

### RM as *Flora of North America* Cornerstone

*The Flora of North America (FNA) is a wonder to behold and a remarkable work-in-progress. It started as little more than a New World dream, spurred by the start of Flora Europaea in 1960. It is a groundbreaking botanical series and collaborative effort of researchers at more than 30 U.S. and Canadian institutions. The first volume was published in 1993, launching a 30-volume magnum opus goal on the flora of a continent north of Mexico. Twenty more volumes have been published, announced with limited fanfare, emerging as though by magic. Nine more volumes are underway.*

The Rocky Mountain Herbarium (RM) is an FNA cornerstone in providing specimens and specimen data, housing a major type specimen collection, and as home turf for leading researchers including Aven Nelson and Ronald Hartman. There is an FNA Editorial Committee that sets policy, priorities and participation. This included Ronald Hartman starting with Volume 1. He was also a taxonomic author, taxonomic editor, and regional reviewer for FNA.

RM continues to anchor regional FNA reviews. B. E. “Ernie” Nelson orchestrates all specimen loans and returns and is point of contact for all FNA authors, while directing RM growth and operations. Draft manuscripts for each genus get sent out to one or more regional review teams covering the distribution of the genus. The Rocky Mountain Region review team includes botanists in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah and Wyoming...including Ernie Nelson! Regional reviewers take the new taxonomic treatise out for a “test drive”, checking to make sure the taxonomic keys work, the distribution information is accurate, and the content is consistent with species information at state and regional levels. Bonnie Heidel, Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, compiles the seven reviews into one for the region.

The simplest kind of regional reviews are the ones that only need fine-tuning, such as the recent *Asclepias* (milkweed) manuscript. There are 77 species of *Asclepias* in North America (about 400 in the world) and 249 pages of text written about the North American ones (double-spaced)! Less than half of the 77 species occur in Rocky Mountain states – 27 to be exact, including 12 for Wyoming. In the pages of terse technical jargon, the author’s insight and excitement comes across in highlighting uniqueness of various species.

The author of the *Asclepias* treatment worked closely with RM information and had already bundled the information needed to put the perplexing milkweed flora of Wyoming into perfect perspective consistent with interpretations and oversight of Wyoming experts. Three of our milkweed species haven’t been seen in over 50 years, including *Asclepias uncialis* (dwarf

milkweed) collected in 1873 with vague location information.



Dwarf milkweed specimen (*Osterhout 1021 RM*, an 1896 coll. from Windsor, CO)

A mere 33 comments and notes were bundled into a review of the *Asclepias* tome for Rocky Mountain states. It included comments that the range of characteristics for a given species needed to be edited because they were too narrow for specimen material from one or more states, or that there were minor inconsistencies between the key and species description information.

*Flora of North America* is not just a publication treatise but a new construct in top-down and bottom-up information exchange between botanists across the continent. RM, as a herbarium of regional stature and exceptional research activity, is a cornerstone in the construct and processes for FNA. Further information about FNA is posted on the homepage:

[http://beta.floranorthamerica.org/Main\\_Page](http://beta.floranorthamerica.org/Main_Page).



### RM Faces: Jacey Myers

Jacey Myers is a senior Mathematics Education major in her third year of working at RM. She loves handling specimens from a wide range of places and times that include her Cody hometown environs and her work in Bighorn National Forest. ...Okay, she also appreciates the awesome people at RM and the flexible work hours.

Jacey works at databasing specimens, and recently joined Ernie in taking a Georeference Workshop as part of the Southern Rocky Mountains grant proposal. She will be student teaching math classes at Laramie Middle School next semester. So there’s no time like the present to say: Thank You, Jacey!