

# Branching Out

## Herbarium Workshop: Outreach

Nicole Tarnowsky & Kelcie Brown

NYBG





# Branching Out

- History and Evolution of our Outreach efforts
- Spotlight on some particulars
  - Tabling Events
  - Exhibitions
  - Professional Development (Workshops, Seminars)
  - Volunteers
  - *The Hand Lens*





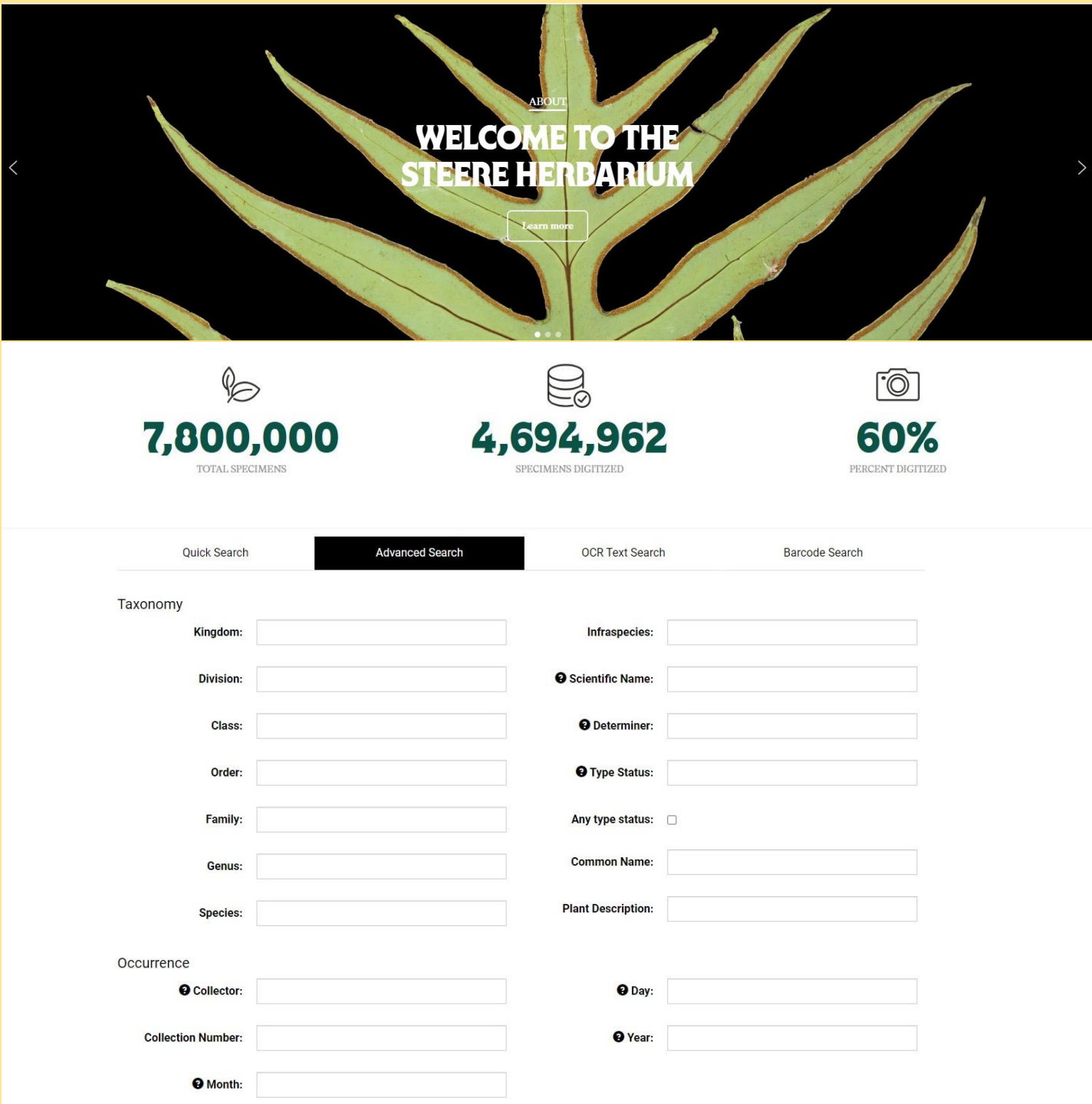
# History of Collections Access

- NYBG has 130 year history of making collections available for scientific study
- Visiting Researcher Program – totals over 2000 days per year
- Loan Program – 10-15K specimens per year
- Visitation is by appointment, not open to the public
- Tours to school groups and other interested parties



# History of Collections Access

- In last 3 decades we have added digital access to collections through the C. V. Starr Virtual Herbarium as well as other data aggregators like GBIF, iDigBio, Symbiota portals
- Scientific value of specimens - Physical and digital accessibility has catered to the scientific community
- Reflected in our virtual herbarium. To find our specimens you have to know what you are looking for, and to understand scientific names
- Even though pages are open to everyone, accessibility to non-scientists is limited





# History of Collections Access

- Garden is a public venue, missed opportunities to reach audiences that have an interest in natural history
- Visitors to the Garden see the beautiful grounds, but the herbarium and our science program are largely hidden
- Exhibition in 2017 – What in the World is a Herbarium?
- Turning point to expand our public outreach
- Included specimens showcasing research and easily recognizable plants





# Branching Out to the Public

- Held our first Open House to coincide with exhibition
- Opportunity for our staff to Branch Out and share specimen stories of interest to them
- Relatable to the public, to telling both scientific and cultural stories
- New perspective - Scientific vouchers but also artifacts of human history
- Often timed on opening or closing weekends of the Garden's major exhibitions as well as staff meetings





# Open Houses: Valentines Day

- #plantlove fun!

#plantlove tee

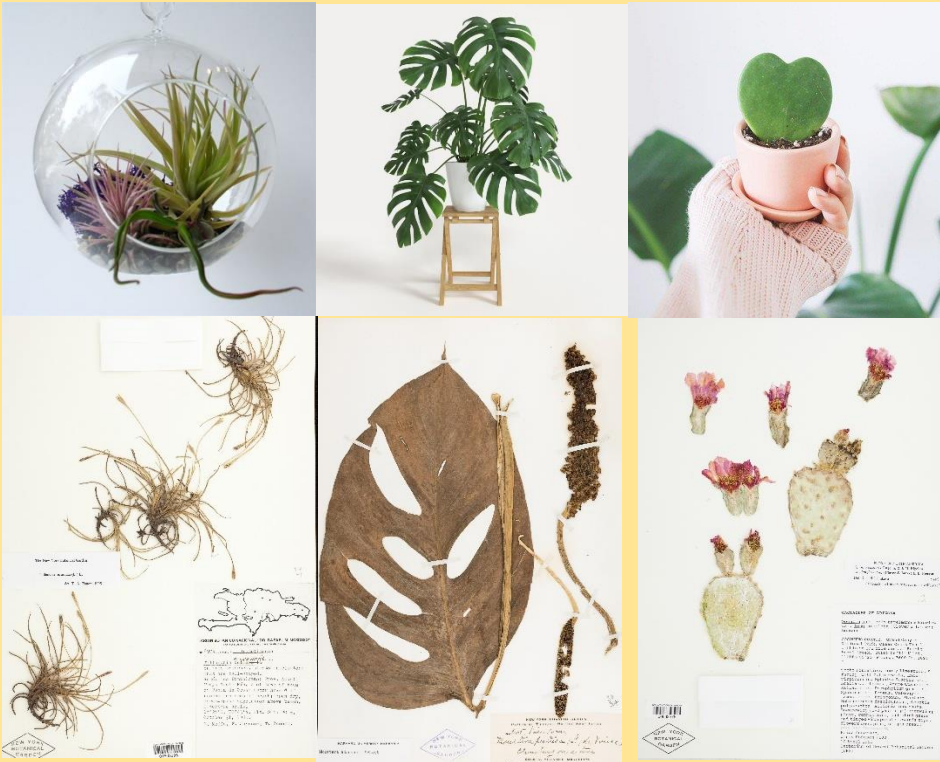


Botanical  
Couples,  
#plantlove

#plantlove  
pollination biology



Houseplants, #plantlove



PHOTOBOOTH  
Become a herbarium  
specimen!





# Open Houses: Holiday Edition for staff



**Mulled Cider:** Need a warm drink while you peruse the Train show?  
Put these fruits, seeds, bark, and flower buds together to get mulled apple cider.



## Crafty Holiday Cards and Decorations



## Christmas Tree species



**Deck The Halls:**  
Need some boughs of holly to deck your halls this season? We've got you covered.





# Open Houses



- Open houses were so much work to research stories and pull specimens. Each one was a full exhibit that was dismantled after just one weekend
- Needed to preserve this work and be able to share it with a wider audience



# Branching Out with Digital Access

- *The Hand Lens* launched in April 2019
- Developed as a way to present our open house stories to a wider audience.
- Browse based on general topics without needing a science background



[Home](#) » [The Hand Lens](#)

## Discover



What's New  
12 Stories



Focus on Science  
61 Stories



Cabinet of Curiosities  
46 Stories



Works of Art  
51 Stories

## Up Close



Exploring the Art of Paper Making



The Cactaceae



Springtime with Peter Zika



# Relatable content

- Family friendly
- Art
- History
- Foodways
- Science



## Alice Eastwood

collectors women in science

Alice Eastwood was a self-taught Canadian-American botanist. After graduating from high school...

By Leanna McMillin



## Modern Art

works of art

Herbarium specimens play an important part in plant science research. But the specimens themselves can...

By Amy Weiss



## Specimen Alphabet

works of art

Have something to say? Say it with specimens.

By Amy Weiss



## Plantways of the Lenape People

The New York Botanical Garden is located on land that is part...

By Emily B. Sessa



## Climate Research and Herbarium Specimens

Focus on Science

Climate research requires lots of data. Data about the conditions on earth now,...

By Nicole Tarnowsky



## John Kunkel Small

collectors

John Kunkel Small (1869-1938) was a taxonomist and botanical explorer, who specialized...

By Amy Weiss



## Mary Emily Eaton

works of art women in science

Mary Emily Eaton was an accomplished natural history illustrator employed at the...

By Nicole Tarnowsky, Laura Briscoe



# Branching Out with Institutional Messaging

- Virtual herbarium only targeted the scientific community
- Had to demonstrate with *The Hand Lens* that we were aligned with Garden messaging to the public
- Coordinate content for Themed months, Exhibitions, Garden features
- Garden's webpages now link back to *Hand Lens* stories



## July in the Native Plant Garden

works of art

The Native Plant Garden is looking lovely right now! Some plants that...

By Nicole Tarnowsky



## Plants of the Holiday Train Show

Nov 22 2022

The Holiday Train Show is a winter tradition at the New York...

By Amy Weiss



## Women in Science, Botany, and Horticulture

NYBG's *The Hand Lens* dives into the stories of innovative women in botany and horticulture who have contributed to science through cutting-edge research and activism. Learn about groundbreakers such as Sarah "Sadie" Frances Price (depicted here) and others who are recognized for their significant contributions to our current understanding and appreciation of cryptogamic botany, the study of spore-producing plants.

Show More



## The LGBTQ+ Legacy of NYBG: Out of the...

Collectors

Herbarium specimens are kept in metal cabinets to protect them from damage....

By Matthew C. Pace



## Algae Rainbow

Works of Art

Algae specimens can be found in every color of the rainbow.

By Amy Weiss



## Celebrating Pride with Flowers

Works of Art, Specimen Stories

As the world celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots during...

By McKenna Coyle



## Focus on Black Botanists

This fascinating series highlights under-recognized Black scientists whose research and discoveries have contributed to our collective knowledge and understanding of the plant world.

Show More



# Branching Out with Public Events *outside* of the Herbarium

- Tabling Events, both at NYBG and elsewhere
- Partner with our Library staff
- Craft projects





# Branching Out with New Scholarly Uses of Specimens

- Opportunities for non-science academics to incorporate specimens into their studies
- Humanities Institute
- NEH Digital Humanities Grant – using our moss collections to ask questions about history and society



LEARN

Continuing Education

Mertz Library

Humanities Institute

Upcoming Foodways Lectures, Workshops, & Symposia

Bronx Foodways Oral Histories Project

African American Garden

Research Fellows, Visiting

+

+

-

+

+

+

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

The Humanities Institute, supported by The Mellon Foundation, promotes innovative thinking at the intersection of science and the humanities, particularly in the vital and growing field of Food Humanities. A division of Education, the Institute strengthens The New York Botanical Garden's academic role among universities and research centers worldwide. It engages a lively community of fellows and visiting scholars who study NYBG's historical collections in the Mertz Library, the Archives, and William and Lynda Steere Herbarium to further their interdisciplinary research projects. Lecture series, workshops, and symposia span issues in foodways, Food Studies, and justice, with special programs focused on the Bronx. While the borough is disproportionately impacted by food insecurity, it's also home to vibrant, multi-cultural food traditions, stories and community gardens that all come together in the *Bronx Foodways Oral Histories Project* – a partnership with NYBG's Bronx Green-Up, and leading community gardens and urban farms.

## Mellon Visiting Scholar



Matthew Raiford

Matthew Raiford, author, chef, horticulturalist, and owner of Gilliard Farms grew up “breaking the dirt, raising hogs and chickens, and rarely going to a grocery store”.

Show More

**Inverting the Wunderkammer:  
Rethinking the Digital Humanities through Botanic Histories and Archives**  
Workshop II: Subjects





# Branching Out with Intern Perspectives

- Opportunities for students with a wider variety of interests to use specimens
- CIIG interns - city funded paid internships, museum studies students
- Mellon funded Foodways interns - week rotation in herbarium
- Often their first opportunity to have a published by-line in *The Hand Lens*.



## Urban Foodways Internship Program



**Xiomara Bryan** – Nutrition and Food Science, Department of Health Sciences – Lehman College



**Ang Lama** – Dietetics, Foods, and Nutrition, Department of Health Sciences – Lehman College



### Ginger and Chiya

specimen stories

Ginger, also known as *Zingiber officinale* is native to tropical climates like...

By Ang Lama



### Aloe: The Plant of Many Wonders

specimen stories

Aloe vera is one of the over 300 species of Aloe belonging...

By Xiomara Bryan



### A World of Botanical Illustrations: Japanese plants referenced...

works of art

For decades, Studio Ghibli Inc. has been revered as one of the...

By Danna Carina Cruz



# Branching Out with Artist Perspectives – Ebony Patterson exhibit

- Themes of shedding and loss - extinct species
- Herbarium specimens incorporated into her work
- What's hidden underneath the Garden, untold stories





# Lessons Learned

Widening our perspective to value specimens as cultural objects has:

- Given our staff professional development opportunities to develop outreach skills
- Aligned us more closely with the public facing side of our institution
- Opened accessibility physically and online
  - to wider section of the public and local Bronx community
  - to students and scholars with more varied interests
- Provided new perspectives, new stories





# Spotlight on Specifics

- Tours
- Open Houses
- Tabling Events
- Exhibitions
- Social Media
- Volunteers
- Professional Development
- The Hand Lens





# Spotlight: Tours

Who we give tours to, and how we tailor them

- Donors
- University classes
- Campers
- Artists/Historians
- Influencers
- New staff onboarding
- Interns from various programs
- Colleagues from other Institutions





# Spotlight: Tours

## Tour Cabinet

- Permanent Content
- Rotating content – used for once a year events – Fall Forest, Fiesta de Flores
- Objects – Specimens (sheets, bulky fruits, palms, jars, bound herbaria, crypt packeted and boxed), books, photos,
- Folder categories
  - Curator research
  - Taxa
  - Geographical Regions
  - Historical Figures (Garden history, women's history, LGBTQ history, black history, artists)
  - Food
  - Medicine
  - Conservation (Phenology, invasives, rare/endangered)





# Spotlight: Open Houses

- Open Houses for the public
- Open Houses for staff (Branch Out)
- Open House New York





# Spotlight: Tabling Events

- For the general public, visitors to the grounds
- Specimens – From tour cabinet and newly pulled
- 3D specimens
- Captions
- QR codes
- Additional objects, books
- Activities - Crafts/games/microscope
- Supplies - weights, mylar, packing tape, carboard





# Spotlight: Exhibitions

- Garden wide exhibitions - Supply specimens to display for length of exhibition (6 months)
  - Make specimens for display (UV light can damage permanent collection)
  - 3D specimens
  - Plant fiber fabric swatches
  - Swap real specimens to limit time in cases
  - Hand Lens stories related to exhibitions
  - Tabling





# Spotlight: Exhibitions

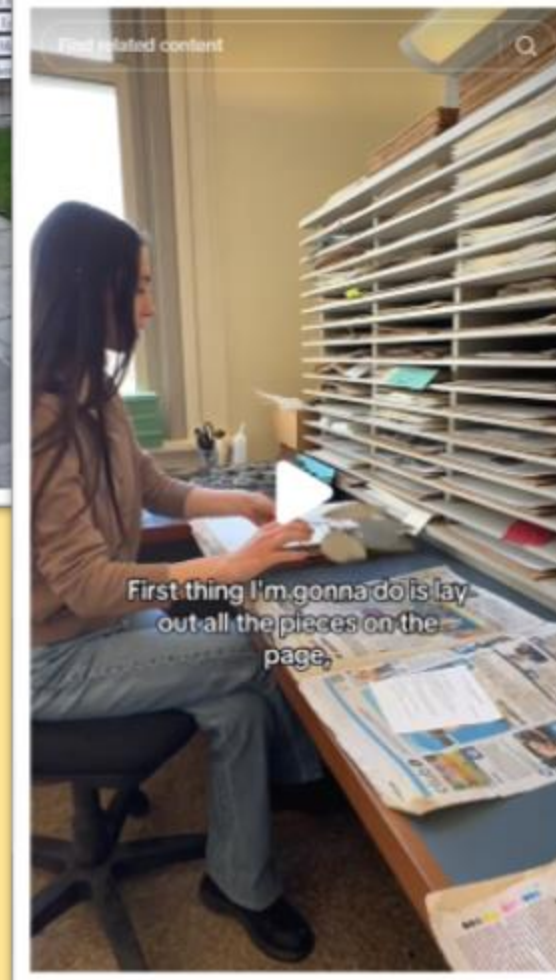
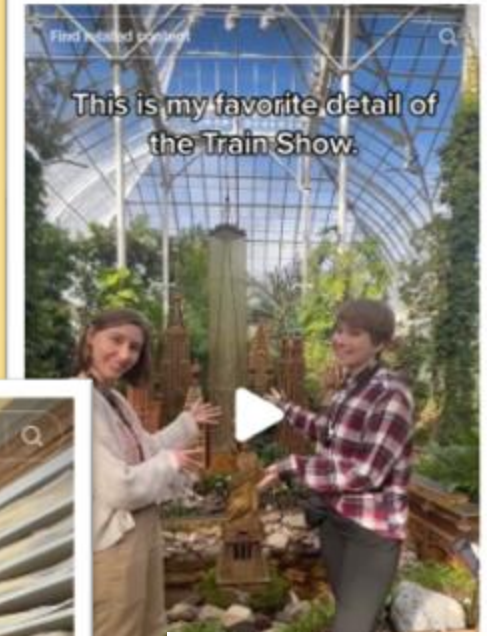
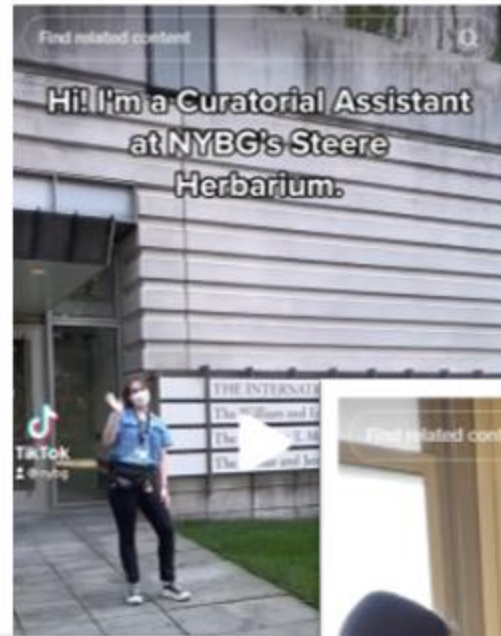
- Special exhibitions – cases assembled with Library for special events
  - Board meeting
  - Climate change event in Ross
  - Sam van Aken talk in Ross
  - Rare Book Room





# Spotlight: Social Media

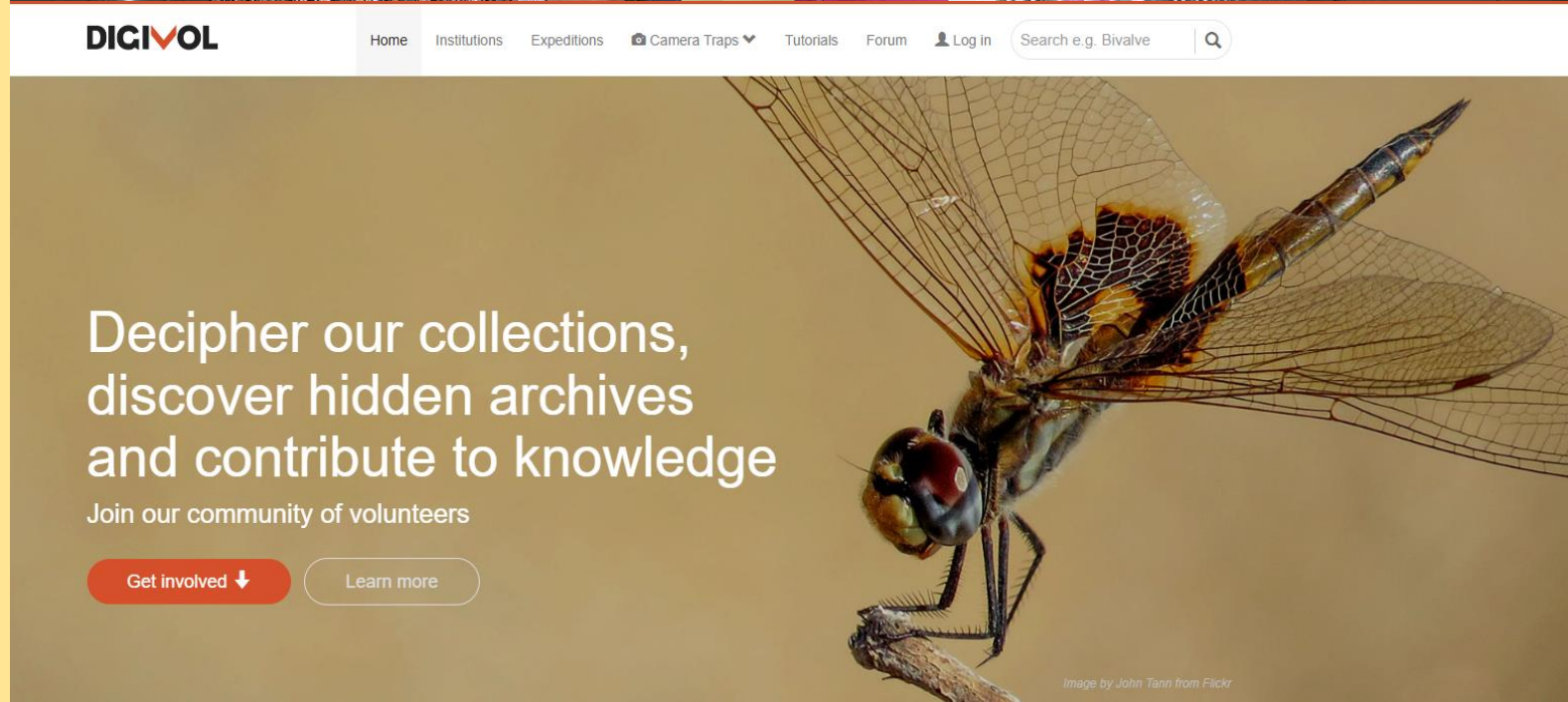
- Culturing a relationship with the marketing team.
- Appearing on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, etc.
- We prepare content, but the marketing team or influencer does the work of editing and posting.
- We now get requests to collaborate.





# Spotlight: Volunteers

- Onsite
  - Imaging lab
  - Mounting room
  - Filers
- Online
  - Transcribers
  - Validators
- Helps to fill gaps in the workflows while also providing an enriching experience for community members.
- Mostly retirees, but also get college students, young professionals, and occasional corporate volunteers.
- Yearly recognition event arranged by Volunteer Services





# Spotlight: Professional Development

- Workshops
  - Mounting
    - Continuing Education
    - School of Professional Horticulture
    - Eleuthera Preserve interns
  - Best Practices
- Seminars
  - In person
  - Online





# Spotlight: *The Hand Lens*

- Storytelling platform using specimens
- Topics are endless, as long as specimens can represent the story
- Authors
  - Staff – Herbarium, Library, Science
  - Interns – Herbarium, Science, all Garden depts.
  - Outside collaborators



[Home](#) » [The Hand Lens](#)

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The Cactaceae



Springtime with Peter Zika



# Spotlight: *The Hand Lens* Structure Online

- Home page
- Templates
  - All have Author, Date, Main Narrative, Specimens
- Keywords
- Associated stories

More about:

ethnobotany

useful plants

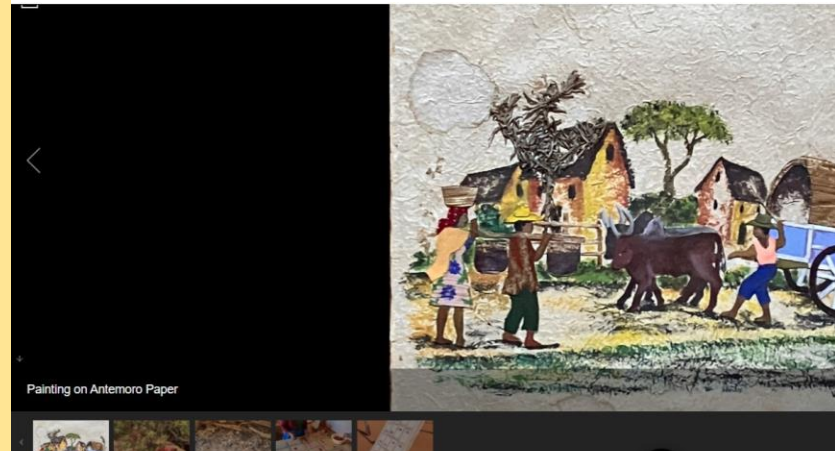
NYBG



## THE HAND LENS

A closer look. Explore our collections and the stories they tell, like never before.

[Home](#) » The Hand Lens



Painting on Antemoro Paper

### A Closer Look



### People Also Viewed



Exploring the Art of Paper Making



Exploring Kozo Paper : Special Qualities and its Application in Conservation



Fun with Fibers



# Spotlight: *The Hand Lens* Structure in EMu

- Narratives
- Objects and Captions
- Multimedia
- Keywords
- Associated stories
- References/NSF acknowledgement

Narratives (1) - Display

File Edit Select View Tools Tabs Hierarchy Multimedia Window Help

Pitcher plants: so nice, they evolved thrice!

**Narrative Details**

Title: Pitcher plants: so nice, they evolved thrice!

Authors: 1 Person - L. Sparreo (Luke Sparreo); determiner, \*


Purpose: The Hand Lens

Type: 1 Cabinet of Curiosities, \*

**Narrative**

Pitcher plants are famous (or perhaps infamous) for their carnivorous structures that trap prey to supplement their nutritional needs. While you might assume that all plants with such a unique characteristic must be related, the species we commonly refer to as "pitcher plants" actually refer to three completely unrelated and distinct plant families: Sarraceniaceae, Nepenthaceae, and Cephalotaceae.

**Multimedia**



Summary Details Description Narrative Narrative Objects Taxonomy Related Sub Narratives



# Spotlight: *The Hand Lens* Editorial Management

- Submission of ideas
  - Need editor approval before writing story
- Structural Guidelines
  - Templates
  - Number of specimens
  - Number of images
  - Subnarratives
  - Citations
  - Associated stories

Narratives (1) - Display

File Edit Select View Tools Tabs Hierarchy Multimedia Window Help

Pitcher plants: so nice, they evolved thrice! 7782

Narrative Details

Title: Pitcher plants: so nice, they evolved thrice!

Authors: 1 Person - L. Sparreo (Luke Sparreo); determiner, collector

Contributor(s): Other Contributor(s) Role

1 Person - L. Briscoe (Laura Briscoe); Author, Collector, Determiner; 4 ... Editor

Date/Type: Date Type Explanation

1 23 May 2025 approval AW

Purpose: The Hand Lens Version:

Subject/Keywords: 1 Seed plants 2 Botany Basics Version Date: 04 Jun 2025

Identifier: Objects Gallery

Summary Details Description Narrative Narrative Objects Taxonomy Rel

Display Narrative 2 of 2 tamowsk Admin 20085



# Spotlight: *The Hand Lens* Editorial Management

- Multimedia
  - Attributions
    - Creative Commons
      - NYBG images
      - BHL
      - Wikimedia
    - Non-CC
      - Permissions needed

