



Preparing and Sending Samples for Identification or Diagnosis to the WSU/Spokane County Master Gardener Plant Clinic

*Please follow the instructions below to submit samples to the Master Gardener Plant Clinic. Incomplete samples or forms may have to be returned for additional information. Include a daytime phone number so that a Master Gardener can call you with further questions, if necessary. Please allow **two to three working days** for a response.*

1. Prepare your sample according to the instructions on the form “How to Prepare Samples for Identification/Diagnosis” (following page). Bring in the freshest sample possible.
2. Bring your sample to the Extension Education Center, 222 N Havana Street (south of the fairgrounds). The Plant Clinic is open from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 9:00 am to 1 pm on Friday. Samples may also be dropped off at the main office from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. An after-hours drop box for small samples is available outside the south entrance.
3. It is recommended that Friday samples be delivered no later than 11:00 am. Dropping off samples late Friday may result in deterioration that could require a fresh sample.



How to Prepare Samples for Identification/Diagnosis

Preparing Insect Specimens for Identification

1. Carefully collect insect specimens and/or plant material associated with insect damage.
2. Bring as much of the affected plant material associated with the insect pest as possible.
3. Place insect in alcohol contained in either small vials or bottles with secured caps. 35mm film canisters leak, so tape lid and place in a plastic bag. If you do not have a supply of regular methyl or ethyl alcohol, rubbing alcohol may be used. This is easily obtained from any drugstore. DO NOT bring plant material in alcohol!!
4. Place large adult moths and butterflies cushioned in a box or jar with cotton to minimize damage.

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Preparing Plant Specimens for Disease Diagnosis

1. Select a plant specimen showing distinct disease symptoms. If it is not practical to bring the entire plant, try to bring several plants or plant parts that show the various stages of the problem: a plant showing the early stages of the disease, a plant that is severely affected, and a healthy plant, if available.
2. Dig up the entire plant where practical, including its root structure. Try not to pull the plant as any diseased roots will be left behind.
3. Tree diseases can best be diagnosed by evaluating the junction of diseased and healthy tissue. Include twigs or limbs just beginning to show symptoms, but still alive. Old, dead limbs are useless.
4. Wrap the roots in a plastic bag separate from the rest of the plant to prevent dirt from contaminating leaves and stems.
5. Place the entire sample in another plastic bag without additional moisture, as it also may cause contamination.

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Preparing Turf Samples for Disease Diagnosis

1. Cut the turf in squares approximately 4 inches across and as deep as the roots will hold soil. Leave the soil intact. DO NOT bring plugs from 1" diameter soil probes. Store samples in a refrigerator until ready to bring into Plant Clinic.
2. Bring three or four specimens each representing a different stage (healthy, slightly affected, and heavily damaged).

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Preparing Plant and Weed Identification Requests

Plants/weeds are identified in many ways. The most useful plant parts are flowers, fruits, leaves, buds, and young stems. Because some ornamental plants have many varieties, it may not be possible to determine the exact variety without the flower.

1. Collect as many plant parts as possible. Flowers, fruits/seeds, leaves, stems, buds and roots may aid in identification.
2. Place the plant specimen in a plastic bag along with a dry paper towel (don't add water) and seal.

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