

Herbarium
of
Penang Botanic Gardens

Collection Policy

Last update: 14/04/2016

How often is this policy revised?

This policy must be revised 6 months after PBG has employed a curator of the Herbarium. The person responsible for the revision is the curator. He/she has to present the revision to the director of PBG and the stakeholders of PBG. After 7 months, the reviewed collection policy for the Herbarium must be implemented.

Purpose of the collections

The purpose of the collections held at the Herbarium at PGB is to represent the plant life of Malaysia.

The collections contain only:

1. Native plants.
2. Traditional useful plants.

The collections are open to scientists from around the world.

Management of the collections

The person responsible for the management of the collections at the Herbarium of PBG is the curator of the Herbarium.

In all technical aspects of the Herbarium work the curator must follow the advice given in "The Herbarium Handbook", edited by Diane Bridson and Leonard Forman, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The curator is also responsible for prioritising any construction work at the Herbarium and for giving advise on buying any equipment and materials which are needed for running the Herbarium. The project manager of PBG is bound to the advice (including advice on the budget) of the curator regarding projects related to the Herbarium. Regarding matters of the Herbarium, the project manager cannot act without the advice of the curator.

Collections Acquisitions Policy

Acquisitions:

PBG Herbarium acquires specimens from:

- field collecting by staff
- exchange with other institutions
- specially negotiated acquisition of orphaned collections
- gifts or bequests from individuals, institutions, and private companies

The Herbarium of PBG generally accepts specimens without stipulations and reserves the right to determine the appropriate use of the specimens. Specimens deemed not appropriate for the collection or the current development policy may be disposed of.

Criteria:

Decisions to acquire collections can only be made by the curator of the Herbarium.

To be accepted for the permanent collection, specimens must:

- fulfill the criteria for the priorities of the collections
- be of reasonable quality (characters valuable for identification present; acceptable mounting; no deterioration from pests or from fungi)
- include adequate documentation (i.e. complete label data and/or field notes)

The curator has the decision-making authority and responsibility for acquisitions and de-accessions.

Priorities for the collections

The collection priorities for the Herbarium at Penang Botanic Garden are :

- Native plants of Penang State and neighbouring provinces. This is the most important group. "Native" is defined as having a natural distribution range within this area. This means that all plants which have been introduced by humans into the area are not considered here.
- Native plants of peninsular Malaysia.
- Native plants of Sabah and Sarawak.
- Traditional useful plants of Malaysia. "Traditional" refers to plants used by traditional societies. "Useful plants" are plants fulfilling a need for humans, for example edible plants, medicinal plants, and plants used for technical purposes

Spirit collections

The maintenance of the spirit collection is expensive for PBG and due to unpredictable staff rotation in the future the continuance in the curation cannot be guaranteed. Until the Herbarium is well established, it is essential that spirit samples are only made in exceptional cases. These are collections of plant parts of species endemic to Malaysia, which cannot be conserved by pressing and drying and which have not been collected by other major herbaria in Malaysia.

The spirit collection should be managed according to chapter 13 "Ancillary Collections", page 94 of the "The Herbarium Handbook", edited by Diane Bridson and Leonard Forman, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. This includes the advice given on cross referencing.

Carpological and seed collection

Fruits and seeds which are too thick for mounting on a sheet, should be stored in the carpological and seed collection.

The carpological and seed collection should be managed according to chapter 13 "Ancillary Collections", page 94 of the "The Herbarium Handbook", edited by Diane Bridson and Leonard Forman, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. This includes the advice given on cross referencing.

Collections of illustrations and photographs

This collection should be managed according to chapter 14 “ Collections of illustrations and photographs”, page 98 of the “The Herbarium Handbook”, edited by Diane Bridson and Leonard Forman, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Personal collections

Personal collections may not be maintained at the Herbarium of PBG. All specimens housed in the Herbarium are considered the property of the Herbarium with the exception of material borrowed via inter-institutional loan agreement.

Collection records

Each specimen deemed appropriate for the incorporation in the collections at the Herbarium will be accessioned in the Iris BG database after it has been mounted. All available label data are kept, including plant family, genus, species, authority, detailed plant and habitat descriptions, plant associates, date of collection, collector's name and number and the exact location where collected including GPS coordinates.

De-accessioning

Specimens which do not

- fulfill the criteria for the priorities of the collections
- are not of reasonable quality (characters needed for identification not or poorly shown, such as flowers and fruits, serious infestation with pests or fungi)
- include adequate documentation (i.e. complete label data and/or field notes)

can be de-accessioned. The exception are specimens collected before 1985. These specimens have to be kept in every case because of their historic value. Specimens of reasonable quality which are to be de-accessioned should be offered to other institutions. Specimens of inferior quality or with incomplete documentation should be disposed off.

At no time are de-accessioned specimens sold, nor do such specimens have other than scientific value.

The only person responsible for de-accessioning is the curator of the Herbarium.

Loans

PBG does not send loans to other institutions or individuals, but the Herbarium is open to any researcher interested.

Care and control of collections

All specimens are to be stored under the best environmental and physical conditions possible to protect the collection from deterioration and with particular consideration for the long term conservation of the material for future research.

In the care and control of collections, the following four areas must be attended to:

1. Pest control – prevention and treatment
2. Fire prevention
3. Adequate and appropriate storage space
4. Specimens removed from the collection

The primary responsibility for the care and the control of the collections rests with the curator of the Herbarium.

Access to the collections

Since the collections represent the product of many expensive expeditions and years of curation, study and preservation, it is imperative that this most important source of research material be well protected. Therefore the access to the collection storage areas must be restricted and carefully monitored. The final responsibility rests with the curator of the Herbarium whether an individual researcher may gain access.

The cleaning of the collection storage rooms and the Herbarium library (floor/ windows/ compactor shelves) is to be done by Herbarium staff only and not by anybody else.

The doors to the collection storage rooms and the Herbarium library must be locked all the time. The keys are held by the Herbarium staff only. One copy of the keys is stored in the safe of the administration department.