



BISHOP MUSEUM

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Bishop Museum Awarded \$500,000 Grant to Preserve and Digitize Hawai‘i’s Most Important Plant Repository

Funds were awarded through the Historic Preservation Fund’s Save America’s Treasures grant program.

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a \$500,000 grant to protect, digitize, and greatly increase access to the world’s largest repository of Pacific plant specimens. Bishop Museum’s **Herbarium Pacificum** is indispensable to researchers as well as state and federal agencies engaged in biodiversity and conservation work. The \$500,000 grant, as well as an additional \$500,000 committed by the Museum, will go towards ensuring the repository is preserved and broadly accessible. The funds have been awarded through the Save America’s Treasures grant program, through the Historic Preservation Fund, as administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Senators Mazie Hirono and Brian Schatz were instrumental in securing this funding for the Museum.

With more than 210,000 specimens collected throughout the Hawaiian archipelago, Herbarium Pacificum is the largest and most comprehensive collection of native and naturalized Hawaiian plants that have been verified and authenticated by taxonomic experts. As such, the collection provides primary evidence for plant occurrence in the state and source material used to identify unknown plants, confirm the identity of newly rediscovered endangered species thought to be extinct, and inform biodiversity restoration projects across Hawai‘i. The Herbarium also contains over 400,000 specimens from outside of Hawai‘i, which are used as a reference collection to identify new alien species found in the state.

“We are grateful that the Herbarium is well-used, but the specimens contained are also extremely fragile,” said Dr. Timothy Gallaher, curator of botany at Bishop Museum. “Our oldest collections are nearly 250 years old dating back to 1779, and some of our specimens represent the last remnants of extinct species.”

“Continued handling of these resources shortens their lifespan. It is our responsibility to ensure that researchers will still be able to rely on our specimens for the next 250 years and beyond, so this grant will go a long way in ensuring that we are well-equipped to face the environmental challenges of our generation. We greatly appreciate the administrators of the Save America’s Treasures grant program, and Senators Mazie Hirono and Brian Schatz, for their support,” he added.

The Save America's Treasures grant empowers Bishop Museum researchers to embark on a major digitization and curation project that will:

1. Secure the physical specimens by reattaching or transferring specimens that do not meet current standards, or those needing repair, onto archival quality paper and into archival quality folders or boxes;
2. Digitize all specimens with high-resolution images;
3. Connect the specimens and images with all the data related to them in a searchable database;
4. Georeference their original collection locality; and
5. Make all of that data available on www.plantsofhawaii.org.

Through this project, researchers and for the first time, the broader community will be able to access the specimens in digital form, learn about the history of each species in the Islands, and access tools for plant identification. This work will enhance the value of Bishop Museum's collections while reducing the number of times that specimens need to be handled, effectively extending their lifespans.

The digitization and preservation project for Bishop Museum's Herbarium Pacificum is expected to take two years to complete.

The Save America's Treasures grant program was established in 1998 to celebrate America's premier cultural resources in the new millennium. After more than 20 years, this grant program has awarded more than 1,300 grants totaling more than \$300 million to projects across the United States. Funded projects, selected from more than 4,000 applications requesting \$1.5 billion, represent nationally significant historic properties and collections that convey the nation's rich heritage to future generations. The National Park Service administers Save America's Treasures grants in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

For more information about Bishop Museum, its Natural Science collections and research, and the Herbarium Pacificum, please visit the Museum's website BishopMuseum.org and follow @BishopMuseum.

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum's mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai'i and the Pacific. The Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the Museum thrives as an educational center for the community and is widely regarded as the world's premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content.

Bishop Museum's vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over two million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and one million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai'i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years.

Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits.

To learn more about the Museum's research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit BishopMuseum.org, follow @BishopMuseum on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), become a fan of Bishop Museum on [Facebook](#), visit Bishop Museum's [YouTube](#) channel, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at [BishopMuseum.org/Careers](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/Careers) and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai'i's oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1200 titles and distributed over 1,000,000 books in 72 countries worldwide.

Past news releases can be viewed and downloaded at [BishopMuseum.org/NewsRoom](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/NewsRoom).