

Plant Collecting Guidelines

Checklist for specimen selection and preparation:

1. Collect only native or naturalized species from natural environments; avoid ornamental, horticultural, agriculturally grown plants. Try to collect fertile plants only (currently producing flower or fruit). Do not collect a plant if there are only a few like it in the area, take a picture instead. Collect as many identifying characteristics of the plant as you can (i.e. flowers, fruits, leaves, roots, etc.).
2. When filling your plant press, begin at the bottom and work up. This way you minimize disturbance of previously pressed plants. Place each plant in a single fold of newspaper on top of a blotter (larger newspapers such as The Wall Street Journal work best). Do not over stuff plant material into a press. Be neat. Make sure the plant fits nicely into the press. If needed, bend plants into a 'V' or 'N' shape before pressing. Parts that stick out won't dry properly and may get broken off. Remember, if your plant fits into your press it will fit onto a mounting sheet. After arranging your plant so that it fits neatly into the plant press, layer with a blotter, then cardboard and then another blotter before pressing the next plant. After arranging all specimens in the plant press, place the top on the press and secure down tightly with the fasteners.
3. Moldy, messy, moist, and/or inadequate specimens cannot be used. Before pressing, clean dirt from plant roots and try not to press very wet specimens. When pressing try to orient leaves so that you can see both upper and lower surfaces. Press flowers so the interior reproductive structures are visible (open faced). Pressing plants can actually be quite artistic, use your imagination and be neat.
4. Write the scientific name of the plant (if known) on the outside edge of the fold of newspaper. A brief note about location may also be very helpful. Record a personal collection number; this will greatly reduce potential confusion and mix-ups later in processing.
5. Plants must be dried for 3 days in a plant drier or for 5-7 days in a warm dry place (DO NOT place in an oven that is not specifically made for drying plants). After drying, carefully remove plants. Leave plants in the paper in which they were originally pressed.
6. Each specimen must be A) adequate, B) neatly pressed and dried, C) properly and correctly labeled.
7. Prepare temporary specimen labels (on 3" x 5" note cards or in your collection notebook) for those you have identified. Include as much information as you can, location, habitat, associated species, soil type, etc.
8. Finished labels, neatly typed (12pt font, approx. 3.5" x 4") should be loosely placed inside the newspapers with the appropriate specimens. Be sure to include multiple labels if you have collected enough material for multiple mounting sheets. DO NOT tape or glue down specimens or labels within the newspaper.
9. Specimens are now ready for Mounting.