What is an herbarium?

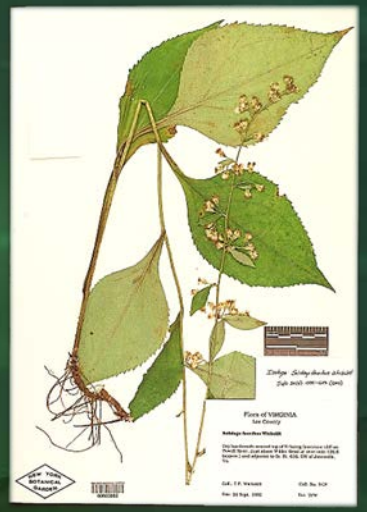
Did you know that the City of Alexandria maintains a collection of several thousand scientific plant specimens?

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?

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An historical document about Alexandria's plant communities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

Image adapted courtesy of Dr. Andrea Weeks, Director of the Ted R. Bradley Herbarium (GMUF) at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. The City of Alexandria Herbarium (AVCH) is located at 2900-A Business Center Drive - Dept. RPCA, Natural Resources Division. For further information contact Rod Simmons at Rod.Simmons@alexandriava.gov