

# How to Prepare Samples for Identification/Diagnosis

*Master Gardeners are available at the WSU Extension office on Mondays (9:00 am-12:00 pm) April through October. Please follow the instructions below to submit samples to Master Gardener Plant Clinics. Incomplete samples may have to be returned for additional information. Include a daytime phone number so that a Master Gardener can call you with further questions. Allow two to three working days for a response.*

**Please bring in the freshest sample possible to the WSU Extension office or Farmer's Market Plant Clinic.** Samples can be taken to Farmers Markets in Grant and Adams Counties where Master Gardeners are holding Plant Clinics. Plant Clinics at Farmers Markets in Moses Lake, Ephrata, Coulee Dam and Othello are open on some Saturdays during the summer months. Check the local hours. A Master Gardener will not always be available. Please call the Grant County Extension office (754-2011 ext. 4313) for further information.

## 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 associated with the pest as possible.
3. Place insect in alcohol contained in small vials or bottles with tight lids. **Don't** bring plant material in alcohol.
4. Bring adult moths or butterflies cushioned in a box or jar with cotton to minimize damage.
5. Store the sample in refrigerator if you can't bring it in immediately.

## Preparing Plant Specimens for Disease Diagnosis

1. Select a plant specimen showing distinct disease symptoms. Try to bring several plants or plant parts that show various stages of the problem: early stages, severely affected, and a healthy plant, if possible.
2. Dig up the entire plant where practical, including its root structure. If the plant is pulled up, you may leave behind the diseased roots.
3. Tree disease can best be diagnosed by evaluation of 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 roots in a separate plastic bag to prevent the dirt from contaminating leaves and stems.
5. Place the entire sample in another plastic bag without additional moisture because it also may cause contamination.

## 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. Store samples in the refrigerator until ready to bring in for diagnosis.
2. Bring in 3 or 4 samples representing different stages (healthy, slightly affected, heavily damaged).

## Preparing Plant and Weed Identification Requests

Plants and weeds can be 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.



Grant/Adams County

## Master Gardener Program

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EXTENSION

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