

REGIONAL HERBARIA NETWORK

What is it

The Regional Herbaria Network actively links regional community groups to the Western Australian Herbarium, creating nodes of local expertise collaboratively contributing to an expanding knowledge base on the WA flora.

The Regional Herbaria Network trains community groups to collect and document specimens of their local native and weedy plant species. Specimens collected are sent to Perth for identification and retention, while another remains in the local reference herbarium, cross-referenced by a unique number.

By compiling a local reference herbarium with specimens for which the currency of names is ensured, a regional group can create a local conservation resource.

The community can access further available information on local plant biodiversity through tools such as the FloraBase web site.

Why is it important

Local knowledge from regional herbarium groups allows us to gather comprehensive information about local floras.

Regional collectors know their local habitats and can access areas a visiting botanist may miss, providing year-round observations to document the life stages and ecological preferences of local species.

To date, some 14,000 well-documented specimens have been added jointly to the State Collection and the Regional Herbaria. Approximately 15 new species have been discovered and 676 conservation species vouchered, including 78 rare species.

The recent initiation of the Weed Information Network will support regional collectors making important contributions towards documenting the distribution of invasive species throughout the State.

Sponsorship opportunities

The Gordon Reid Foundation and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) initially funded the Regional Herbaria Network. Ongoing funding is required to implement or support the following range of initiatives:

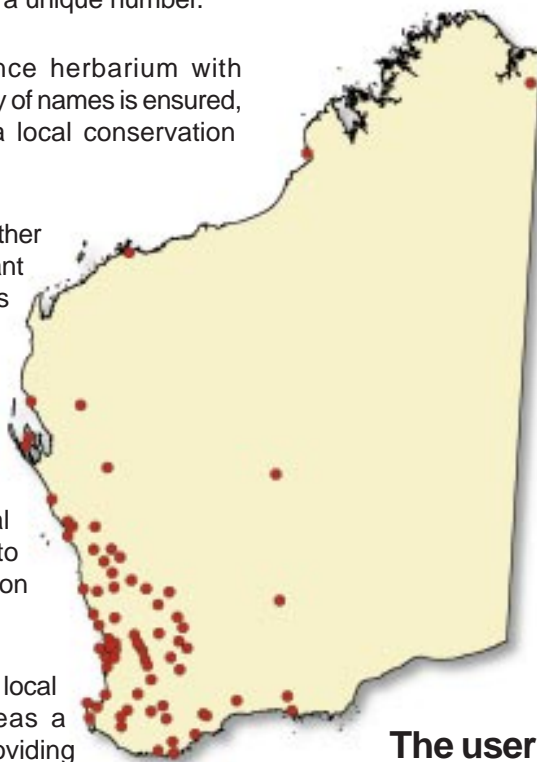
- additional personnel to coordinate training and support for the 74 regional herbaria
- a customised series of regional training workshops focusing on identification and advanced collecting techniques

- additional infrastructural support for regional herbaria, including collecting and mounting materials and library resources

- web programming and content for FloraBase customised to provide improved support for each Regional Herbarium

- publication of user-friendly flora-style booklets for regional areas based on the work of regional herbaria

- an enhanced plant identification service for Regional Herbaria



The user community

The Regional Herbaria Network serves an estimated 700 regional volunteers and the broader community with 74 regional groups throughout the State.

Regional Herbaria are empowered to create and maintain a local reference collection providing access to up-to-date information about the region's flora.

Local government agencies, community groups and education facilities can all benefit from interacting with their local Regional Herbarium.

WEED INFORMATION NETWORK

What is it

The Weed Information Network (WIN) is a new Natural Heritage Trust supported initiative for the Western Australian Herbarium that over the next two years will develop a comprehensive weed-watch program and online information system for the State.

The Weed Information Network aims to become the primary authoritative information resource concerning the State's weed species. WIN is designed to integrate closely with the Regional Herbaria Network to focus local communities across the state on the problem of destructive invasive species.

Information products created as outcomes from the WIN project will be disseminated via the FloraBase web site.

Volunteers from local community conservation groups locate, document and collect voucher specimens of weeds for their regional herbarium



Why is it important

Weeds cause serious economic loss for agriculture and damage to the environment of natural areas. Good information is the first requirement for tackling the problems.

It is uncertain how many weed species occur in Western Australia because of poor information. Estimates range from 800 to over 1000 species. The WIN project is re-assessing the evidence.

Additionally, the actual identity of many weed species is uncertain due to a lack of expert identifications. WIN project botanists and cooperating international experts will review the identity of Western Australian weeds.

Specimens provide the physical evidence for the presence, distribution and identity of weeds. The WIN project will train and mobilise the many volunteers of the Regional Herbaria Network to collect good specimens with quality data from numerous locations across Western Australia.

The user community

A wide range of conservation practitioners in government and the community require authoritative information on the identification, propagation and control of invasive species.

Community groups forming the Regional Herbaria Network will be increasing their efforts in documenting local and regional weed species and will require the latest available information on weeds.

Sponsorship opportunities

The Weed Information Network (WIN) has recently obtained National Heritage Trust (NHT) funding establishing the basic frame-work. Supplementary projects may include:

- digital images of weed species for presentation in online and printed information products
- a customised series of regional training workshops focusing on weed identification and advanced collecting techniques
- an encouragement scheme to reward excellent community participation with practical equipment or botanical book gifts

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