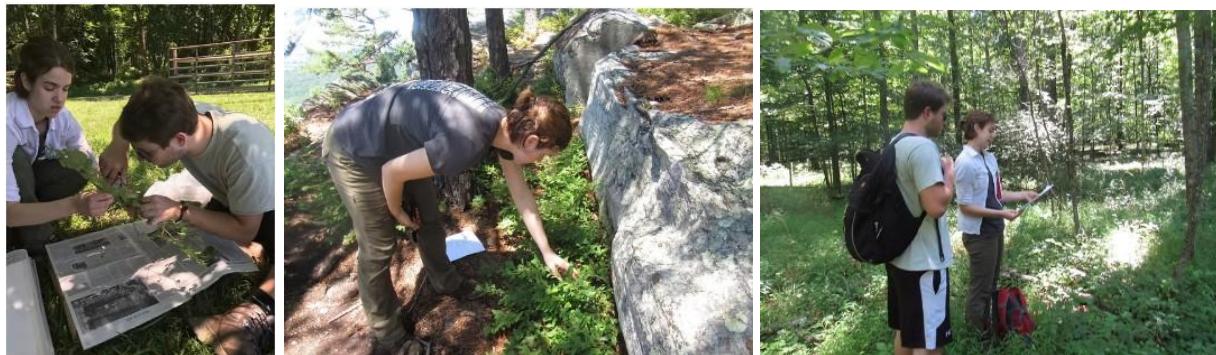


Native Plant Specimen Project

Building on research done in 2001, this project intends to create herbarium specimens of native plant indicator species, increasing awareness and understanding of the Piedmont's native plants and their role in ecological communities.



FALL 2017 UPDATE: This past spring and summer, our team began work by identifying ideal locations for each community type to collect specimens. We used maps from Gary Fleming's 2002 Natural Heritage Technical Report on the mountains' ecological communities and our knowledge of the mountains to formulate a field collection plan.

Over several field days, a total of 38 specimens representing 31 species were collected. Each collection was recorded with GPS coordinates. The collection of several spring ephemeral species was postponed until spring of 2018, so that the specimens would represent undamaged and intact examples of their respective species.

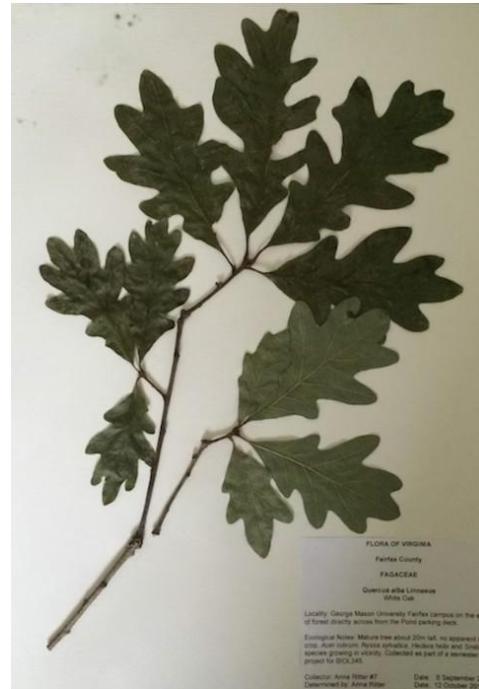
The specimens were pressed out in the field and later trimmed, so identifying characteristics and morphologies are easily apparent. In the next few weeks, the specimens will be mounted and identification cards created.

Every landscape consists of various ecological communities, defined as groups of species together with the physical environment that recur on the landscape.

In 2001, Gary Fleming, ecologist with DCR-DNH, documented 72 vegetation plots on the Bull Run Mountains that represented 9 native ecological communities within four general classes. The results were published as Natural Heritage Technical Report in 2002. This work was instrumental in securing the Natural Area Preserve designation for former Natural Area in the Bull Run Mountains, as it demonstrated the biodiversity necessary for that level of protection.

This project was designed to make this critical work more readily accessible to visitors to the Mountains and the local community. Herbarium specimens (see example at right) will be made of the indicator species for each community type on the Mountains defined by Fleming. Indicator species are those that define a certain community and appear in every instance of that community.

Specimens will be grouped according to their respective community and photographed. These photos will be incorporated along with photos of the communities on the landscape into a PowerPoint presentation that features information about each community type and respective locations of those communities on the BRMNAP (see photograph above). BRMC will use this presentation in educational programs, have it on display for visitors at the BRMC headquarters, and feature a pdf of the presentation on the BRMC website. The physical specimens will be used during educational programs to teach participants about these native plants and the role they play in their ecological community.



An herbarium specimen of *Quercus alba*, white oak, collected in Fairfax, Virginia

An herbarium specimen of *Quercus alba*, white oak, collected in Fairfax, Virginia