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The Western Australian Herbarium specimen database

Plant Science and Herbarium

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Program Leader	granted
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Context

The Western Australian Herbarium specimen database (WAHerb) allows staff at the Herbarium to manage and maintain the Herbarium's collections, and provides core data on the distribution, ecology and morphology of all taxa for the department and the community, through the *FloraBase* and *NatureMap* websites. Data from the specimen database is provided to researchers, consultants and community members on request, and to the Australasian Virtual Herbarium (AVH), Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) on a regular basis.

Aims

- Capture, maintain and validate spatial, phenological, population and habitat data for the Herbarium botanical collections, enabling curation of the collection and providing core data for *FloraBase* and departmental decision support systems and research.

Progress

- The Western Australian Herbarium added 9,938 specimens to collections, including 1,186 priority flora and 109 threatened flora.
- Regularly provided customised specimen data requests (species lists and label data) to departmental officers, researchers and the public.
- More than 51,000 specimen records were edited as part of activities aimed at ensuring the collection is scientifically valid, up-to-date and aligned with the department's conservation codes.
- Significant collections added to the Western Australian Herbarium included industry surveys, departmental regional surveys, Herbarium Research Associates and exchange specimens from Australasian herbaria: Ravensthorpe Range Survey, AusPlots Rangelands Survey, Kimberley Islands Biodiversity Survey and Yilgarn Calcrete Survey, as well as collections from GJ and BJ Keighery, CJ French, SD Hopper, G Byrne, JE Wajon, G Brockman, the National Herbarium of New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian National Herbarium.

Management implications

- WAHerb represents the most comprehensive collections database for Western Australian plants available and provides a source of information that managers can use for updates on biodiversity or conservation status, plant identification, clarification of plants in an area, and identification of knowledge gaps. This ensures that all research and management activities use up to date and valid plant species names.

Future directions

- Continue adding to, timely editing and validation of specimen records to maintain currency and connectivity between the Herbarium collection, the Western Australian Plant Census (WACensus) and external databases, including the Australasian Virtual Herbarium and Atlas of Living Australia.