

GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTING AND SUBMITTING PLANT SAMPLES FOR IDENTIFICATION

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Collecting Plant Samples

- Flowering/fruitleting samples are most diagnostic
- At the very least we need to see several whole leaves attached to a stem
- If the plant is badly infested or damaged by insects or disease, please try to find a relatively undamaged piece to send as a sample

Collecting Plant Samples

- To minimize wilting and defoliation, once you've collected the plant sample put it in a sealed plastic bag, and keep it out of the heat and direct sunlight until you are able to send it or press and dry it
- Bagged samples may be refrigerated until they can be shipped, but refrigerated samples that are subsequently subjected to high heat seem to rot very quickly!

You can help us to provide you with more accurate and timely IDs!

- Our ability to quickly identify a plant sample is dependent on
 - the type and quantity of plant material provided (*more is better!*)
 - the quality of the sample (*fresh & fertile is better!*)
 - information provided on the sample submission form



Sending Fresh Plant Samples

- Wrap in **dry** paper towels
- Put in a **sealed** plastic bag
- Attach the completed sample submission form to the bag with a rubber band, paper clip, or staple
- Mail **promptly** (overnight, next day, or priority)
- Time, air, light, temperature extremes, and excessive moisture all contribute to sample decomposition



Drying and Pressing Plant Samples to Submit for ID

- The objective is to spread out the plant and flatten it to reveal features that will help with ID
- If you don't have a plant press, you can spread out, arrange, and flatten the plant inside a folded piece of newspaper and then put a couple of heavy books on top
- Keep the pressed plant in a low humidity environment until it is dry
- Then secure the edges of the newspaper, place between two pieces of cardboard and attach the sample submission form, and mail in a box or large envelope



Please do not tape the plant to the newspaper or cardboard!



If you're not able to collect/obtain a good plant sample...

- Try to provide all of the requested info on the sample submission form in as much detail as possible
- Take some photos and send them along with the physical sample (or ask client to provide photos)
- Wait until the plant is larger and/or fertile

Information that facilitates (and ideally should accompany) all identification requests

- Where is the plant growing (**county**)? Detailed **locality data** is essential if we decide to press your sample to add to the herbarium.
- What is the **context** (residential landscape, commercial landscape, nursery, orchard, natural area, parking lot, roadside, etc.)?
- Is the plant **cultivated**, growing in the wild, a weed, or are you unsure?
- What is the **habit** of the plant (tree, shrub, vine, herb, other)?
- Is there any **sap** when the stem is cut (milky, clear, yellow, red)?
- If flowers or fruit are present, what **color** are they?
- What is the approximate **size and shape** of the fruit?
- Are the leaves, flowers, or fruit **fragrant**? Is the fragrance sweet, musky, spicy, resinous, minty, fecal, like rotted meat?