

Hollister Herbarium Collection Management Policy

Collections stewardship and documentation policy

Administrative unit	Department of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences
Policy owner	Director and Curator, Hollister Herbarium
Approval authority	Department of Biology and Tennessee Tech
Effective date	June 1, 2026
Review cycle	Every three years or sooner if requirements change

Purpose and scope

This policy establishes how HTTU acquires, documents, cares for, uses, and, when necessary, removes specimens and associated records from the permanent collection. It applies to preserved botanical specimens, labels, field documentation, images, digital records, reference materials, and other collection-associated information under HTTU stewardship.

Mission and collection scope

HTTU supports botanical education, research on the flora of Tennessee and the southeastern United States, and conservation of Tennessee rare plants. The collection emphasizes flowering plants, ferns, and conifers, with particular strength in Tennessee and the Upper Cumberland region. Material from other regions may be accepted when it supports teaching, research, identification, exchange, or comparative study.

Responsibilities

Role	Primary responsibility
Director and Curator	Day-to-day collection decisions, documentation, access, loans, risk management, and policy implementation.
Department of Biology	Administrative oversight, space and staffing coordination, and approval routing.
Authorized staff students and volunteers	Work only within assigned duties and follow handling, safety, confidentiality, and documentation requirements.
Tennessee Tech offices	Provide institutional authority for contracts, property, safety, facilities, information technology, legal compliance, and sponsored activities as applicable.

Acquisitions

HTTU may acquire specimens through field collection, donation, exchange, transfer, or other lawful means. Acceptance is discretionary and based on mission fit, scientific value, documentation, condition, ownership, legal status, storage needs, and the resources required for long-term care.

- Specimens must have been collected and transferred legally and ethically, with permits, permissions, and export or import documentation when required.
- Donors and depositors must have authority to transfer the material. Restrictions must be disclosed before acceptance and documented in writing.
- HTTU may decline undocumented, hazardous, heavily infested, duplicative, or out-of-scope material.
- Associated field notes, collecting permits, photographs, geospatial information, and electronic files should accompany specimens whenever available.
- No appraisal for tax deduction purposes will be provided by HTTU staff.

Accessioning and cataloging

1. Record the source, date received, quantity, transfer terms, and responsible staff member in an accession record.
2. Assign stable catalog numbers and preserve the connection among the specimen, label, accession, image, and database record.
3. Quarantine or inspect incoming material under the Integrated Pest Management Plan before it enters collection storage.
4. Capture label information as faithfully as possible, distinguish verbatim transcription from interpreted fields, and document later corrections.
5. File specimens according to the current curatorial arrangement while retaining nomenclatural and determination history.

Care and preservation

- Use archival-quality mounting materials, folders, labels, and storage supplies appropriate to botanical collections.
- Maintain secure, clean cabinets and limit light, water, pest, temperature, humidity, fire, and handling risks as resources allow.
- Conduct periodic condition surveys and prioritize stabilization of damaged, historically important, rare, or frequently used material.
- Follow the HTTU Integrated Pest Management Plan and Emergency and Disaster Plan.
- Record conservation treatments, remounting, repairs, sampling, and significant condition changes.

Use of the collection

Use is encouraged when it is consistent with preservation, research, education, and public service. Access may occur through supervised visits, institutional loans, digital records, images, teaching programs, or approved destructive sampling. Separate HTTU policies govern each activity.

Deaccessioning and disposition

Deaccessioning is exceptional. It may be considered for material outside the collection scope, irreparably damaged or hazardous material, undocumented material with no reasonable research or teaching value,

duplicates better placed elsewhere, or specimens for which HTTU lacks legal title. Financial value alone is not a sufficient reason.

1. Document the reason, legal status, restrictions, scientific significance, and proposed disposition.
2. Seek review by the Director and Curator and approval through the Department of Biology and any additional university authority required for institutional property.
3. Prefer transfer to another qualified public collection, return to the lawful owner, or documented scientific or educational use. Sale to staff, students, trustees, or their agents is prohibited.
4. Retain the accession and catalog record, approval, disposition date, recipient, and rationale permanently. Catalog numbers are never reassigned.

Ethics and compliance

HTTU will respect applicable collecting laws, permits, donor restrictions, intellectual property, cultural or community interests, sensitive locality protections, and Tennessee Tech requirements. Staff will disclose conflicts of interest and will not use collection access for undisclosed personal gain.

Records and review

The Director and Curator maintains accession, catalog, loan, sampling, conservation, pest, and deaccession records. This policy should be reviewed at least every three years and after significant changes in staffing, facilities, law, or university policy.