



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agriculture
Marketing
Service

Science and
Technology
Program

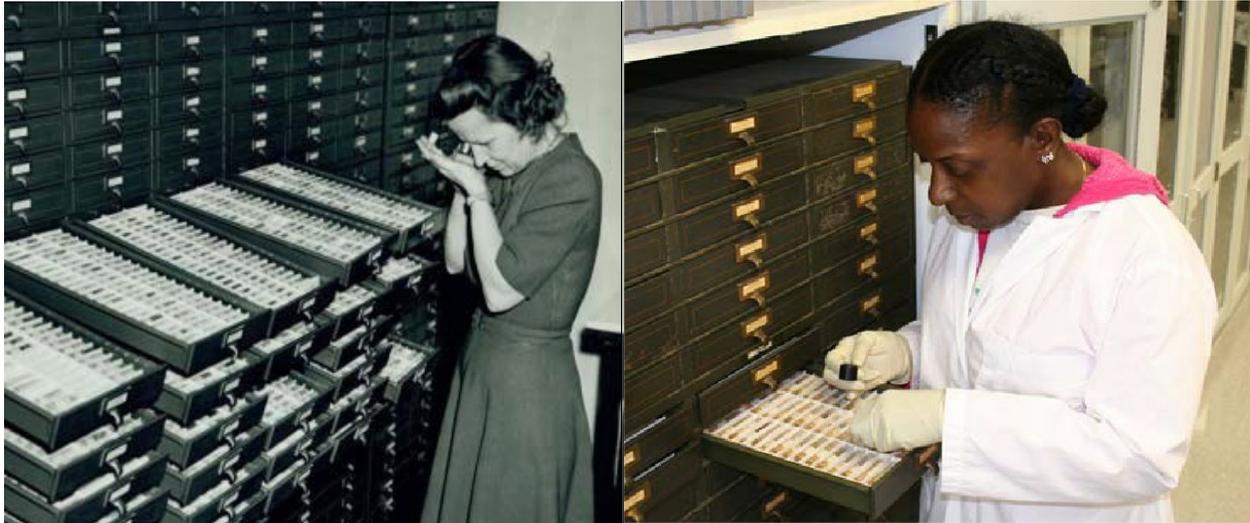
Seed Regulatory and Testing Division
801 Summit Crossing Place, Suite C
Gastonia, NC 28054
Phone: 704-810-8870, Fax: 833-890-2305

THE SEED REGULATORY AND TESTING DIVISION (SRTD) HERBARIUM

A quality seed herbarium has been and remains a useful tool for seed analysts to use in identification of crop and weed seeds. As part of SRTD's mission, assistance is offered to U.S seed labs in seed ID and training.

The earliest versions of the USDA Seed Regulatory and Testing Division laboratory and seed herbarium started in Washington, D.C. in 1895 and moved to several locations through 1939. In 1940, the laboratory and herbarium moved to the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville, MD and remained there until 2003. Currently, SRTD is located in Gastonia, NC with a collection of more than 30,000 specimens in its seed herbarium. The oldest seed in the herbarium collection is dated 1820, which predates the creation of the USDA, and is labeled *Carex schweinitzii*, a sedge, collected by C. Dewey.

The specimens, contributed by many individuals over the years, are arranged phylogenetically by family, with genera within each family arranged alphabetically. This type of organization makes it easier to identify an unknown seed because seeds in a family, or closely related family, often have similar characteristics. Specimens are stored in stoppered glass vials in metal drawers with dividers separating the specimens. For additional protection, the metal drawers were installed in water-resistant cabinets when the herbarium was moved to Gastonia.



Miss Harriet Cull, Seed Technologist (left, 1943), and Botanist Patsy Jackson (right, 2011), each compare an unidentified seed with specimens of known identity from the seed herbarium.

Photo by Todd Erickson, USDA, AMS, 2011
USDA archival photo, 1943