

Ribbens, Eric. 2007. The Wired Herbarium #3: TROPICOS and IPNI. In The Vasculum (newsletter of the Society for Herbarium Curators), July 2007.

In the last issue I reviewed the USDA Plants Database website, which presents a synonymized list of plants found in the United States. Where can you go to find information about species that are not found in the United States? Two very useful websites are the Missouri Botanical garden's TROPICOS and the International Plant Names Index (IPNI). As with the USDA Plants Database, both sites are driven by a search engine that allows the user to hunt for a particular taxon or set of taxa, and both sites provide nomenclatural information. IPNI also lets the user search for Authors or for Publications, and TROPICOS also searches a set of digitized specimens.

Searching TROPICOS (<http://mobot.mobot.org/W3T/Search/vast.html>) is fast, and produces name, authority, family, synonyms, etc. TROPICOS is considerably more conservative regarding synonyms than the USDA Plants Database is.

IPNI has a more complex set of search choices, including an option to only search for hybrids. IPNI combines the Index Kewensis, the Gray Card Index, and the Australian Plant Names Index, and has added some other indexes plus frequent updates.

Occasionally I've hit missing information on TROPICOS. For example, searching for *Salvia rutilans* does not produce an authority. IPNI, which combines information from several databases, often identifies multiple citations, frequently with different authorities. For example, *Salvia abyssinica* turns up four citations, each with a different set of authorities and a different bibliographic source. Since sources are given, species can be tracked down, but it can be confusing.

However, each site efficiently accesses an incredible amount of information. I use them frequently, and I suspect many of you do as well.

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I want to review an herbarium webpage for the January 2008 issue, and I need your input. First, what do you think a good herbarium website should do? Since I'm a relatively nontraditional herbarium website user, I'd greatly appreciate comments from you: what do you use herbarium websites for? What kinds of information or presentations do you find particularly helpful or particularly annoying? Why do you go to herbarium websites? Second, although I can of course select an herbarium website more or less at random to review, I'd rather have some nominations. Do you maintain a website that you think should be reviewed? Is there an herbarium website that you have found particularly memorable? Please email any input you have regarding either of these questions to me at [E-Ribbens@wiu.edu](mailto:E-Ribbens@wiu.edu). Thanks!