

Science Educator: Tina Ayers  
Website: <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~ayers/>

About:

“My interests are in plant systematics, biogeography, and floristics. I teach graduate courses in all of these topics, as well, although only plant systematics is offered at the undergraduate level. Currently, I am completing a monograph of the genus *Lysipomia* (Campanulaceae), a genus of about 40 species endemic to the Andean alpine tundra.

“Additional projects include a molecular phylogenetic analysis of *Nemacladus*, in collaboration with Dr. Nancy Morin, systematics of *Cyphocarpus*, and systematics of *Lobelia* in Mexico and Central America. All of these studies involve gathering molecular sequence data from chloroplast or nuclear genomes, as well as collecting macro- and micromorphological data. I am also interested in floristics, especially in the southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico.

“My recent graduate students have completed floristic inventories of two areas in northern Arizona/southern Utah funded by the National Park Service. For more information on these studies visit the Deaver Herbarium site.”

This letter is a nomination for Dr. Tina Ayers, Associate Professor and Curator, Deaver Herbarium at Northern Arizona University. I am personally familiar with her role in science education, having taken two of her courses. Her course in Native Plants of Northern Arizona is a series of field trips throughout northern Arizona, enthusiastically attended by her students, which extend thousands of feet in vertical elevation and hundreds of miles horizontally, from the Mohave Desert to Winslow and the Sonoran Desert to the Inner Basin of the San Francisco Peaks. The students who take this course come away with a deep understanding of and ability to recognize important members of the northern Arizona flora. Even with her spot quizzes, attendance is near perfect and all participants are ready to go when the vans leave. If any course can be described as education and fun, this course (Bio 414) is it! Her course in plant taxonomy is a laboratory course in which students learn to "key" various plants in a variety of families and learn to recognize where on the planet they might be if given an unknown specimen. She instructs and mentors graduate students and collaborates on numerous research projects in plant systematics. Her influence on making serious botany interesting to undergraduate and graduate students alike has been very important in enhancing appreciation of all aspects of the regional natural environment. She is active as well in her own research projects among which is the study of *Lobelia* in Mexico and Central America. She has also been an important member of the board of the Arboretum at Flagstaff.