

# Vandal Explorer Series: Documenting Northern Idaho Mountain Plants

## Student Botanist Creates a Complete Record of Plant Diversity Across Selkirk Mountains



### The Plants of the Selkirks

Watch Harpo Faust, a University of Idaho master's student, collect plants from across North Idaho's Selkirk Mountains. Faust is building on collections of past botanists to obtain a comprehensive catalogue of the regional plant life of the Selkirks.

Harpo Faust embarked on a treasure hunt across North Idaho's Selkirk Mountains for her master's work. During summer 2019 and 2020, she combed the Selkirk peaks and valleys for every vascular plant species that grows in the area. Faust's project builds on the collections of past botanists to obtain a comprehensive catalogue of the regional plant life of the Selkirks, which hosts a unique combination of floristic influences from boreal Canada, the Rocky Mountains, the Columbia Basin and the Pacific Northwest. Faust was joined in the field by her advisor, Professor [David Tank](#), who is the director of the [Stillinger Herbarium](#) in the [Department of Biological Sciences](#); Ben Legler; collections manager of the Stillinger Herbarium, and Moose Griswold, a research assistant. A more comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of the mountain plant life will help land managers make local conservation decisions and improve our understanding of species distributions. U of I's Stillinger Herbarium will house the study's complete collection of plants. Faust lives in Moscow and is studying botany in the [College of Science](#).

Harpo Faust hiked — and even canoed — the Selkirks to collect all the regional plants.

Faust used a digging tool to collect the whole plant, in this case a glacier lily.

Faust and Legler press plants between newspaper to flatten the samples and transport them to the laboratory.

Faust was joined by Leroy the Botany Dog in the field.

*Article by [Leigh Cooper](#), University Communications and Marketing.*

*Photos courtesy of Harpo Faust, College of Science.*

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