

Pressing Plant Specimens

Preparing Herbarium Vouchers

December 2024

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Why are Vouchers Needed?

An herbarium specimen voucher is a sample of a plant that has been pressed and dried, along with accompanying information. Vouchers are retained by Herbaria to document research and floristic inventories. For example, a botanist studying the plants occurring in a park would want to have specimens vouchered as evidence that these plants were present. Vouchers are also used to aid in future plant identifications and to note the ranges and locations of plants, the habitats where a species has been found, and the periods when a species flowers and fruits. By preparing and submitting a plant specimen to a Herbarium, you contribute to our scientific knowledge about plants and our world.

Sampling & Pressing Specimens

- Obtain collection permits in advance.
- Do not harm the survival of endangered species or habitats. Harvest <5% of the biomass of a plant population.
- Gather enough plant material to fill a herbarium sheet (11.5" x 16.5").
- Include at least a stem with multiple leaves attached, and flowers or fruit. Include roots of herbaceous specimens.
- Take photographs of the fresh plants.
- Label each specimen with a unique number.
- Fold/bend long stems to fit sheet.
- Minimize overlap of plant parts.
- Use multiple sheets for large samples.
- Place small loose pieces in paper packet.
- Cut open flowers/fruits/stems/bulbs if bulky and/or to reveal the interior when mounted.
- Close plant press tightly to keep material flat.
- Store press in warm, low humidity area.

Materials Needed

- Field notebook and pen/pencil
- Plant press
- Newspaper or other folded paper for pressing
- Camera
- Phone for determining lat/lon location
- Envelopes/packets for storage of loose fruits

Information to Include with Specimen

- Specimen number, to be included on the pressing paper, field notebook, photograph labels, and other sample materials.
- Location where the sample was collected.
- Copies of collection permits, with applicable collection numbers noted.
- Field notes, including things you can't tell from the pressed sample, like:
 - Location details
 - Whether the plant is wild or cultivated
 - Habitat/other plants growing nearby
 - Frequency of occurrence
 - Plant habit (tree, shrub, vine, herb)
 - Height
 - Color
 - Smell
 - Bark appearance
- Collector(s) name(s) and date of collection
- Collection number (e.g., 1, 2, 3)

Sending the Sample to the Herbarium

Before mailing your specimens, make sure they are fully dried, organized, and labeled. Complete a submission form for each sample. Forms and instructions are available online at: edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/SR024