



## New Herbarium Gives Forestry Students Tangible Examples

By Karen Brasher

Alexis Londo is a mother of two, a doctoral-degree candidate and research associate at Mississippi State University. But, wait, there's more—much more.

In 2003, Londo was asked to teach dendrology—the identification of trees—in the College of Forest Resources after the course instructor went on an academic sabbatical.

In addition to taking quickly to her new classroom duties, the Bellaire, Texas, native began work on a much-needed herbarium for Thompson Hall, the college's home on Stone Boulevard.

"I started the herbarium so students would have tangible examples to compare and contrast," explained the doctoral student in forest biometrics. "While there is another herbarium on campus, it is used primarily by faculty researchers."

The MSU Department of Biology also maintains a herbarium, which is an important tool in the scientific study of plants by faculty researchers, so its scientific integrity must be maintained. The Thompson Hall facility, however, is a different type of resource.

"The materials in the Thompson Hall herbarium are intended to be handled and will have to be replaced from time to time," Londo said.

While it provides assistance particularly for those in forestry and wildlife and fisheries, the Thompson Hall herbarium is available for all students and faculty.

Thanks to Londo's tireless efforts, the collection now contains samples and information sheets on more than 400 herba-

ceous and woody species of plants from Mississippi and other parts of the United States. Each sheet identifies the species of plant, locations where it occurs and a leaf sample. The herbarium also contains more than 40 examples of North American conifer cones.

"Despite all we have, the herbarium remains a work-in-process," observed Londo, who earlier received bachelor's and master's degrees in forestry from Stephen F. Austin State University.

She said wildlife and fisheries associate professor Jeanne Jones currently is adding more herbaceous species to the collection. With the assistance of forest products professor Mike Barnes, these will be complemented by samples illustrating the macro and micro characteristics of various woods, she added.

Londo's work to develop the herbarium is in addition to her staff duties with the Department of Forestry's measurements and spatial technologies working group. There, she provides technical assistance to five faculty members while supporting teaching and research efforts for both undergraduate and graduate students.

"If someone has a question about spatial technology, forest inventory or, of course, tree identification, they can go to Alexis for answers in all three areas," said Department Head Jim Shepard, one of her biggest fans.

"With all she does in both her assigned and adopted roles, she truly deserves to be called 'a dynamo,'" he added.



Above: Student workers Lindsay Anne Murphy, left, and Rebecca Horton, center, assist Alexis Londo with herbarium displays. (Photo by Jim Lytle)