



Botanical Society of America  
4344 Shaw Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63110  
[www.botany.org](http://www.botany.org)

February 21, 2024

Dr. Vincent E. Price  
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Dr. Susan Alberts  
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Dear Drs. Price, Gallimore, Bennett, Alberts, Benneer, Jones and Bernhardt:

I am writing on behalf of the Botanical Society of America, a professional scientific society representing 3,000 botanical scientists worldwide, to emphasize our deep concern regarding the planned closure of the Duke University Herbarium and relocation of its collection. We urge you to reconsider this decision which will have dire consequences for the second largest private herbarium in the United States, its invaluable collections of vascular plants, bryophytes, lichens, fungi and algae, and for current and future scientific researchers.

The Duke University Herbarium serves as a crucial repository of botanical diversity, providing researchers with essential resources for studying plant taxonomy, distribution, ecology, and evolution. These collections represent a tangible record of our planet's botanical heritage and are indispensable for advancing our understanding of the natural world. The closure of the Duke University Herbarium and relocation of its specimens would not only represent a loss of scientific resources but also hinder efforts to address the most pressing scientific issues of our time: climate change and global biodiversity loss. Without access to these invaluable collections, especially for plant scientists in the Southeastern United States which is the most biodiverse region of the country, researchers would be deprived of essential tools for understanding and combating the environmental challenges we face.

With this divestment and dispersal of a world-renowned scientific collection, Duke is ceding its position as a top research center and strongly indicating it no longer values the support and training of the next generation of scientists. Generations of outstanding plant biologists

*Our Mission: To inspire and promote an inclusive global community committed to advancing fundamental knowledge and innovation in the botanical sciences for the benefit of people and the environment.*



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have been trained through the Duke Herbarium. Duke undergraduate and graduate students in Agriculture, Biology, Environmental Science and Policy, and Earth and Climate Science will lose access to a world-class archive of plant biodiversity that has supported student research and training for over a century. We encourage you to continue the Duke legacy in biodiversity science by supporting this critical resource.

We understand the financial constraints that institutions often face. The long-term funding of a Herbarium and its curators is not insignificant. However, we believe that the long-term benefits of maintaining the Duke University Herbarium far outweigh the cost. We urge you to explore alternative solutions and potentially a combination of solutions, such as increased funding (Duke's endowment consistently ranks as one of the largest at US universities), partnerships, or community and crowd-funded support, to ensure the continued operation of this important herbarium. Rather than scattering these collections, we must *invest* in them and maximize access to the wealth of knowledge they hold about the past, present and future of our planet.

Demonstrate that you value biodiversity, research and the training of our next generation of top-notch plant scientists and preserve the world-class scientific collections you have while keeping them in their home at Duke. The Botanical Society of America stands ready to support your efforts to maintain the collection at Duke and looks forward to a positive resolution to this matter. Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

Brenda Molano-Flores, President on behalf of the BSA Board of Directors  
Botanical Society of America