

Pacific Southwest Research Station/USDA Forest Service

News & Information

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HISTORIC CRITCHFIELD MEMORIAL HERBARIUM GOES DIGITAL

Believed to Be the Largest Collection of Pine Specimens in the World

Albany, CA (July 13, 2010) — Today the USDA Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station, Institute of Forest Genetics released the online version of its historic Critchfield Memorial Herbarium. The website includes collection information as well as a photograph of each specimen. Many specimens in the collection date back to the early 1920's and represent an important record of the development of the field of pine taxonomy. Many influential forest geneticists deposited specimens in the herbarium. The collection includes several holotypes and isotypes- specimens used to define a species. With over 4,000 specimens, it is believed to be the largest collection of pines in the world.

“The Critchfield Memorial Herbarium is a fantastic resource,” said Jessica Wright, conservation geneticist and herbarium curator at the USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station, Institute of Forest Genetics. “Now all that information is online and researchers as well as nature-lovers can easily access it. There is an amazing diversity in pines, and this collection is a great place to see it.”

The Critchfield Memorial Herbarium is located at the Institute of Forest Genetics in Placerville, California. A herbarium is a collection of dried, generally mounted, plant specimens used for a number of purposes, including documenting the taxonomy of a species or like a library that contains a collection of books for reading or useful materials for common use. Taxonomy is the science of classifying organisms. Herbaria also provide an educational opportunity for people interested in learning how to identify species. For example, many college courses will use

herbarium specimens to teach the taxonomic differences between species. So, herbaria are important resources for research as well as education. In addition, the collection information is extremely useful for understanding the current and historical range and diversity of a species. Each specimen is marked with a location and date indicating where and when it was collected. Many specimens have additional information, including information on the habitat it was found in, or other species growing in the area. Having the Critchfield Memorial Herbarium online will facilitate the use of the collection for understanding pine taxonomy, education as well as ongoing research.

The Critchfield Memorial Herbarium is available on line at

http://treearch.fs.fed.us/psw/topics/forest_genetics/critchfield_herbarium/

For more information on the Pacific Southwest Research Station, please review our web site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/>.

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