

Collecting a sample for or Identification/Herbarium

What to collect

There are two basic points to remember:

- 1 Include all available parts of the plant (i.e. all reproductive structures such as fruits, flowers and buds, as well as bark, leaves, juvenile or coppice foliage, etc)
 - 2 Include detailed notes about the plant and its surroundings e.g. in shade, riverbank, wetland. Get a GPS point if possible
- If collecting a herbarium sample it is a good idea to collect two samples of the plant, one for dissection and identification, and another for the herbarium specimen. Keep one sample in the fridge for identification and press the other.
 - While in the field, always record details of the plant in your field notebook. Do not rely on your memory! This information will later be included on the specimen label.
 - Before venturing out in to the field always consider the laws and ethics governing the collection of plant material. Get permission from the landowner before collecting and ensure you are not taking a threatened plant.

The ideal specimen for identification and research is an entire plant, roots and all. **Leaves alone are virtually useless.** You should try to collect as much of the plant that is practical and possible given the size of the plant and which parts are most informative.

- » Try to include flowers, fruits (even if they are woody) and leaves when you collect your weed. Also include bark, seeds and roots of the weed if you can.
- » For weeds that are trees or shrubs take a small branch, collect flowers, fruits and seed and some bark, if possible.
- » For a small plant or grass, it is best to include the whole plant.
- » If the plant has underground runners, stems, bulbs or tubers, a sample of these should also be included. It may take several goes to collect all parts of the plant. Keep looking.

Tips

- A photo is a good reminder of the growth characteristic and plant surroundings
- Have plastic bags on hand while in the field for impromptu collections
- Take a pair of secateurs and gloves for prickly or woody plants
- Keep your sample refrigerated if it can't be identified immediately
- Take a pencil in case it rains or voice record the details for later reference.

(information sourced from: 1 The University of Melbourne Herbarium School of Botany website – Make your own Herbarium Specimens <http://www.botany.unimelb.edu.au/herbarium/files/MakeHerbSpec.pdf>

2 Weedbusters Making a weed collection: http://weedbusters.co.nz/weedbusters_in_schools/downloads/Weed%20collection.doc)