

The Polly Hill Arboretum Collection Policy

The mission of the Polly Hill Arboretum is to perpetuate the experimental tradition in horticulture established by Polly Hill, encompassing the dissemination of knowledge of plants and scientific procedure through educational programs, research, exploration and conservation. The Arboretum seeks to preserve its meadows and woodlands, to promote an understanding of its collections, and to encourage their utilization for scholarship, observation, and the enjoyment of all.

Living Collection Policy

1. Purpose

The collection policy is set forth as a guideline in developing and managing the plant collections of the Polly Hill Arboretum. This policy applies to all plants that are accessioned by the curatorial staff of the Arboretum. It does not apply to plants in natural areas or plants that are not accessioned as permanent plants in the collections. Physical site guidelines have been established for existing collections and for future collection expansion and development in the most recent (July 2002) master plan.

1.1 Collection Policy Review

A Collection Committee has been established comprised of the Founder, the Executive Director, Curator, Plant Recorder, Gardeners and an appointed Board Member. The committee is charged with the responsibility to administer and review the collection policy and make recommendations for changes as needed. A member of the Landscape Review Committee will also be appointed to gain additional critical review of the policy, and provide input as it relates to developments in the most recent master plan.

2. Plant Acquisition

The focus of plant acquisition includes a) increasing the genetic diversity of the collections that are of documented wild origin and b) acquiring plants that exhibit superior ornamental qualities.

2.1 A focus of plant acquisition will encourage the development of collections for:

- Research
- Evaluation
- Conservation
- Teaching and display

2.2 Field collecting activities will concentrate on the following areas:

(a) Indigenous plants of the Atlantic Coastal Plain

The Vineyard natural landscape has been an important source for plants that Polly Hill utilized in collecting, evaluating, and naming superior forms that are adapted to the climate and soils of the region and beyond. Continued collection of local and regional genotypes will serve as both a source of potentially new introductions but also for ex-situ conservation purposes. Rare or threatened plant populations will not be collected without the explicit permission of local, state and federal authorities. Collection activities of this type will be in expressed research collaboration with local, state and federal conservation groups. Plants representing endangered, threatened, or rare taxa shall be acquired in a manner that does not deplete wild populations.

Geographic boundaries are necessary to delimit and focus collection activities in what has been described as the Atlantic Coastal Plain, (Barbour & Billings, 1988). Modern ecosystem classification studies define Martha's Vineyard, and adjacent Cape Cod as part of the Northeast Coastal Forest (Ricketts et al, 1999). This ecoregion further includes a broad geographic zone that is part of the Piedmont plateau and encompasses seven states from southern Maine to northern Maryland. The collection of wild documented plant material will focus on the Northeast Coastal Forests described here. These areas have served in the past as valuable reservoirs for ornamental plants. Many of the Arboretum's best native plant collections come from and will continue to be from these areas.

(b) Temperate plants of Asiatic origin

A historically valuable source of ornamental plants developed by Polly Hill are of Asiatic origin with a particular emphasis on the flora of Japan. Continued plant collecting from Japan will focus on plants of interest for research, plant introductions, and teaching. When opportunities arise with kindred institutions, joint collecting collaboratives may expand the scope of collection activities to Korea and China.

(c) Cultivar Study Groups

Specialized collections will include taxa from which an array of cultivars exist. Emphasis will be placed on obtaining true to name plants from the original source nursery whenever possible. Priority will be given to plants that have a history of excellent performance based on awards of merits by plant societies as well as the recommendations of horticultural professionals. These plants will be judged on their aesthetic characteristics, ease of culture and resistance to insects and diseases. Given the extensive amount of germplasm available with cultivated plant material, a focus will emphasize plants that are pre-adapted, or tolerant of the cultural limitations of the soils and climate of Martha's Vineyard.

(d) National Collections

Through the dedication and skill of Polly Hill, comprehensive synoptic collections have been firmly established at the Arboretum representing the finest of their type in North America. These collections should continue to be built upon, expanded and improved with the goal of establishing them as North American National Collections.

3. Accessioning

All plants obtained for the permanent collections of the Arboretum will be accessioned upon receipt with as complete documentation as possible. Plants with limited or poor documentation will be critically reviewed before acceptance is granted. Plants received or produced by the Arboretum for sale, membership distribution, or plants for temporary loan for educational purposes will not be accessioned as part of the permanent plant collections. Plants that are documented as invasive or are known to pose a potential risk of being invasive will not be accepted into the plant collections.

4. Plant Records

In the tradition of Polly Hill, the Arboretum is committed to the highest standards of plant recording and documentation. The Arboretum plant record information data is entered, stored and maintained using the BGBase™ and BGmap™ software. The plant recorder is responsible for initial entry of newly accessioned plants. The Curator and the Executive Director share the task of applying the correct names to plants based on the established *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* (1994) and the *International Code of Cultivated Plants* (1995). All curatorial staff are encouraged to observe and record the qualities and performance of plants in the collection as part of a continual review and evaluation. A plant record procedures manual will be developed outlining the detailed tasks associated with maintaining plant records while also incorporating plant mapping and labeling.

5. Evaluation

The Collection Committee is responsible for the periodic review of plants in the collections. Recommendations of the committee may include the deaccessioning of plants based on a review of their performance. All plants will be closely monitored for their potential to be invasive. Plants that show superior performance will be promoted as such through Arboretum publications, regional and national media outlets, and educational events sponsored by the Arboretum.

6. Maintenance

Every effort will be given to continue the founder's goal of providing the cultural care and maintenance to "provide the best opportunity for a plant to show its true potential." The Arboretum will make the best efforts to use sustainable horticultural practices to support the health and vitality of its plant collections. Plants that need continual life support through chemical means will be considered for removal.

Detailed maintenance activities are beyond the scope of this policy but will be outlined in a separate procedure manual.

7. Verification

A herbarium voucher specimen will be collected for all accessioned plants with the expressed goal of verifying the plant as true to type, that is, a taxon which is true to its assigned name. When the plant is verified as true to type, it will be noted in the database. When necessary authorities of a given plant group will be brought in to review and examine plants where their expertise is needed for verification.

8. Deaccessioning

Plants removed from the collections will be annotated in the plant records. Reasons for removal include:

- a. the plant is dead or dying or in poor health
- b. the plant poses a threat or is potentially hazardous to persons on the property
- c. the plant is occupying space needed by adjacent plants or for new accessions
- d. the plant has a severe disease or pest infestation and should be removed to protect other plants
- e. the plant is determined not to be true to name and the correct identity cannot be determined
- f. the plant is surplus (i.e. there is at least two other healthy plants of the accession found in the collections)
- g. if a cultivar, the plant has been evaluated and found to have poor performance
- h. the plant poses a serious threat of invasiveness.

January, 2003, amended, January 2005

PHA Collection and Grounds Committee

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