

Volunteers impress

CALM Herbarium volunteers have completed the mounting of their 100,000th plant specimen, and were recently congratulated on their impressive achievement by Herbarium staff members at a special function to mark the occasion.

The number of specimens is now 450,000, so the volunteer effort has contributed more than 20 per cent of the total number of specimens that make up the State collection.

An essential task of any herbarium is the painstaking fixing of each pressed specimen to a special card. At the CALM Herbarium, the task is largely carried out by a team of trained volunteers.

Each plant specimen chosen for mounting is different, some have stout stems, some are prickly some are huge; all need to be secured to the special

by Neville
Marchant

large card which makes a herbarium sheet.

The specimen mounter needs to be careful in arranging the specimen on the sheet so as not to obscure an important plant part and has to ensure that the correct label is affixed.

Collections Manager Chang Sha Fang and technician Phil Spencer as well as other staff have trained selected volunteers so that the Volunteer Mounting Team is highly efficient as well as productive.

There is still a great deal of contact with staff who are ultimately responsible for the standard of specimen preparation, but the volunteer program has provided an estimated \$300,000 worth of support.

This is what it would

have cost the Herbarium to employ more staff to mount 100,000 specimens.

Because of the help received, the curation staff has been able to incorporate many more specimens into the State collection than would have been possible otherwise.

It also means that curation staff has been able to process a long-standing backlog of specimens, and these have now been incorporated into the Herbarium for scientists to use.

The Herbarium has a highly successful volunteer program. Many of the helpers are professional people in their own right, some have retired and others are seeking jobs.

They all have one thing in common; they have an interest in WA plants, and while they work, they are learning more about the fascinating flora of WA.



Daphne Edinger gleefully prepares to plunge her knife deep into the cake, as she joins fellow volunteers and their 'minder', CALM technician Phil Spencer in celebrating the 100 thousandth plant specimen mounting. From left rear they are: Chris Hollister, Nora Best and Phil. Front Pat Angel, Daphne and Gwen Abbott.

Photo by Verna Costello