires are required to meet the expectations and requirements outlined above. MSC explicitly does not purchase specimens. Growth of the collection follows a few general means of acquisition, which include:

1. Voucher specimens for work by researchers that are connected to Michigan State University. As the herbarium of record for MSU, MSC provides a repository for deposition of research specimens of plants, fungi, and groups traditionally treated in the botanical sciences.
 - a. *The deposition of specimens or the use of specimens from MSC's collection should be acknowledged in publications that result from the use of those specimens. Please also notify herbarium staff of the publication, so that we can archive a copy in our records.*
 - b. *If genetic data are stored on GenBank or another public repository, this information should be linked to the physical specimen.*
2. Gifts by MSU employees or the general public, including gifts for identification. Gifts are made by the person that owns the specimens while the person is alive.
3. Bequests to MSC. Bequests occur after the death of the person who owned the specimens. Only persons legally able to transfer ownership can supply specimens to MSC.
4. Exchanges with other herbaria. Specimens will be returned to the original herbarium if MSC decides not to accession them.
5. Orphaned collection adoption. If a smaller herbarium closes, MSC may consider accepting the body of specimens of that collection, at the discretion of the Director.
6. Donation by law enforcement and/or regulatory agencies. There may be cases where specimens are acquired by law enforcement or regulatory agencies and, as part of the legal process, may be deposited in a museum, such as our herbarium. MSC may accept such specimens, provided that the basic requirements of specimens are met.

Other Considerations

Other considerations go into the decision of whether MSC will accept an acquisition. These include the following:

1. MSC will not take specimens that it is unable to properly care for.
2. MSC has strength in the Great Lakes region, but we do not have a geographic restriction on specimens and will take specimens from locations worldwide.
3. Historical specimens have special value, so some of the expectations and requirements may be waived, at the discretion of the Director.
4. MSC will accept small quantities of specimens without charge. However, it may be necessary for the donor to contribute to the cost of accessioning large quantities of specimens.

5. MSC may reject new acquisitions that may serve a threat to human health. Such concerns could include specimens that contain organisms that may cause disease or specimens that have been treated with chemicals that are injurious to human health.

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