

**The Merritt Lyndon Fernald Award For
Best Paper published in *Rhodora*
Volume 123, 2021**

presented to

**Janet R. Sullivan and Mare Nazaire
for their paper, “Specimen collection and preparation
for a changing flora”**

This year’s recipients of the New England Botanical Society’s Merritt Lyndon Fernald Award are Janet R. Sullivan and Mare Nazaire for their paper published in *Rhodora* 123 (993): 50-66.

The Merritt Lyndon Fernald Award Committee states that “the paper by Sullivan and Nazaire stands apart in Volume 123 and is an eloquent, thorough, and timely reminder of the importance of herbaria and collections in botany, and we anticipate that it will be used widely for reference — and especially for teaching.

The Sullivan and Nazaire paper provides a wealth of information useful for anyone who might be interested in collecting but not know exactly how to go about it or exactly why people would do such a thing. What are 200-year-old specimens good for, anyway? What is it that botanists do with them? Good questions, and Sullivan and Nazaire provide answers. What do I take into the field with me to collect plants? Sullivan and Nazaire provide a list of things to take with you. How do I press the plants afterwards? They explain the technique in detail. They also raise questions the uninitiated might not think of: Do I need a permit? Do I collect everything? How much do I collect? Do I need to worry that something might be rare? Sullivan and Nazaire provide essential information on what information needs to be recorded with a specimen, beyond the basic date and location information, so each specimen will be useful for many kinds of research, remembering that specimens are used for many things the original collectors could not have imagined, like DNA analysis.

The timing of this paper is particularly critical because botanical collecting has declined in recent years, just as the need to record changes in our flora has increased because of climate change! In addition, students now have fewer opportunities than they would have had in the past to learn about collecting and why it is useful, and this paper will answer some of the questions students might have, as well as point out some questions they did not know enough to ask.

The paper is comprehensive, authoritative, and thoughtful. And importantly, the information is presented in a very readable style, making clear the importance of collecting plants and preparing specimens without making it sound tedious or impossibly difficult or anything less than fun.”