

The Siebold Herbarium

National Herbarium of the Netherlands, Universiteit Leiden Branch



- Important resource for the history of early Japanese botany
- Largest collection of Japanese plants at that time
- Including many type specimens

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The Siebold Herbarium

The Siebold Herbarium is the earliest herbarium collection of this extent from Japan. P.F. von Siebold (1796-1866) brought together *c.* 12,000 specimens including many items from Japanese students and collaborators. Publication on the Japanese flora at that time was impossible without consulting the Japanese collections in Leiden, consequently this collection contains many type specimens. These Japanese collections are still subject of ongoing research. From a source of new species it now has become important in the study of the history of early Japanese botany.

The Siebold collection

The Leiden branch of the National Herbarium of the Netherlands (NHN), formerly the Rijksherbarium, houses many important botanical collections. One of these is a 19th century collection of Japanese plants, generally referred to as the “Siebold” collection. The plants belonging to this collection were gathered during a period in which Japan was still closed to all western nations except the Netherlands. A considerable number of the *c.* 12,000 specimens, which include phanerogams as well as cryptogams, were brought together by the famous German physician P.F. von Siebold (1796—1866). In 1823 the Government of the Dutch East Indies sent him to Japan as the physician of the factory on Deshima, an artificial island in the Bay of Nagasaki. He also had the task of collecting information about the various aspects of Japan. Von Siebold thought himself very lucky to go to Japan. Almost nothing new had been learned about the Japanese flora since the publication of Thunberg’s *Flora Japonica* in 1784. For Von Siebold this meant that there were many opportunities to make new discoveries. Even before he arrived on Deshima, he planned to describe the fauna and flora of Japan as completely as possible and to collect all the species to be found there. In 1823 he wrote that he would not leave Japan before he had collected all the material needed for the preparation of a *Flora Japonica* (Schmid, 1942).

Von Siebold’s collaborators

Von Siebold not only collected specimens himself, but also obtained many specimens from his Japanese students and collaborators, such as Mizutani Sugerok (1779—1833), Ohkôchi Zonshin (1796—1882), Ito Keiske (1803—1901), and Katsuragawa Hoken (1797—1844), one of the physicians to the Shogun. There are also Japanese plants present which, although not collected by Von Siebold personally, are counted as being part of the “Siebold” collection in the widest sense. These include plants collected by Von Siebold’s assistant and successor on Deshima, H. Bürger (1806?—1858) who stayed on Deshima in the period 1825—1832 (and for some months in 1834); and the dried plants assembled for Von Siebold after his own departure.



Illustration from: *Flora Japonica* Nuphar Japonicum Rubotinctorium, painting by Keiga

Von Siebold’s society

In 1839 Von Siebold established a society in the Netherlands for the introduction and cultivation of Japanese plants. To collect living plants for this society, Von Siebold sent J. Pierot (1812—1841) to Japan in 1840. Pierot, however, died on his way there, but while on Java (together with G. Bisschop) he bought a collection of dried Japanese plants that may have been collected by Bürger. C.J. Textor (1816—x) succeeded Pierot as a collector for Von Siebold’s society in 1843. The dried plants he collected were sent directly to the Rijksherbarium.

O.G.J. Mohnike

The first physician on Deshima after Von Siebold was O.G.J. Mohnike (1813—1887). He stayed in Japan from 1848 to 1851. As the official in charge of the natural sciences he oversaw the study and collection of natural history materials. Although there is no direct relationship between the plants collected by Mohnike and Von Siebold, these have been added to the collection for the sake of completeness.

Largest collection of Japanese plants

The plants Von Siebold collected during his stay in Japan (1823—1829) were not the first Japanese plants to have reached Europe. E. Kämpfer (1651—1716) and

C.P. Thunberg (1743—1828) had collected specimens in Japan in the 17th and 18th century respectively. However, the herbarium Von Siebold assembled was the largest collection of Japanese plants at that time. According to a catalogue of plant names it covered some 2,200—2,300 species of phanerogams (Hoffmann & Schultes, 1853). Publication on the Japanese flora at that time was impossible without consulting the Japanese collections in Leiden. The specimens belonging to the Siebold collection are now kept separate. Before that they were incorporated in the general collections. From time to time still specimens are (re)discovered.

Publications on the Japanese collections (*Flora Japonica*)

By 1829 Von Siebold had published on the Japanese Hydrangeas, a genus in which he was very interested (Von Siebold, 1829). Together with the German botanist J.G. Zuccarini (1797—1848) he started the publication of his *Flora Japonica* in 1835. After the death of Zuccarini in 1848 this project came to a halt. Also with Zuccarini, Von Siebold described many new genera and species based on the herbarium collections (Von Siebold & Zuccarini, 1843; 1845; 1846). The last two publications were intended to be as complete a representation of the Japanese flora as possible.

F.A.W. Miquel (1811—1871), director of the Rijksherbarium from 1862, was also very interested in the Japanese collections. After Von Siebold died in 1866, he published some new parts of the *Flora Japonica*. He also published on the Japanese collections in the *Annales Musei Botanici Lugduno-Batavi* (1863—1870), in which he described many new taxa, and in his *Prolusio florum Japonicarum* (1866—1867). The latter is mainly a reprint of the *Annales*. In 1871 W.F.R. Suringar (1832—1898) succeeded Miquel as director of the Rijksherbarium. He was especially interested in the Japanese algae and published on them in the *Algae Japonica* (1870) and in the first two volumes of the *Musée botanique de Leide* (1871—1875).

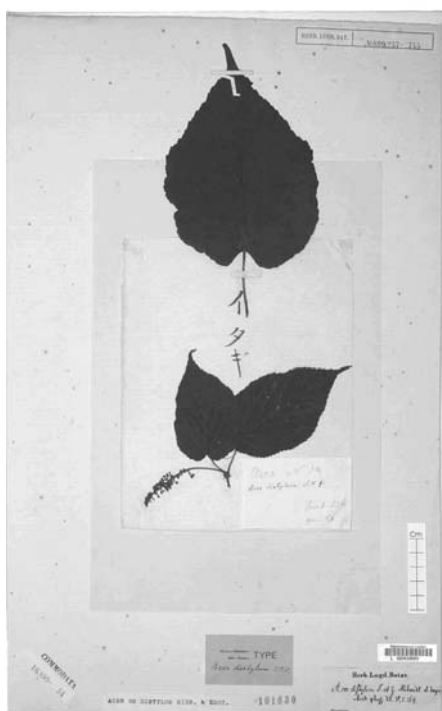
Type specimens

The “Siebold” collection therefore contains many type specimens —

specimens to which a certain plant name will always be linked. Many of the type specimens of plants named by Von Siebold, or by Von Siebold and Zuccarini, can be found here.

Furthermore, many names created by Miquel and Suringar are based on this collection. However, the Japanese collections were not only studied in the past. In recent times they have been the subject of ongoing research. From a source of new species they have become important in the study of the history of early Japanese botany. Since 1995 T. Yamaguchi and N. Kato have visited the NHN many times to study the Japanese collections. The results of their extensive studies have been published amongst others in the Japanese periodical *Calamus* (Yamaguchi, 1997; 1998; 2003).

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Type Specimen of *Acer distylum* Sieb. & Zucc.

Cover illustration: Type Specimen *Rhododendron metternichii* Sieb. & Zucc.

Literature

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Miquel, F.A.W., 1863—1869. *Annales musei botanici Lugduno-Batavi*. VI Vols. Amsterdam.
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IDC no.: BT-163 7 mf.

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IDC no.: 5741 28 mf.

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General information

| | |
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| Scope | Approx. 12,000 specimens |
| Number of fiche | 553 |
| Size of fiche | 105 x 148 mm. |
| Film type | Positive silver halide |
| Reduction ratio | Varies depending on the size of the original |
| Internal finding aids | Eye-legible headers on every fiche |

External finding aids
Printed and online (www.idc.nl) guide prepared by Gerard Thijssse, National Herbarium Nederland, Universiteit Leiden Branch

Siebold, P.F. von & Zuccarini, J.G., 1846. *Florae Japonicae familiae naturales adjectis generum et specierum exemplis selectis. Sectio altera. Plantae dicotyledoneae et monocotyledonae*. In: Abhandlungen der mathematisch-physikalischen Classe der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 4(3): 123—240.

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Suringar, W.F.R., 1871—1872. *Illustration des espèces et formes du genre d'Algues Gloiopeltis* J.Ag. Musée botanique de Leide.

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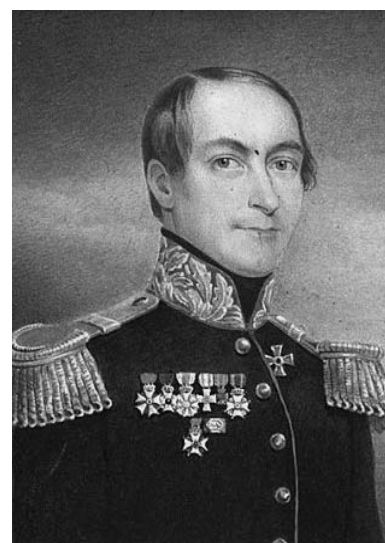
Yamaguchi, T., 1997. *Von Siebold and Japanese Botany*. Calanus Special number I.

Yamaguchi, T., 1998. *The material of the species dealt in Von Siebold's Flora Japonica I*. Calanus Special number II.

Yamaguchi, T., 2003. *How did Von Siebold accumulate botanical specimens in Japan?* Calanus Special number V.

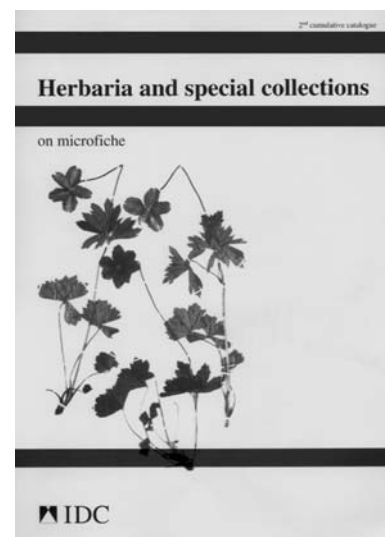
VON SIEBOLD HERBARIUM BOTANISCHE STAATSSAMMLUNG MUNCHEN

After Zuccarini's death his herbarium was bought by the Munich University. It contains many Japanese plants he had on loan from the Leiden herbarium, and plants sent him by Von Siebold personally. These among others have been used for the preparations of the *Flora Japonica*. When Zuccarini visited Leiden to select the plants for preparation of the second volume of the *Flora Japonica*, he was able to buy a collection of Japanese plants, probably collected by Bürger. For some reason not all the plants Zuccarini had on loan were returned to Leiden. These plants are now kept in the Botanische Staatssammlung (M) and will be also published by IDC in the near future.



HISTORICAL HERBARIA AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Each of the 44 herbaria represents a unique, major source of research material in its own right. Eight special collections have been added: three collections of botanical drawings (The östlund Collection of drawings of Mexican orchids, the Schott Collection of drawings of Araceae and Stephani's Species Hepaticarum); the algal illustrations collected by F.E. Fritsch and his successors; a collection of over 3,000 photographs of pollinaria; botanical clippings of Pius Font y Quer, Carlos Pau, Frère Sennen and Moriz Willkomm; and collections of correspondence by botanists Linnaeus and Thunberg.



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