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Web Sites

The New York Botanical Garden Vascular Plant Type Catalog **(<http://www.nybg.org/bsci/hcol/vasc/>)**

There's something really exciting about looking through old herbarium sheets. You might see the handwriting of famous collectors and botanists like Allan Cunningham, Donald Petrie and Etienne Fiacre Louis Raoul. You might come across specimens collected by Banks and Solander on Cook's first voyage. Well, at <http://www.nybg.org/bsci/hcol/vasc/> you can do it all! The folks at the New York Botanical Garden have photographed and made available on the web all the vascular plant type specimens they have in their herbarium - 82,000 of them! Once those specimens on loan at present are returned and photographed, there will be almost 90,000 type specimens on-line.

"Who cares?" you might say - New York is a long way away from Otago! Well, I found that they have 38 collections from New Zealand listed as either types, syntypes, isotypes or 'possible types'. There is a specimen of *Ranunculus hirtus* Banks 499 and Solander labelled as "Type specimen" (although I couldn't verify this from Vol. 1 of Flora of New Zealand as the type specimen details are not recorded there). There is a collection of *Pratia arenaria* Hook. f. from the Auckland Islands, collected on the Wilkes Expedition (U.S. South Pacific Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842). Closer to home, there is a collection of *Carmichaelia compacta* Petrie from "Dunstan Gorge, Central Otago", a sheet originally from the herbarium of Leonard Cockayne. I got a bit confused about this one as the collecting details are "No. 1727 ... D. Petrie Nov 1890", and the specimen is listed on the web site as "Type". However that species was described five years earlier by Petrie in 1885 in the *Transactions and Proceeding of the New Zealand Institute 1884, vol. 17* (published 1885). There is no type locality in the original description, just a statement "Hab. Kawarau Gorge and Dunstan Gorge, Clutha River, Otago". In 1945, G. Simpson (*Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand 75: 321-287*) reported that one of Petrie's specimens "from the entrance to the Dunstan Gorge, near Clyde, No 224/490a" (now WELT 53661) was marked as "type" and thus that collection was designated as the lectotype. Peter Heenan from Landcare Research, Lincoln upheld this in his 1995 (*New Zealand Journal of Botany 33, 443*) paper and also upheld three of Simpson's isolectotypes (AK 4929, 211346 and WELT 26306).

Thus whilst the specimen at the New York Botanical Garden herbarium is interesting and valuable (at least as another specimen falling within Petrie's concept of that species and coming from the type locality), it isn't "type" material. I also got to

wondering about the sheets labeled "possible type" on the web site. I emailed Barbara Thiers, the director of the Herbarium in New York, to ask what "possible types" were and she replied (10 minutes later – email is incredible isn't it!) "... this is usually used in the case of putative syntypes, where the protolog is very vague, and there are a number of specimens that might potentially match it. We were not able to verify the status of every single type, but we thought by adding "possible type" we were at least alerting users to specimens that perhaps should be considered in lecto or neotypification."

So, it's an interesting website and one which will be valuable to people searching for early collections of selected species. Provided you're aware that the listing as "type", "syntype" etc should serve as a starting point for your investigation and not the end point, it is a worthwhile resource. Searching through the image database occupied a whole afternoon for me and I highly recommend the web site to people interested in taxonomy and botanical history. The New York Botanical Garden also maintains the online **Index Herbariorum** and a number of other databases such as **Lichens of Eastern North America** and the **Catalogue of Costa Rican Fungi**. The Costa Rican fungi catalogue even has macroscopic descriptions of some collections done by Roy Halling. You can access all these databases from the **Virtual Herbarium of the New York Botanical Garden** at <http://www.nybg.org/bsci/hcol/>.

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Botanical Society of Otago: <http://www.botany.otago.ac.nz/bsot> Don't forget our very own web site, which David Orlovich is in the process of upgrading – in September, after he comes back from a Mycology conference in Oslo !

New Zealand Plant Name Database domain change!:

<http://nzflora.landcareresearch.co.nz>. Aaron Wilton advises that "Landcare Research have recently changed the domain name of their website (and email addresses) - 'landcare.cri.nz' has been replaced with '**landcareresearch.co.nz**'. Apparently people overseas didn't understand 'cri'. The website now includes lichens, mosses, liverworts, ferns, seed plants and fresh water algae. Common and Maori names have also recently been made available and can be searched." There are synonyms as well as current names for some of the plants, liverworts and lichens. Interestingly, *Bomarea multifida* is still the only *Bomarea* species listed as wild in New Zealand in this database.

All this marvelous extra information means that the interface now works best with Internet Explorer version 5 and later OR Netscape version 6 and later. Links to free upgrades are provided on the plant names home page. If only there were links to free computer upgrades!

- Allison Knight