Botanic Garden of Smith College
Collections Policy
This policy was approved by the responsible administrator, Provost and Dean of Faculty Katherine Rowe, on January 10, 2018.
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I. Background

The idea that the Smith College grounds should serve as a botanical garden was proposed by Laurenus Clark Seelye, the college's first president, with the hope that the campus would be imbued with a domestic charm and complement the scientific study of plants. By 1893, the landscape architecture firm F. L. Olmsted & Co., with senior member Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and project lead Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., developed the first landscape master plan which depicted lofty trees, curving walkways, open spaces, and vistas on 25 acres. Though there have been subsequent master site plans, today's 125-acre campus continues to regard Olmstedian design principles.

Planting of trees and shrubs, and construction of the first glasshouses, began in 1894. Since then, the Botanic Garden of Smith College has been the home and canvas for educators, researchers, horticulturists, designers, and students. The Botanic Garden's plant collections create real-world opportunities for students and the broader Smith community to learn, explore, and reflect. The living plant collections contribute to Smith College’s vision for the campus as classroom and as space for study, research, professional experience, inspiration, and play.

II. Botanic Garden of Smith College Mission Statement

The mission of the Botanic Garden of Smith College is to foster education about the science, beauty, and importance of the plant kingdom through the use of outdoor and conservatory plant collections, gardens, displays, and exhibitions, and to preserve and maintain the historic Olmsted-designed campus landscape.

We carry out this mission while embodying the values of inclusivity, stewardship, collaboration, and innovation.

III. Policy Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Collections Policy is to guide the curation of the plants that are accessioned and maintained by the Botanic Garden of Smith College in the Lyman Conservatory, campus arboretum, named gardens, campus plantings, and natural areas. The Collections Policy enumerates priorities for the plant collections in order to guide decisions about the acquisition, deaccessioning, and management of materials.

The Collections Policy sets a vision for an ideal collection in order to balance the mission of the Botanic Garden, the desires of curators, the needs of stakeholders (including students, faculty, staff, alumnae, Botanic Gardens Friends, and the general public), and educational opportunities with the Botanic Garden's available resources. The Collections Policy does not depict a clear endpoint for the collection; rather it provides a thoughtful and vetted rationale for increasing the
overall value of the collections measured against the Collections Policy’s own stated priorities and goals. Finally, the Collections Policy provides transparency about how accessioning and deaccessioning decisions are made by Botanic Garden staff.

IV. Policy Governance

The Botanic Garden of Smith College is responsible for the implementation of the Collections Policy. All staff at the Botanic Garden of Smith College play a role in curation by responding to stakeholder feedback, proposing acquisitions that increase the value of the living plant collections, identifying opportunities to replace accessions with higher value accessions, and nominating plant materials for deaccessioning. Decisions about accessioning and deaccessioning are the primary responsibility of the landscape curator and conservatory curator. Responsibility for the interpretation and assessment of the Collections Policy lies with the director, in consultation with curators, garden staff, and stakeholders. Authority for the approval of the Collections Policy lies with the Provost and Dean of Faculty, who is the responsible administrator for this policy. As a normal course of action, Smith College faculty and staff will be consulted about their needs and about changes to the collections so as to ensure that the collections are of maximum academic use to the Smith College community.

The Collections Policy should be continuously scrutinized and revised as needed to reflect changing priorities, constraints, and opportunities. A comprehensive assessment of this policy should occur no less often than every five years. Stakeholder input and review will be sought during any substantial revisions of the Collection Policy.

V. Purpose of the Collections

The primary purpose of the living plant collections at the Botanic Garden of Smith College is to serve as a material resource for educational activities for the Smith College community, especially those educational goals elucidated through examples of plant diversity, horticultural display, economic botany, and ecosystem functions. Important secondary purposes of the collection include serving as an ex situ repository for plants of conservation concern, maintaining research specimens, and enhancing the aesthetic qualities of the Smith College campus.

VI. Collections Priorities

The living plants maintained by the Botanic Garden are broadly divided into specialized collections and general collections. The specialized collections are tied to specialized usage and create collection depth for their defined primary audiences. The general collections create collection breadth and appeal to a wide audience in many different ways. The specialized collections, although viewed as relatively more essential, more irreplaceable, and more valuable to the Botanic Garden than the general collections, may be smaller in number of accessions and
are important to fewer stakeholders than the general collections. Accessions in the general collections can be easily substituted by other taxa and often play a role in enhancing the aesthetic qualities of the campus landscape.

Accessions may be identified as belonging to more than one collection and accessions that can be attributed to multiple collections will be interpreted as more valuable to the collections.

A. Specialized Collections

Curriculum Collection
The curriculum collection includes accessions of species, cultivars, and hybrids that are used in exhibits or Smith College courses and which cannot be substituted by other taxa. Emphasis is on accessions used to teach plant identification, systematics, horticulture, and economic botany.

Economic Botany Collection
The economic botany collection contains species and bred-for-use cultivars that showcase the range of ways plants have been used by humans around the world. The primary emphasis of this collection is on diversity of plant use and cultural significances with secondary emphasis on taxonomic diversity, biogeography of use, and cultural diversity.

Germplasm Collection
The germplasm collection is made up of populations of wild-origin plants that can serve as germplasm for ecologically sound and evolutionarily functional reintroductions, as well as exceptionally genetically diverse collections of cultivated species from wild origins. Plant materials in the germplasm collection must have robust documentation about their provenance, source, permitting, taxonomy, and ideally, genotype or proxies for genotype. Plants in this collection that are maintained in the landscape should be hardy and thoroughly safeguarded against misidentification or lost identification, herbivory, construction, poaching, and other threats. In the case of wild-origin populations, priority is placed on Massachusetts state threatened and endangered species with a lesser emphasis on species that are threatened or endangered in New England states (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT). When resources allow, populations from outside of New England may be accessioned in this collection as well.

Heritage Collection
The heritage collection contains plants that are of value to the Smith College community because of cultural and/or historic value. The Smith College campus, in addition to being a repository for the Botanic Garden’s collections, is also an archive of living plants that are culturally significant to the Smith College community. Such plants add to our appreciation and knowledge of Smith College by enhancing our understanding of the college’s identity, influence, and history. This includes, but is not limited to, taxa that were collected, bred, discovered, or introduced to commercial trade by important plant explorers or prominent Smith stakeholders; specimens and taxa that played an essential or highly visible role in important College events;
specimens that were gifted to prominent Smith College leaders or that came from dignitaries; taxa that have become emblematic of the Smith College campus; exceptional specimens; and plants that were established as memorials or honorials.

Research Collection
The research collection consists of specimens that the Botanic Garden acquires for and maintains as part of ongoing, long-term research. Plants in this collection that are no longer being used for active research are deaccessioned or, when desirable, retained as part of another collection.

Endangered Species Collection
The endangered species collection contains species, from a broad range of plant families and localities, that are in danger of extinction in the wild or that are already extinct in the wild. When possible, plants in this collection should be cultivated specimens and their wild provenance should be known. In addition to being a biogeographically diverse collection, it is used to illustrate the different reasons plants become endangered and so efforts are made to collect plants with a broad range of reasons for their endangerment.

B. General Collections

Educational Collection
The educational collection contains species (and rarely hybrids or cultivars when collection management considerations dictate their use) that showcase the taxonomic and phenotypic diversity of the plant kingdom. The emphasis of this collection is first on illustrating as many plant families as possible. Secondarily, this collection seeks to showcase the diversity of genera within families, especially when the breadth of phenotypic diversity among those genera is broad.

Public Display Collection
The public display collection contains plants whose role is primarily aesthetic and to illustrate landscape design concepts (e.g., right plant/right place, formal garden elements, four season interest, pollinator habitat, water conservation, permaculture, edible landscapes, and native plant landscapes). When practical, the public display collection is used to trial new species, cultivars, and hybrids in order to inform the regional community of new landscape plants that are performing well in our current climate and that show promise of performing well in future climates.

VII. Arboretum, Garden, and Greenhouse Priorities
The Botanic Garden at Smith College is composed of many distinct spaces, with different themes, purposes, strengths, constraints, boundaries, designs, and environmental conditions. Plants in each of these locales must meet the goals and educational themes of each discrete
space, as well as meeting the Collections Policy’s stated priorities. See Appendix A for more information about each of these spaces.

VIII. Documentation

The value of an accession to the collection is augmented by the extensiveness of its documentation within the plant database. Plants with more complete documentation (provenance data, collection information, biological performance data, cultural significance, and history of use by students, faculty, and staff) are more valuable than those with less documentation. When practical, plants with less extensive documentation should be replaced by those with more thorough or significant documentation.

IX. Collection Management Considerations

A. Climate Change and Ecology

As stewards and advocates for the Smith College campus, the Botanic Garden of Smith College has an obligation to proactively address climate change through planning and action. Plant accessions will be evaluated for their water needs, disease and pest resistance, flood and drought tolerance, and hardiness and resilience to extreme temperatures in our current and near future climates. The specifics of soils, drainage and hydrology, habitat, landform and orientation, and ecological function should guide selection and placement of accessions in the landscape. Accessions will, when possible, be replaced with taxa of comparable collection value if the replacements help mitigate climate impact, increase campus adaptation to climate change, or ecosystem functions.

B. Legal Acquisition of Plants

The Botanic Garden of Smith College follows all State of Massachusetts and federal laws governing the collection, dissemination, and propagation of plants including the Endangered Species Act (1973) and the Lacey Act (1900, amended 2008). The Botanic Garden also adheres to the Convention on Biological Diversity (1993) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1975). Staff of the Botanic Garden will abide by the laws and regulations of any country in which they collect or obtain plant material. Should illegally procured plants be identified in the collection, they will be protected until they can be safely and legally surrendered to the appropriate authorities.

C. Controlled Substances

The Botanic Garden of Smith College complies with all local, Massachusetts State, and federal laws regarding prohibited compounds and controlled substances. The Botanic Garden will not
acquire or possess plants, plant materials, plant products, or plant compounds that are regulated by such laws without proper state and federal permits. If the Botanic Garden is in possession of a plant that is found to violate local, state, or federal laws, the plant will be safely destroyed under the supervision of at least two Smith College employees, one of whom will be the Botanic Garden director. This policy does not prohibit the acquisition, possession, and cultivation of plants that fall under the regulation of these laws if the materials are obtained in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, such as when proper licensing or permitting is obtained for research purposes. In such cases, acquisition, research, handling, and cultivation protocols must be submitted to the Smith Institutional Review Board and to the Provost’s Office for review and approval prior to acquisition. This policy was approved by the President’s Cabinet 18 September 2017. Proposed changes to this policy must be submitted to the President’s Cabinet by the Provost’s Office for review.

D. Ethical Acquisition of Plants

The Botanic Garden of Smith College will not knowingly purchase, acquire, or curate plants, propagules, or other plant materials that have been or are suspected of having been illegally collected or imported, with the exception of confiscated plants legally procured from the United States Department of Agriculture. The Botanic Garden will perform due diligence to ensure that purchases and acquisitions are not contributing to habitat destruction or overcollection of plants from the wild. Material transfer agreements, collection permits, and other acquisition agreements that regulate plant ownership, propagation, or distribution will be archived for the life of the accession and properly noted in collection records.

E. Invasive Species

The Botanic Garden actively seeks to limit the introduction and spread of invasive species. The United States Department of Agriculture, Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, and Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources lists of invasive species will be used to review the plant collections and potential accessions. Plants that are known to pose a risk of escape in Massachusetts will not be accessioned unless there is evidence that the accession can be monitored and reasonably safeguarded from escape. Accessions that are not on these invasive species lists may still be removed from the collection if there are concerns about their potential invasiveness.

F. Distribution of Material

Requests for plant materials for noncommercial scientific, educational, or conservation purposes from botanical gardens, educational institutions, and other nonprofit organizations will be considered when the requested material is not restricted from redistribution by legal, contractual, or other prior agreements, and the requested material is not readily available in the commercial trade. Requests will be fulfilled when they are deemed by Botanic Garden staff not to pose an undue burden to Botanic Garden resources, not to jeopardize the health of the accession, and not to pose an environmental or biological threat. Requesting institutions must
provide all legal documents for the importation of requested materials and follow all relevant laws including those governing the inspection, import, export, and translocation of plant material.

G. Donations and Bequests

Plants acquired by donation or bequest must satisfy the priorities of the Collections Policy and advance collection management goals. Each individual plant in a prospective donation or bequest will be evaluated for accessioning based on individual merits and expected resource investment, as time allows. Donations and bequests that are accessioned will not necessarily be maintained in perpetuity. The Botanic Garden will not appraise or pay for the appraisal of plant gifts for tax or other purposes.

H. Public Safety

When a taxon or individual plant is deemed to pose an unreasonable threat to the safety of campus visitors, either because of its phenotype (e.g. excessively thorny shrubs, trees with heavy fruit falls, unreasonably toxic plants, and plants that produce contact dermatitis), its health (e.g., diseased or damaged), or its location, it will be promptly removed from the collection or relocated to another location.

I. Resource Allocation

The cost of obtaining and maintaining taxa should be considered prior to acquisition and subsequently reevaluated over the lifetime of all accessioned plants. In instances when two taxa are of equal value to the collections, but one needs significantly more resources (e.g., time, labor, space, expertise, chemical inputs, or equipment) for it to thrive, the less resource intensive taxon should be obtained or used to replace the more resource intensive taxon. The current commitment of resources to the collection, the pool of available resources, and any anticipated changes in these resources should be considered when committing resources to the care of new accessions.

X. Deaccessioning

Deaccessioning is a normal and healthy part of collections management. As accessions die, are stolen, are found not to meet collection priorities, or are replaced by more valuable taxa, they should be deaccessioned. Strategic deaccessioning may also be needed to free resources for developing collections and when new opportunities to increase the overall value of the collections emerge.

Deaccessioning will honor material transfer agreements, collecting permits, and relevant laws. When plants in the curriculum, germplasm, or research collections are scheduled for
deaccessioning, the appropriate stakeholders (instructors, land stewards, or researchers) should be given advanced warning.

In cases where an accession that is flagged for deaccessioning is likely to be of value to another botanical garden, the accession should be offered for donation to interested institutions. In other cases, the material may be sold at Botanic Garden plant sales (with proceeds going back into plant curation), returned to the donor, donated to local nonprofits, given away to staff or volunteers, or destroyed. When deaccessioned plants are given to staff or volunteers, this action must not undermine the best interests of the Botanic Garden.
Appendix A: Arboretum, Gardens, and Greenhouses

I. Arboretum

The commitment to making Smith College’s campus an arboretum was made in 1892. The arboretum, which is recognized as a Level III arboretum by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program, overlaps the 125 acre campus. The goal of the arboretum remains largely unchanged: to maintain a taxonomically diverse collection of woody plants for the study of plant diversity that also complements the campus’s aesthetics, functionality, and safety. The arboretum is also used to showcase and trial new-to-cultivation taxon and cultivars, and taxa at the edge of their hardiness in order to broaden the range of known, high-performing trees that can be grown in western Massachusetts. Special care is made to place woody material from the curriculum collection in multiple prominent and easily accessible locations to aid with teaching and study.

II. Capen Greenhouse

Capen Greenhouse was constructed in 1999 to provide space for plants during the renovation of Lyman Conservatory (2000–2003). The greenhouse is used for the propagation and cultivation of plants for the outdoor collections.

III. Gardens and Nurseries

William F. Ganong, noted botanist and inaugural director of the Botanic Garden, wrote in 1897, “History is made rapidly at Smith....Four years ago a part of its campus was a rough wilderness; that part is now a Garden, scientific in plan, serviceable to education, and although new and unripe, not without promise of beauty.” This statement reinforces the goals of the landscape as a classroom, resource, and place of inspiration and leisure. Each garden has a different theme and style that should be honored while also seeking to use these spaces to increase the overall value of the plant collections.

Alice Orme Smith Species Rhododendron Garden

The Rhododendron Garden was established in 1982 by friends and family of Alice Orme Smith, class of 1911. The garden’s purpose is to display species of the genus *Rhododendron* in a naturalistic woodland garden setting. Native North American woodland plants that complement the rhododendrons are also grown and displayed.

Capen Garden

Capen Garden is a European style garden with several rooms with varying degrees of formality. The primary purpose of this garden is horticultural display in service of horticulture instruction. Its key features are the rustic rose arbor, the Carol Brown Knot Garden, the gazebo garden with formal beds (partially reserved for Mary Mattison van Schaik, class of 1931, spring tulip plantings), the Stout daylily collection, the pollinator garden, iris and tree peony trial beds, and the Marjorie Wellman Freeman paperbark maple grove. Capen Garden is used heavily by horticulture students for plant identification, propagation, and garden design, and thus hosts a
large number of curriculum collection and education collection plants.

Capen Nursery
Capen Nursery is used for the propagation and cultivation of high value trees, shrubs, and groundcovers.

Edith Bramwell Reilly Hand (Class of 1952) Wildflower Garden (Woodland Garden)
The Woodland Garden is a shaded garden under the canopy of native deciduous and evergreen trees. The focus of this garden is spring ephemeral wildflower species.

Fern Garden
The focus of the Fern Garden is the cultivation and display of hardy, temperate ferns from around the globe. The garden displays a diverse collection of fern species. New cultivars should be routinely introduced so that the garden reflects emerging plant materials.

Fort Hill Nursery
The Fort Hill Nursery is a woody plant nursery used for the propagation and cultivation of trees and shrubs. The space may also be used for research projects.

Happy Chace ’28 Garden
The herb garden adjacent to the President’s Residence was extensively renovated and named the Happy Chace ’28 Garden in 2016. The herb garden showcases medicinal, culinary, and fragrant herbs, but also serves an important role in campus aesthetics, especially during commencement. Key design elements, including the formal layout of beds, clear vistas of Paradise Pond, and manicured gathering spaces, should be preserved.

Hardy Xerophyte Garden
The Hardy Xerophyte Garden features cold-hardy xerophytes from across North America.

Japanese Garden for Reflection and Contemplation
The Japanese Garden was completed in 1986 and renovated in 2017 to replace the tea hut with stone benches. The main purpose of the garden is to be a space that is conducive to reflection. The garden is maintained as a transition into the unmanaged surrounding natural areas; accessions should complement this gradient while contributing to the Japanese garden aesthetic in a New England setting.

Lyman Pond
Lyman Pond has been used for cultivating aquatic plants and teaching aquatic ecology since Smith College’s inception. The pond features aquatic and semi-aquatic plant species, as well as
accompanying terrestrial plant species, that support a robust insect and animal community in a naturalistic display of primarily New England native species.

President’s Residence Gardens
The gardens surrounding the President’s residence are used for hosting numerous events and social gatherings. A private patio features tree peony and clematis cultivars. As these spaces are highly visible and intensively used, the annuals and perennials that occupy these gardens should be proven performers with relatively low maintenance requirements. Species and cultivars that are in their prime during important Smith College events are given priority.

Rock Garden
The Rock Garden, inspired by a similar garden at Kew Gardens in London was completed in 1897 and is North America’s oldest rock garden. The focus is on displaying a taxonomically diverse group of plants that are prevalent in rocky terrain and alpine environments. The woodland slopes feature species from around the world with an emphasis on specimens that are of prime interest during May’s Commencement Ceremony.

Ruth Brown Richardson (Class of 1913) Border (Perennial Border)
The Perennial Border is a memorial garden of ornamental herbaceous perennials, vines, annuals, and small trees. The primary goal is to display a diverse range of ornamentals suitable for garden design and landscaping in western Massachusetts, including plants in the curriculum collection. Secondary goals are to showcase plants with diverse forms, functions, types of horticultural interest, economic uses, bloom times, and pollination mechanisms.

Systematics Garden
The systematics beds were originally laid out as the Herbaceous Garden in 1894 following a common taxonomic arrangement of the time proposed by German botanists Adolf Engler and Karl Prantl. In the 1980s it was revised to reflect the Bessey system, and in 2015 it was revised again to reflect the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group III representation of plant evolution. The garden is used intensively for teaching plant systematics. Plants that typify each family should be grown and the needs of vested faculty should be reflected in this garden.

Trudy’s Garden
Trudy’s Garden was created in 1986 in honor of Trudy Stella (Gertrude Ridgway Stella, class of 1937) who, for 20 years, served as director of the Alumnae Association. The garden’s primary function is as an events space. As such, the garden features cultivars and species that peak during reunion weekends in late May.

IV. Lyman Plant House and Conservatory
Smith College’s first greenhouse was constructed in 1894, and several houses were added in 1895. Renovations and addition of a plant physiology laboratory and glasshouses took place in 1901. The two-house Blakeslee range was constructed in 1952 for Albert Blakeslee’s plant
genetics research and funded by grants from the National Science Foundation. More houses and classrooms were added in 1981. Major renovations in 2000–2003 created new exhibit, reception, and work spaces. Over time, what has come to be known as the Lyman Plant House, or Lyman Conservatory, has grown to a complex with 12,000 square feet under glass in 13 distinct spaces.

Camellia Corridor
In 1981 a pathway between the Blakeslee range (Cool Genetics and Warm Genetics Houses) and the Cold and Show Houses was converted to a glass corridor to create a passageway to the Cool Temperate House. The Camellia Corridor houses exotic New World, Asian, and African plants that were historically grown in the earliest European conservatories and orangeries such as camellias, citrus, orchids, agapanthus, and rhododendrons.

Cold Storage House
The Cold Storage House (1902) was originally used for teaching plant physiology. It is now used for preparation and display of seasonal plant shows (primarily the Spring Bulb Show and Fall Chrysanthemum Show) and, when space allows, for the propagation of conservatory plants.

Cool Genetics House
The Cool Genetics House (1952, part of the Blakeslee Range) is dedicated to the propagation, cultivation, and storage of plants needing cool growing conditions including those used in seasonal plant shows and those used by faculty in courses.

Cool Temperate House
The large volume Cool Temperate House (1981) is dedicated to cultivating and displaying iconic cool temperate taxa of economic significance that are endemic to the world’s four major land regions: Asia, Australasia, Africa, and the Americas.

Fern House
The Fern House (1895) originally housed a collection of acacias and, for a while, the succulent collection. The Fern House focuses on the display and cultivation of non-hardy ferns and fern allies, gymnosperms, and non-vascular plants (mosses, liverworts, and hornworts). The aim of the collection is to use endangered species from a wide range of plant families to teach about plant evolution and extinction, as well as the different human activities that threaten plant species.

Palm House
The Palm House (1895) is used to display tropical trees, shrubs, vines, epiphytes, and groundcovers typical of the lowland tropics in a somewhat natural display. Palm trees and plants of economic importance from a broad range of geographic locations and cultures are featured.
Physiology House
The Physiology House (1902) was built for teaching plant physiology. It is now used for preparation and display of seasonal plant shows and, when space allows, for the propagation of conservatory plants.

Show House
The Show House (1892, renovated in 1901) is used to showcase educational themes (e.g., plant scents, insect–plant relationships, economic tropical herbs). The greenhouse’s theme should be periodically changed (typically this has occurred every 10-20 years). Since 2003, the theme has been floral scents with the goals of displaying plants with a wide range of aromas, various economic use, and broad geographical and cultural distributions.

Stove House
The Stove House (1895) is used primarily for the cultivation and display of orchids and bromeliads with a small focus on other epiphytes, the Araceae, and warmth-loving aquatic and emergent plants.

Student House
The Student House (1981) was built as a space for students’ research, educational, and class projects. The Student House may also be used for maintaining and propagating accessioned plant material.

Succulent House
The succulent house, (1892 and rebuilt in 1901), is dedicated to the display and cultivation of arid-adapted plants from around the world. The primary objective of this house is to showcase the variability of morphologies of arid adapted plants from the world’s major deserts.

Warm Genetics House
The Warm Genetics House (1952, part of the Blakeslee Range) is dedicated to the propagation, cultivation, and storage of warm growing plants.

Warm Temperate House
The Warm Temperate House (1895) houses plants adapted to tropical and subtropical ecosystems with a strong emphasis on carnivorous plants and houseplants including new cultivars, variegated chimeras, morphological oddities, and plants that exhibit the phenotypic extremes of their species. Priority is given to plants in the curriculum collection for use in horticulture classes.