

Botany Policies and Protocols

Policies that govern the acquisition, care and use of specimens were formally approved by the San Diego Society of Natural History Board of Trustees in January 1995, with revisions in 1997. The Museum's Collections Policy establishes policies for: code of ethics, acquisitions, documentation and care of collections, deaccessioning, loans, forensic collections and voucher collections repository, sampling and destructive testing, access, etc. The Botany Department establishes departmental procedures to implement the general museum policies within the framework of its disciplinary concerns.

Acquisitions

Specimens are acquired that will strengthen the existing collection relative to the research priorities of staff and research associates as well as the regional emphasis of the museum. Specimens may be acquired by fieldwork, exchange, gift, purchase, or bequest. Material is accepted from contract projects within the region if well prepared and accompanied by adequate data. Specimens are accepted only with clear documentation of legal title (e.g., proof of permits, landowner permission, etc.).

Access to and Loans of Specimens

The primary reason for holding specimens is their use in scientific research and education. Thus the policies for access to collections and for loans are designed to maximize the usefulness of the collections while minimizing risk of damage to or loss of the collections. Loans of specimens are approved by the Curator, and are made to researchers representing not-for-profit institutions. Students may borrow specimens only with the written approval of their faculty advisor. Loans are made for one year at a time, with consideration of written renewal requests. Any restrictions due to the physical nature of the specimen or particular value (scientific or commercial) are clearly identified before the loan is finally approved. Staff make every effort to respond to loan requests promptly.

Access to the collections by a visiting researcher must be requested in advance. Research associates have authorized access to the department and library. Access to the third floor and the collections are both controlled by locked entrances; therefore visitors must be accompanied by a staff member to gain admittance to the collection. Weekend and after-hours access to and use of the collections is by prior approval of the collections staff only and may require a fee to support after-hours staff and security.

Destructive Testing

The Botany Department follows the institutional policy in approving sampling requests. Recognizing that some research methodologies may result in the permanent alteration, removal and/or destruction of part or all of a specimen, the decision to permit destructive work is made on a case by case basis by the Curator. Conditions and limits must be agreed to by the borrower in writing in advance of the work. Permission may be denied unless the San Diego Natural History Museum specimens can be fairly shown to be the only ones which meet a particular research need. Documentation of the testing and results should be made available to the Museum upon return of the specimen, or remaining portion. Requests to sample type specimens are not currently allowed.

Access to and Dissemination of Collection Data

Requests for data are handled promptly by collections staff. Data are provided to researchers associated with non-profit institutions at no charge. Commercial users are charged \$100 for a standard request; fees for large requests involving multiple sites or taxa would be established before beginning the data retrieval. Data for sensitive localities are not released to commercial users.