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Sem. Bot. at the University of Nebraska

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The Sem. Bot. (Seminarium Botanicum or Botanical Seminar) began in 1886 as an association of seven students (two Juniors, two Sophomores, and three Freshmen) at the University of Nebraska. They collected plants, campaigned against the “Lits and Philistines” (literary and classical studies), and controlled the Science Club and several debating societies. “Show me a Lit” was their rallying cry. Charles Bessey was a force in organizing and developing the Sem. Bot. This initial period ended in 1888.

The first formal meeting of the Sem. Bot occurred at 4 p.m. on October 11, 1888. Jared G. Smith read a paper on “The Genus *Buchloe* and its Relation to Other Genera of Grasses”. After his presentation, the members cross-examined the presenter on the paper. This initial session finally adjourned at 6 p.m., setting a pattern for such meetings of the Sem. Bot. Since the original members of the organization were going on to advanced study, discussions about the future of Sem. Bot. occurred from 1888 through 1890. By 1891, a consensus plan for Sem. Bot. was in place.

On November 21, 1891, an open meeting of the Sem. Bot. was convened. A new member was initiated, joining the seven original members. During the years 1891 through 1899, Sem. Bot. undertook several major projects. The botanical survey of Nebraska was initiated. The Flora of Nebraska was published. The organization created three degrees of membership (Candidatus, Novitius, and Ordinarius), each to be achieved through a series of examinations for the applicants. Symposia

were sponsored by Sem. Bot. Each of these symposia was announced six weeks in advance, to allow members to prepare by reading and discussion of the topics to be presented. Lecturers were invited to the University, and the lectures were printed at Sem. Bot.'s expense.

In 1906, the Sem. Bot. assumed its mature form, with organization of a Chapter. The functions of the original Sem. Bot. were absorbed by the Chapter. Several additional chapters were created, in Washington and in Florida.