

Greetings,

I am a graduate student at UNC Greensboro working with Dr. Bruce Kirchoff on a new method of creating visual identification keys. You can learn about Dr. Kirchoff's previous work on this subject by following this link: <http://aobpla.oxfordjournals.org/content/2011/plr005>. I am extending this work by developing a way of automating key creation by incorporating information on visual similarity garnered from an on-line survey that I have developed.

I am writing because I need your help in order to investigate how botanists assess visual similarity in plant characteristics. My work uses a survey to assess the visual similarities between the leaves of different species of oak. The survey contains 75 questions, each consisting of two standardized pictures of leaves displayed side by side. You are asked to rate the visual similarity of the leaves with a sliding scale that will appear below the images. I will use the results of these aggregated similarity assessments to create a dendrogram, which will be used as the basis for creating the visual key. Each survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be stored under an anonymous ID. Neither Dr. Kirchoff nor I will have access to your real name or any information about you. If you choose to participate, please click on the following link: https://uncg.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bC55kug1UKDymZn.

The survey site will ask you to confirm your consent to participate before beginning the survey.

Thank you for helping with my work. With your help I plan to create and test a visual key to the oaks of the southeastern US. I expect this key to be more accurate and easier to use for both botanical novices and experts alike. If you have any further questions or want to be updated on the work, you may contact me via email at radellin@uncg.edu. I intend to post the results of my research to the listserv when it is published.

Best wishes,

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