

What is an herbarium?

Did you know that the City of Alexandria maintains a collection of several thousand scientific plant specimens?

An herbarium is a collection of dried plant specimens maintained for scientific reference, like a museum. It can also contain reference books and photographic collections, as well as specimens of fungi, mosses, and lichens. Specimens are prepared with archival-quality materials and are intended to last for *centuries*.

What type of information does a specimen contain?



DNA can be extracted from the leaf tissue

Vegetative and reproductive features

Project name

Scientific name

Precise locality

Ecological data

Observations

Collection date

Fragments for dissection

Unique reference number

Collectors' names

How are herbaria useful to science? A few examples...

- By housing physical evidence of all plant species for comparative study.
- By maintaining historical ecological data about the natural landscape.
- By enumerating all plants of specific geographic regions, such as Northern Virginia.



A record of a newly discovered plant species in Virginia



An historical document about Alexandria's plant communities



Specimens to aid identification