

## Collection, Preparation and Use of Specimens Deposited in the Mississippi State University Herbarium

### General operating procedure

The Mississippi State University Herbarium (MISSA) accepts specimens for the permanent collection through field work by faculty, staff, and students, gifts from individuals and institutions and exchanges with other institutions. We welcome the submission of vascular plant specimens from all geographic areas into the MISSA collection. We are especially interested in native and naturalized plants from Mississippi and the southeastern United States (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri & Tennessee). To maintain the integrity and scientific utility of the collection, the following guidelines apply to the collection and preparation of specimens considered for the collection.

Accessioning is the process of officially adding specimens to a collection. Every specimen in the collection has a unique accession number determined by herbarium staff. All specimens accessioned into the herbarium are the property of Mississippi State University and may be loaned to other institutions for scientific study. Digital data are made available through the internet. MISSA maintains the right to not accept, de-accession or dispose of specimens that are not appropriately prepared or appropriate for the collection.

We do not maintain private collections. All accessioned specimens housed in the herbarium are considered the property of the herbarium and Mississippi State University, with the exception of material borrowed via inter-institutional loan agreement.

To be accepted into the permanent collection, specimens must:

- have scientific importance
- be of reasonable quality
- include adequate documentation (see below for instructions on preparing labels)
- have been collected in compliance with all laws and regulations of the country of origin, the State of Mississippi, and the federal government of the United States. MISSA may refuse specimens if the circumstances of their collection involved destruction of sites or when state or federal laws or international treaties (such as CITES) have been violated.

### Preservation and preparation of specimens

All specimens must be pressed and dried. Labels should be printed on acid-free cotton paper and must include the following information:

- Family name
- Species name as a binomial (in italics); include the variety or subspecies if appropriate
- State and county in which the plant was collected
- Exact collecting location (be as specific as possible) and habitat – GPS coordinates are desirable
- Collector's name and collection number
- Date collected

Specimens must be attached to standard form acid-free herbarium sheets along with a label. Please contact the herbarium staff for additional details on mounting specimens.

### Graduate student policy on collections related to research

Many students make collections in connection with their graduate research. These specimens should be prepared in accordance with the guidelines indicated above. The student should make arrangements with the curator to mount the specimens on acid-free sheets. In addition to the preparation of labels, students are required to enter the label data into the herbarium database. Students should contact the herbarium curator for details on how to go about doing this. Specimens will not be assigned accession numbers or be considered part of the collection until arrangements for mounting and databasing have been made.

### Loans and use of the collection

Loans from MISSA: MISSA maintains an active loan program with other herbaria throughout the world. Loan requests (email or snail mail) should be made by the herbarium curator or director of the researcher's home institution. Loans are made for a period of one (1) year, subject to extension upon approval of a written request to the director. While on loan, specimens should be maintained such that damage from handling or pests is limited. Specimens should be returned by insured parcel post or by prepaid express. Destructive sampling of specimens, including removal of material for DNA extraction is not permitted, except by approval of the director. Written requests for permission to destructively sample specimens should include a brief description of the sampling protocol and goals of the intended research. We request that loaned specimens be annotated by the investigator, indicating the determination of the specimen and the title of the research project for which the specimens were borrowed. Reprints of publications pertaining to the loaned material are greatly appreciated as well.

Loans to MISSA: Specimens that are on loan to MISSA are maintained under dry, climate controlled conditions and housed in steel herbarium cabinets when not in use. Paradichlorobenzene (i.e., moth balls) is used in all cabinets to prevent infestation by insect pests and other pesticides are used in the room containing the cabinets. Upon arrival, all loans are stored in a -20C freezer before being moved to a herbarium cabinet. As a condition of requesting loans on behalf of faculty and students at MSU, it is expected that specimens will be annotated in accordance with the loaning institution before being returned.

In-house use: Interested parties are welcome to visit the herbarium and use the collection. Visitation dates should be arranged with the herbarium curator. Destructive sampling of specimens, including removal of material for DNA extraction is not permitted, except by approval of the director. When appropriate, specimens should be annotated by the investigator, indicating the determination of the specimen and the title of the research project for which the specimens were used. Reprints of publications pertaining to the examined material are greatly appreciated as well.

User charges are not typically applied to inter-institutional loans or visitation/use of the collection. However, usage fees may be charged for large data requests or extensive use of herbarium supplies by students and visitors.

### Digital information policy

Label data from all accessions are made available through an online database housed at the University of Mississippi (<http://www.herbarium.olemiss.edu>). Location and collection information for sensitive species (i.e., rare, threatened, or endangered) are blocked from public

view, but these data may be accessed and used for legitimate research purposes by contacting Dr. Lisa Wallace (MS State U.) or Dr. Lucile McCook (U. of MS). A link to the database is provided on the herbarium website <http://herbarium.biology.msstate.edu/introduction.html>. Updates to the collection and changes in this policy will be published on the herbarium website.

For more information about the collection or these policies, contact the herbarium curator, Dr. Lisa Wallace  
Email: [LisaWallace@biology.msstate.edu](mailto:LisaWallace@biology.msstate.edu)  
Phone: 662-325-7575  
Dept. of Biological Sciences, P.O. Box GY, Mississippi State, MS USA 39762