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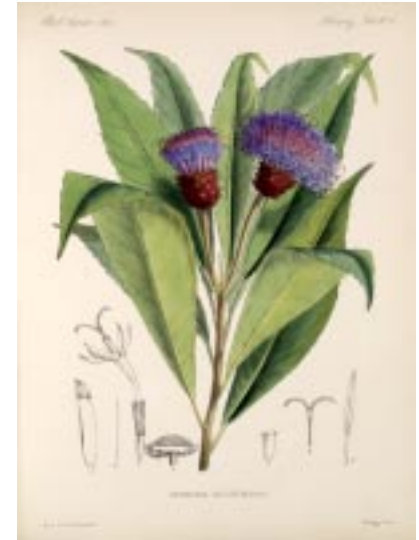


“The Future of Floras: New Frameworks, New Technologies, New Uses”

For centuries botanists have created regional floras for the purposes of inventory, identification, description, and classification. But what will the floras of the future look like? Will there be a need for floras when a Web-based “Encyclopedia of Life” becomes a reality? What will field taxonomists be doing in 20 years? New technologies are now being developed to facilitate the coupling of field work with ready access of plant data that exist in biodiversity institutions. The development of electronic field guides and image identification systems, as well as DNA barcoding methods to identify species in the field, have great potential to augment if not completely replace the traditional paper-based flora.

Some scientists are concerned that new technologies that further the inventory and classification of life may also threaten the field of taxonomy. Will new technologies replace taxonomists who work directly with specimens? Will new techniques provide faulty identifications? Proponents of the new technologies believe that the easier it is for end-users to employ good taxonomic data for identification, the more taxonomists will be appreciated for their skills and knowledge. As the debate continues, floras built on Web-, image-, and DNA-based products are fulfilling new functions that paper-based floras have not been able to attain. All of these topics focusing on the floras of the future will be discussed and debated at the symposium.

Information and registration at: <http://persoon.si.edu/sbs/>
Fax: 202-786-2563 – e-mail: sbs@si.edu



“*Vernonia salvinia*, Hemsl.” (Tab. 41)
in *Biologia Centrali-Americana, Botany*,
Vol. V (1879-1888)
by William B. Hemsley

[Image Courtesy Smithsonian Institution Libraries]