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DSU facility offers the public a unique look at plant life



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Delaware State University's Claude E. Phillips Herbarium houses thousands of plant samples for research and education.

Delmarva's lone herbarium houses thousands of botanical samples

By MICHELE BESSO
The News Journal

DOVER — Rosalynne Sommers works very slowly, using glue, miniature paperweights and gentle pressure to mount a clipping of Cyperaceae sedge, a type of flowering plant, onto a paper mat.

Once it's secured, the specimen is labeled and stored alphabetically in one of more than 70 climate-controlled cabinets

in the Claude E. Phillips Herbarium at Delaware State University in Dover. The herbarium is a resource for documentation, research, education and identification of unknown plants.

The two-level, 16,000-square-foot facility houses an extensive collection of more than 150,000 pressed and dried plant samples — including mosses, fungi, algae and fossils — from Delaware and around the world.

Sommers, a sophomore art major and a paid student worker, prepares up to 20 horticulture specimens a week for storage.

"I'm doing it because I need a job, and it's a really nice job," Sommers said. "It's relaxing, artistic and you can come in during a busy day and escape in here. The first week, they give you easy plants and you figure it out as you go along. It's not that hard."

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