Instructions for beta-testers

Floras Explorer version of 4 October 2012

This is a revised beta version of the Floras Explorer containing the basic functionalities of the application and improvements incorporated after the first round of beta testing. It also includes an updated bibliography and database. More capabilities will come soon. Your feedback will be greatly appreciated. We are eager to learn of potential bugs, of features you would like to see, and of other issues that would improve this utility.

If you helped with the earlier round of testing, many thanks. We resolved most of the issues you mentioned. Please see the end of this document for known issues that have not (and in some cases, will not) be resolved.

Of course, we would like to know of additional floras not represented in the database – or of errors in flora citations or locations – but that is not the purpose of our current request for help.

For general information about the Floras of America project, and the Floras Explorer, please view the "about" tab.

The following instructions include:

Simple searches

Map searches

Multiple searches

Advanced searches

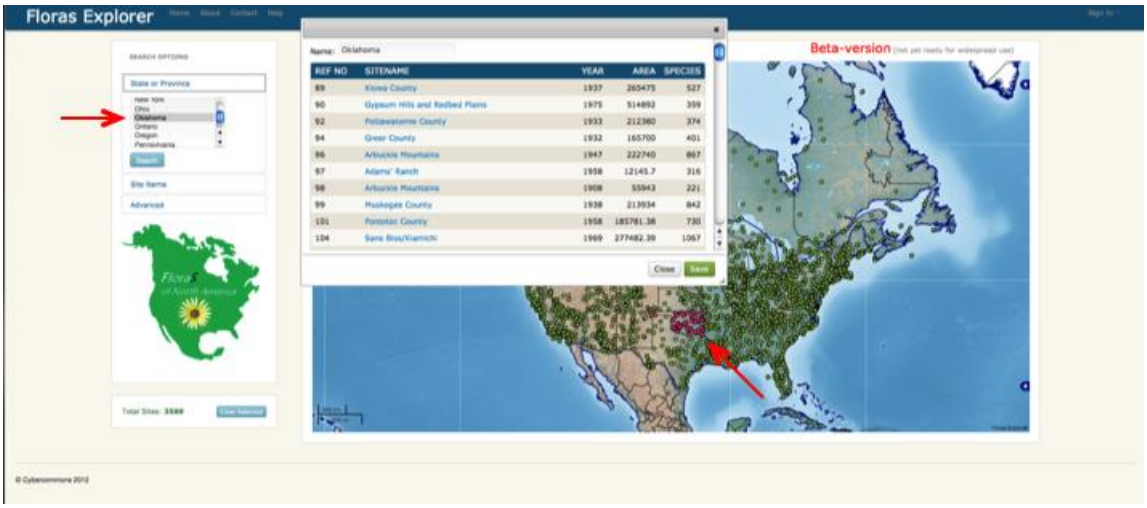
How to view information from a particular flora

How to download information

Known issues

SIMPLE SEARCHES

You can perform **simple searches** selecting a **state** or **province**, or text within the **site name** of the flora. **IMPORTANT NOTE**: These searches will only yield results for which we have complete information in the database. However, there are many floras which we have rejected from consideration (e.g. those with poorly defined boundaries, those with only woody species, etc.) cannot be found using simple searches. At present, you will need to find these floras searching **bibliographic information** in the **Advanced Search**.

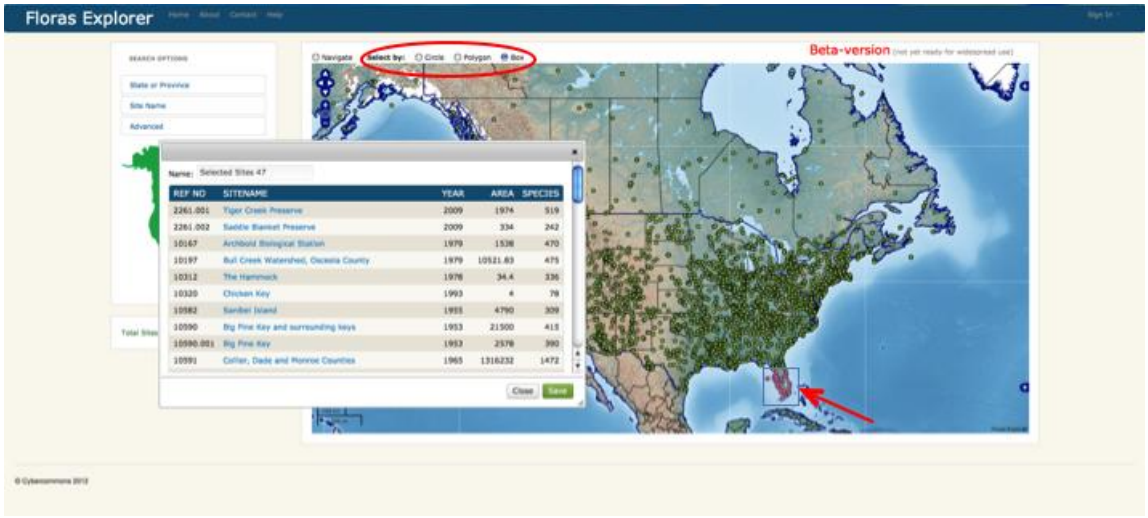


Note that you can select multiple states by using ctrl-left click.

The "Site Name" search will allow you to search within the text of all site names. It is case-insensitive. Thus, if you type in "beaver" you would find floras of Beaver County, Beaver Dam Mountains, and Beaver Island, among others.

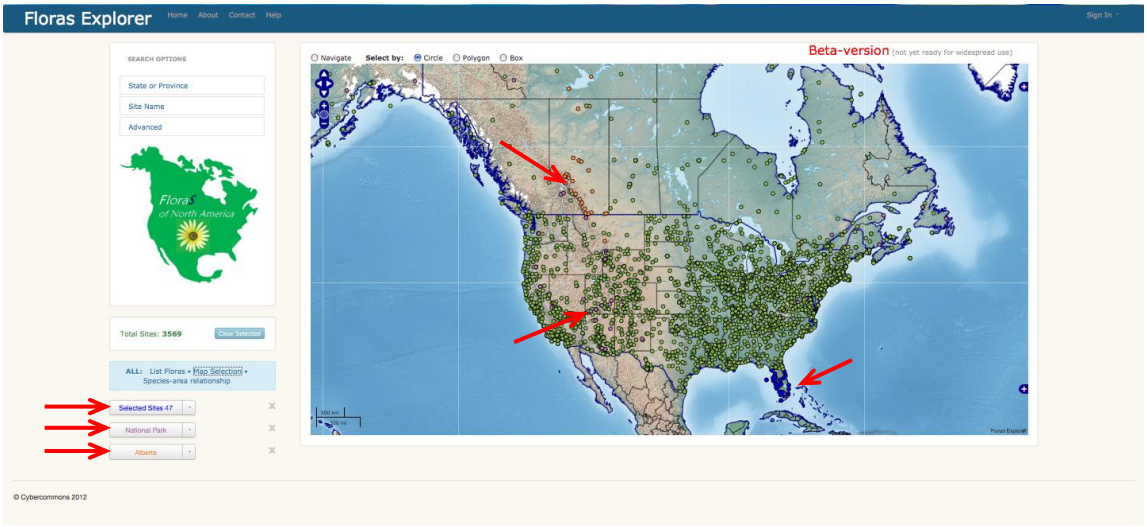
MAP SEARCHES

Select one of the options, **circle**, **polygon** or **box** from the top of the map. For circle or box, just click and drag the cursor to outline or circumscribe the desired area. For the polygon, click the vertices of the desired region and end with a double click. Once you have a selection, a new window will pop up with a list of the floras.

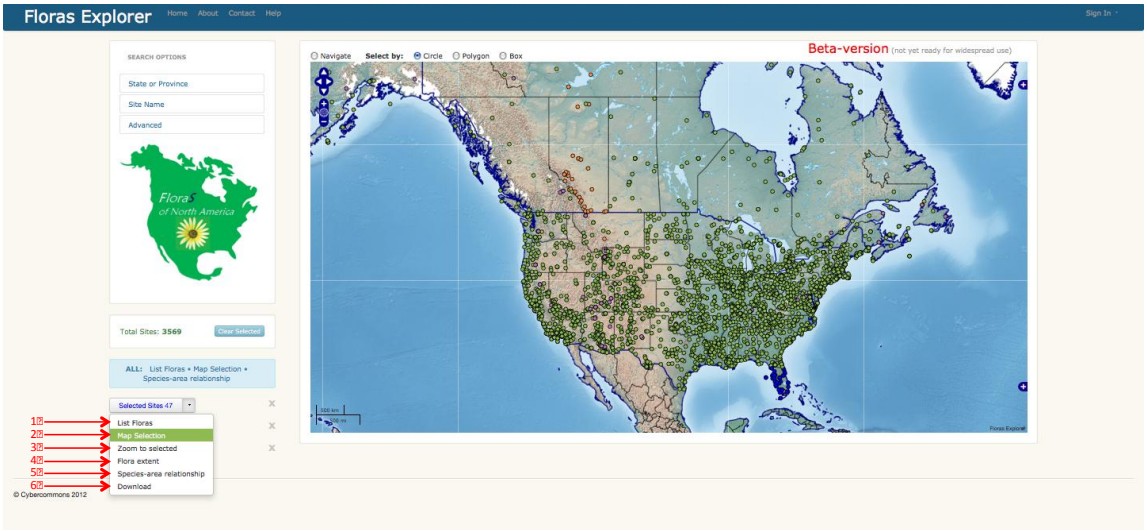


MULTIPLE SEARCHES

You can select more than one area as long as you save each selection. Your selections will appear on left of the map and they will be color-coded. You can rename your selections by editing the “Name” box.



Each saved selection will appear left of the map and will contain a dropdown menu. From this menu you can: **(1)** see a **list** of the selected floras, **(2)** highlight the floras in the **map**, **(3) zoom** to the selected floras, **(4)** view the selected floras in the species-area relationship plot and **(5) download** the **bibliographic references** and **summary statistics** for the selected floras.



ADVANCED SEARCHES

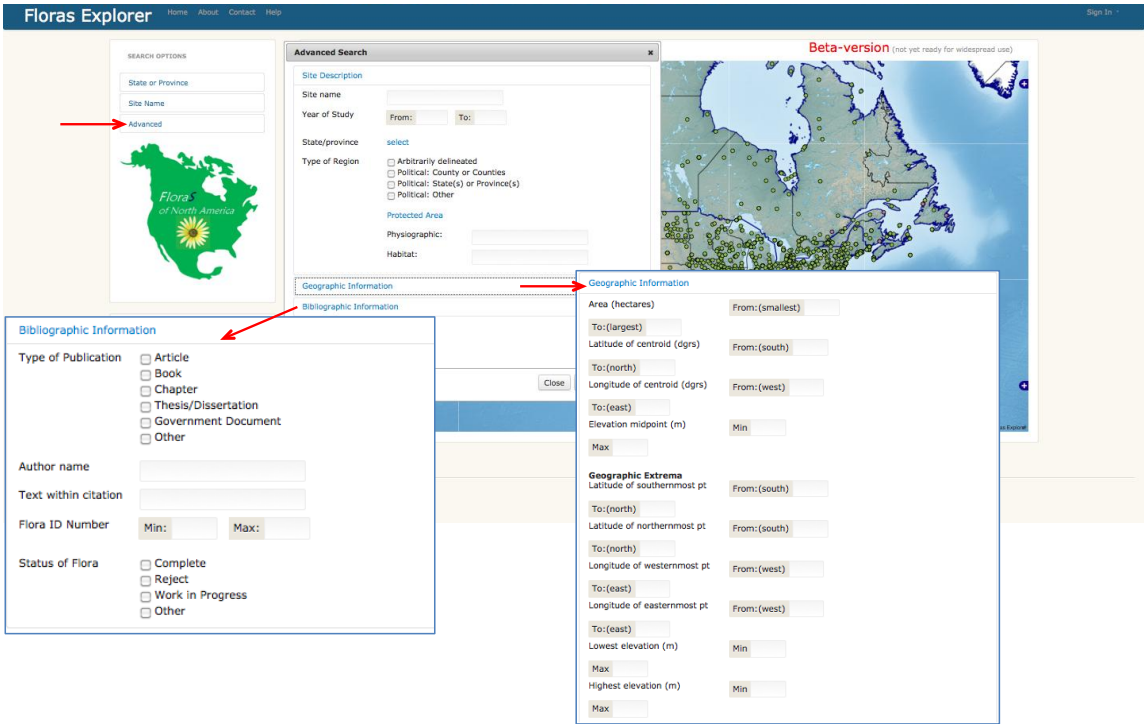
This tool allows you to combine different information in one search.

The search is divided in three main cathegories:

site description (name, year of study, habitat type, etc.)

geographic information (coordinates, elevation, etc.)

bibliographic information (author, type of publication, etc.)



A note on geography: each flora is represented by a bounding box built using the four geographic extrema. The dots on the main map represent the central point of the flora's bounding box. We should note that this representation may be somewhat misleading: an extreme example is the state of Florida, where the central point falls in the Gulf of Mexico.

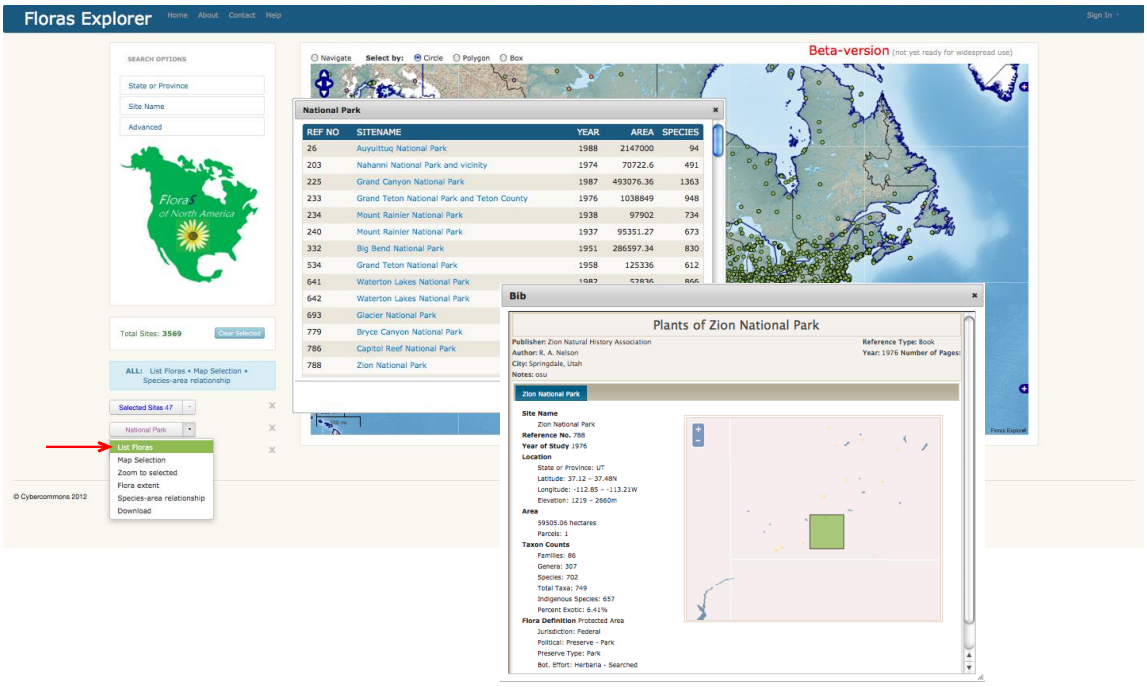
In a future version, we will have the bounding boxes substituted by the actual shape of each flora's region – when such boundaries are readily available to us.

A note on floras without data: we are aware of many references for which we do not have quantitative data. Reasons for this include: 1) we have not yet seen a copy, 2) we have rejected it from consideration for technical reasons, or 3) it is currently a work in progress. To search for such floras, you must use the **Bibliographic Information search** (state searches or site name searches will NOT work)

HOW TO VIEW INFORMATION FROM A PARTICULAR FLORA

First **select one or more floras** using the search by state or province, search by keywords from the title, or map search tools

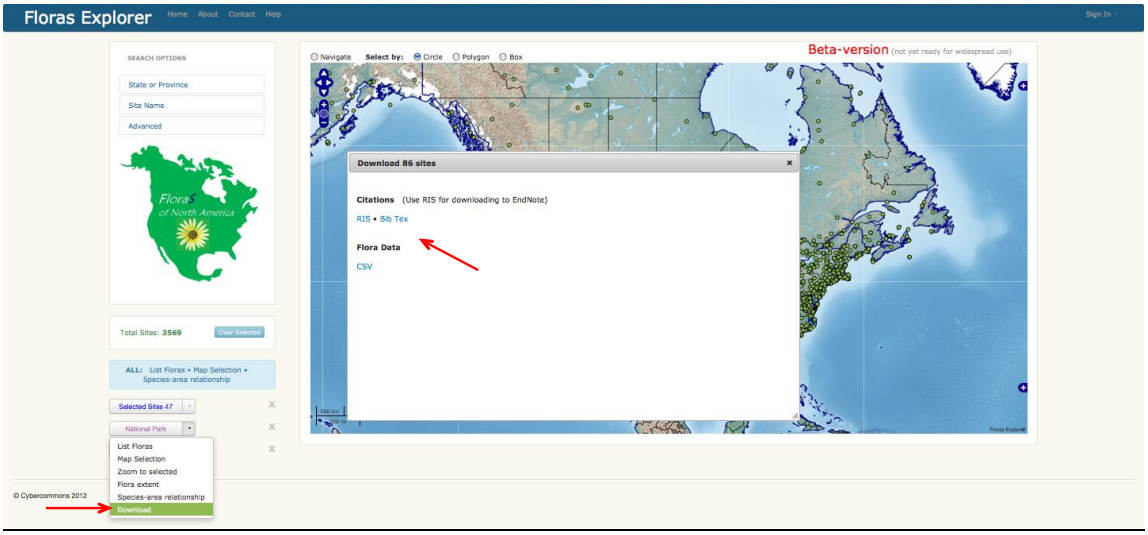
A window will pop up with your selection. Simply click on one of the floras' title and a **new tab** will open with a zoomed in map, bibliographic and summary statistics information for the selected flora. Instead of the central point, there will be a bounding box delimitating the area of the flora (based on the 4 extreme geographic coordinates)



HOW TO DOWNLOAD INFORMATION

From the dropdown menu of the saved selection choose **download**

Choose the information (and the format) you would like to download



KNOWN ISSUES

1) One cannot currently perform state and province searchers for known floras for which we do not (yet) have complete data.
2) The Bibliographic Search from the Advanced Search option has a known bug where it is not possible to combine options. In particular, in some cases it returns a Boolean OR search when an AND search is intended. For example: if you select "Book" and enter the "park" in "Text within citation" the search will return all books and all floras with the word "park" instead of the combination (books with "park" in the citation).
3) It is not possible to turn on and off features of the base maps (e.g. roads, urban areas, etc.) except by zooming in and out. This is a property of the base map.
4) It has been suggested that Google Maps or Google Earth would provide a better base map, and we agree. However, there is no guarantee that this service of Google will be stable indefinitely, nor delivered free of charge.