

BOTANIST BOX

Vasculum

The botanist box or vasculum (latin word for small vessel) is a hard container widely used by botanists, since the 18th century, to preserve plant specimens collected during scientific expeditions. This kind of box was used to transport the plant without compression, in a cool and moist environment, until arriving to the laboratory, where it was prepared for the herbarium.

This cylindrical shaped box was traditionally made of tin or even lacquered iron, although in the beginning of the 20th century some were already made of aluminum foil. The botanist box was usually held horizontally with the aid of a leather belt, in order to preserve the shape and structure of the harvested plants. The existence of two separate compartments of different sizes was helpful for the collection of seeds or small and very fragile specimens.

The exposed botanist box presents two lids: a lateral one, of rectangular shape, and another on the top, with an oval shape. The latter would both give access to the smaller chamber, and allow to remove the plants from the larger compartment without folding. A damp cloth was placed in the larger compartment in order to keep the humidity inside the box.

This box was probably acquired in the late 40's of the 20th century for the use of the botanists of this Museum in their field work.

