

*Field Guide to
Herbarium Obscura:
Shadow of Nature*

**FIELD GUIDE
TO
HERBARIUM OBSCURA: SHADOW OF NATURE**

By Nancy E. Rivera

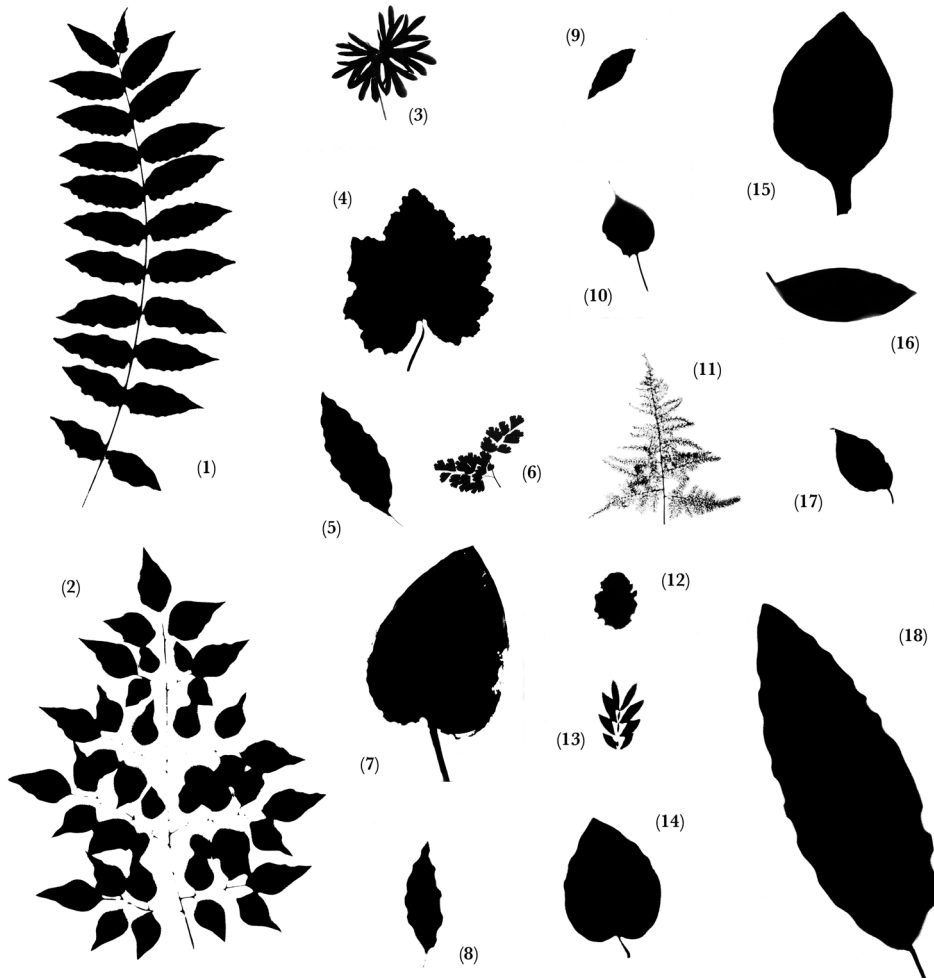
Cover page calligraphy by Skyler Chubak

INTRUCTION.

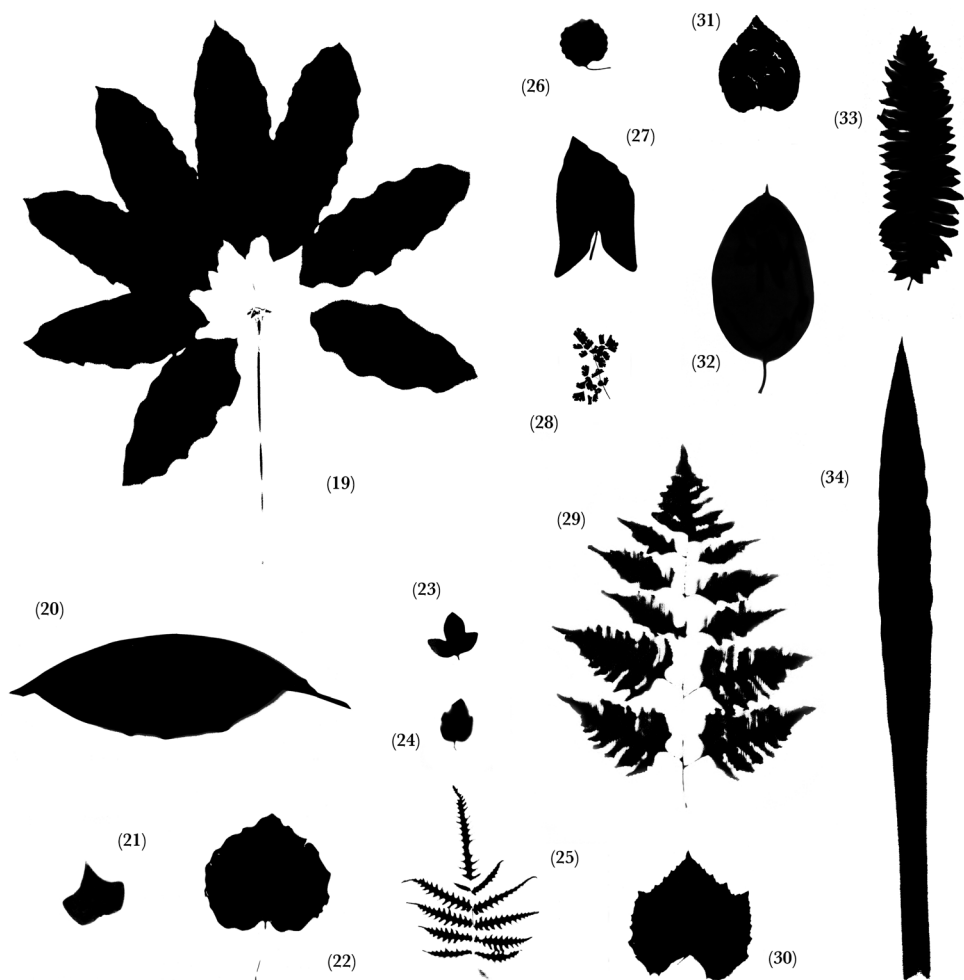
Nature is ephemeral, fragile, and wild. Over time, we have learned to tame and control it: We grow lawns, cultivate house-plants, and manufacture synthetic facsimiles of nature for aesthetic and ornamental purposes. In this way and more, we manipulate how we experience and understand it.

Leaves, aside from being ubiquitous, exhibit power by turning light into life. For centuries, we have collected, catalogued, and studied them because of our fascination with their diversity and their preponderance of forms. *Herbarium Obscura: Shadow of Nature* presents foliage as a material and a motif. In the space hangs a familiar natural sight: Obscuring the gallery wall is English ivy, a rampant, clinging evergreen vine known to escape from cultivated gardens and to invade nearby parks, forests and building façades. Additionally, a series of cyanotypes made from a variety of collected leaf specimens depicts shadows of the leaves' original forms. These pieces, in sum, explore the dichotomies between the natural and the artificial, remembrance and loss, and the mortal and the immortal.

Each unique leaf specimen comes from an environment where plant life is found, sold, or manufactured. Cyanotype is a photographic process that dates back to the mid 19th Century, popularized by amateur scientists looking for the most accurate way to record their botanical findings. I employ this photographic process for its scientific and historical context. Through my work, I have documented our contemporary landscape to subtly evince the liminal space between artifice and nature.



1. *Ailanthus altissima*, considered a noxious weed in the United States. Commonly found in neglected urban areas.
2. *Polystyrin ficus benjamina*, native to craft stores. Fabricated as home décor. Made in China.
3. *Unknown species*.
4. *Polystyrin heuchera*, a genus of herbaceous perpetual plants. Made in China.
5. *Polystyrin coleous*, looks and feels real to the touch. Made in China.
6. *Adiantum aethiopicum*, also known as the common maidenhair fern, a popular and well known ornamental plant.
7. *Hosta*, herbaceous perennial plants. Widely cultivated as shade-tolerant foliage plants.
8. *Polystyrin coleous*, see 5.
9. *Ficus benjamina*, popular houseplant due to its elegant growth.
10. *Epipremnum aureum*, an evergreen vine. Popular houseplant.
11. *Asparagus setaceus*, cultivated as an ornamental plant. Not a true fern, but has leaves that resemble one.
12. *Toxicodendron radicans*, commonly known as poison ivy. Not a true ivy.
13. *Zingiber zerumbet*, a perennial, found in tropical countries.
14. *Populus trichocarpa*, grown as an ornamental tree. Valued for its fast growth and scented foliage in spring.
15. *Textileria hosta*, a unique decorative specimen. Made in China.
16. *Spathiphyllum*, common houseplant. Often given as flowering gift plants.
17. *Epipremnum aureum*, a popular houseplant in temperate regions, has become naturalized in tropical/subtropical forests worldwide.
18. *Textileria canna auguste ferrier*, native to the tropical plant section in craft stores. Made in China.



19. *Schefflera arboricola*, commonly grown as a houseplant. Popular for its tolerance of neglect and poor growing conditions.

20. *Aspidistra elatior*, common houseplant. Grows in medium to low light, tolerant of neglect.

21. *Polystyryn hederia helix*, also known as English ivy. Perfect for adding a touch of greenery to the home. Made in China.

22. *Cercis canadensis*, grown in parks and gardens, with several cultivars being available.

23. *Polystyryn lonicera*, fabricated as decorative garden plants. Made in China.

24. *Polystyryn betula occidentalis*, a species of birch native to craft stores. Made in China.

25. *Phegopteris hexagonoptera*, a genus of forest ferns known collectively as the beech ferns.

26. *Textileria fittonia*, native to craft stores. Available year-round. Can thrive under any climate. Made in China.

27. *Polystyryn syngonium podophyllum*, distinct, heart-shaped leaves add a pleasant visual effect. Creates a gorgeous accent. Made in China.

28. *Adiantum aethiopicum*, also known as the common maidenhair fern, a popular and well known ornamental plant.

29. *Textileria rumohra adiantiformis*, lends a lush appeal when added to a bouquet. Made in China.

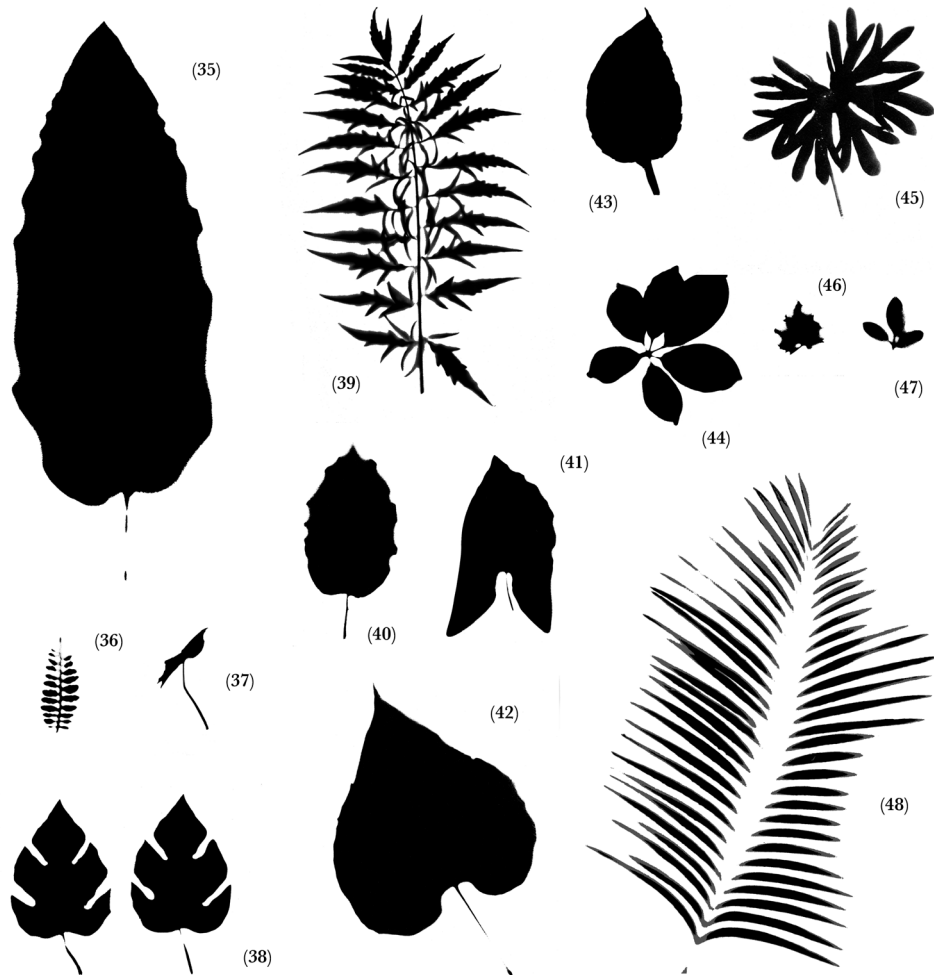
30. *Platanus occidentalis*, also known as American sycamore. Native to North America.

31. *Populus trichocarpa*, grown as an ornamental tree. Valued for its fast growth and scented foliage in spring.

32. *Ficus elastica*, grown around the world as an ornamental plant.

33. *Polystyryn nephrolepis exaltata*, realistic-looking fern. Often displayed in hanging baskets or similar conditions. Made in China.

34. *Sansevieria fasciata*, cultivated as a houseplant. Needs some shade and moderate water.



35. *Textilera canna auguste ferrier*, native to the tropical plant section in craft stores. Perpetual herbs. Made in China.

36. *Plasticus nephrolepis exaltata*, a species of fern. Often displayed in hanging baskets or similar conditions. Made in China.

37. *Syngonium podophyllum*, the most commonly cultivated species in the genus syngonium. Grown as a houseplant.

38. *Polystyryn monstera deliciosa*, commonly fabricated for interior decoration in public buildings and as a houseplant. Made in China.

39. *Polystyryn fruticosa*, a perennial dicot evergreen.

40. *Polystyryn epipremnum aureum*, popular decorative houseplant. Made in China.

41. *Polystyryn syngonium podophyllum*, distinct, heart-shaped leaves add a pleasant visual effect. Creates a gorgeous accent. Made in China.

42. *Fallopia japonica*, a large, herbaceous perennial plant. Can be found in 39 of the 50 United States.

43. *Hosta*, herbaceous perennial plants. Widely cultivated as shade-tolerant foliage plants.

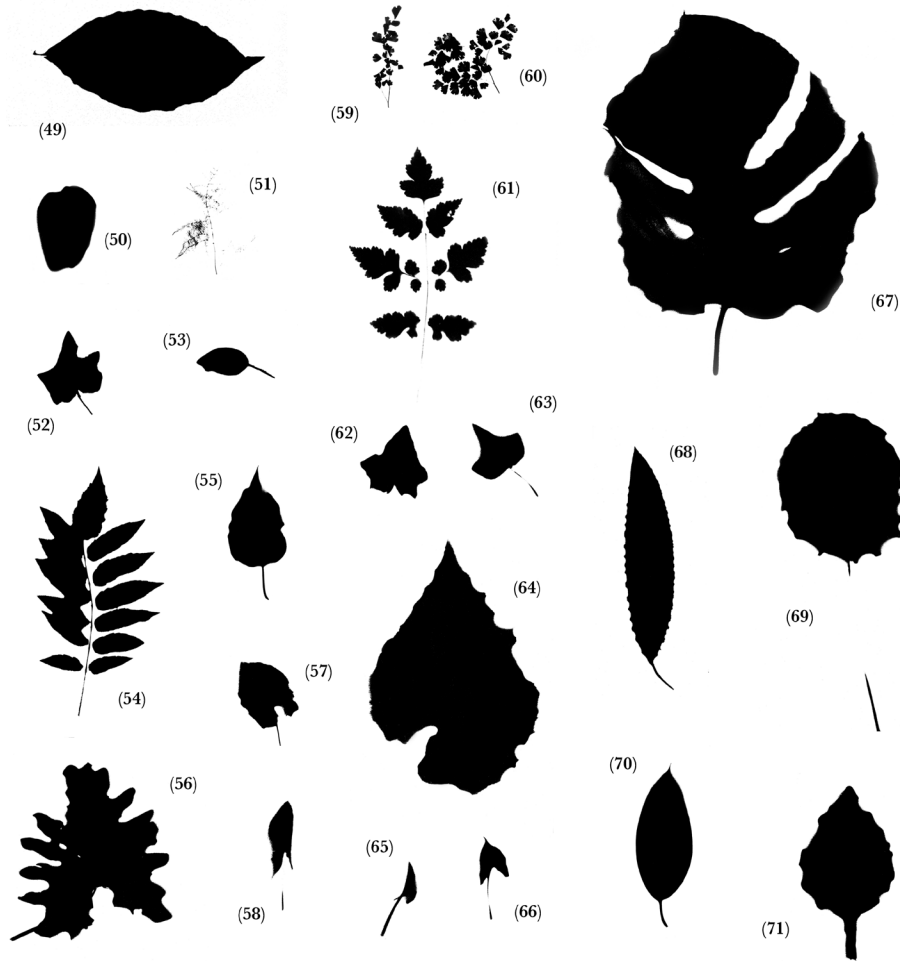
44. *Schefflera arboricola*, commonly grown as a houseplant, popular for its tolerance of neglect and poor growing conditions.

45. *Unkown species*.

46. *Polystyryn heuchera*, a genus of herbaceous perpetual plants. Made in China.

47. *Polystyryn lonicera*, fabricated as garden plants, can cover unsightly walls and outbuildings. Made in China.

48. *Plasticus archontophoenix alexandrae*, native to the tropical plant section in craft stores. Made in China. Ideal for home décor.



49. *Aglaonema*, lives in low-light conditions and are popular houseplants.
 50. *Polystyrin ficus lyrata*, popular decorative tree. Available seasonally.
 Made in China.

51. *Asparagus setaceus*, cultivated as an ornamental plant. Despite its common name, the plant is not a true fern, but has leaves that resemble one.
 52. *Hedera helix*, an evergreen climbing plant, considered a noxious weed. Can easily escape from cultivated gardens and invade nearby parks, forests and building façades.

53. *Textileria fittonia verschaffeltii*, native to the tropical plant section in craft stores. Made in China. Ideal for home décor.

54. *Cyrtomium falcatum*, a popular ornamental plant native to East Asia.

55. *Epipremnum aureum*, a popular houseplant in temperate regions, but has become naturalized in tropical/subtropical forests worldwide.

56. *Philodendron bipinnatifidum*, generally grown as ornamental and indoor plants. Can survive in dark places, but much prefer bright lights. (Specimen was found thriving under florescent lights).

57–58. *Syngonium podophyllum*, the most commonly cultivated species in the genus syngonium, grown as a houseplant.

59–60. *Adiantum aethiopicum*, also known as the common maidenhair fern, a popular and well known ornamental plant.

61. *Cystopteris fragilis*, can be found worldwide, generally in shady, moist areas.

62. *Hedera helix*, see 52.

63. *Polystyrinn hedera helix*, also known as English ivy. Perfect for adding a touch of greenery to the home. Made in China.

64. *Plasticus syngonium podophyllum*, commonly fabricated as a houseplant. Native to craft stores, available year-round.

65–66. *Syngonium podophyllum*, see 58–59.

67. *Monstera deliciosa*, commonly grown for interior decoration in public buildings and as a houseplant.

68. *Alternanthera dentata*, purple-ruby foliage that is almost black. Grown outdoors year-round.

69. *Plasticus nymphaea gigantea*, a species of perpetual aquatic herbaceous plant native to craft stores, available seasonally.

70. *Ficus elastica*, grown around the world as an ornamental plant.

71. *Textileria hosta*, a unique decorative specimen. Made in China.

