



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Genetics Laboratory
(NFGEL)

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GENERAL COLLECTION GUIDE FOR VEGETATIVE MATERIALS *SENDING MATERIAL UNDER DESICCATION*

(revised 6/2013)

IMPORTANT! Sample collectors are required to make contact with NFGEL staff **BEFORE** collections begin. Call (530) 622-1609 for orientation to collection procedures, Quality Assurance (QA) sampling, and equipment. Questions will gladly be answered. We want to help you make your project a success, and that means collections must be optimal!

COLLECTION AND PACKING:

The brand of desiccant to use to dry plant samples is critical. A good choice is "Flower Drying Art (TM)". Craft stores like Michael's carry it as well as some online retailers. It has a sand-like consistency, so essentially the entire leaf surface area is in contact with the silica, unlike the larger gauge desiccant sources.

Chose healthy leaf tissue for sampling (e.g., green, no wilt, chlorosis, or fungus). NFGEL staff will advise collectors on the appropriate amount of tissue per individual to sample for your project.

Place tissue into snack sized Ziploc bags, coin envelopes, or plastic tubes and add an appropriate quantity of the desiccant. NFGEL staff will advise collectors on the needed amount of desiccant relative to the amount of tissue collected and the size of the bag/envelope/vial used. Place a paper label inside the bag/envelope/vial and label the outside of the bag/envelope/vial with a Sharpie marker or other label. Permanent and redundant labeling is essential. Being very dry, the silica has a lot of charge/static associated with it and can make it difficult getting a seal with Ziploc bags. Therefore, if using Ziplocs, run your finger along the inside of each side of the seam to get a full seal. Once you get back to your office, lay out the bags flat and firm up the seals again. Ensure that the leaves are totally submerged in the silica and not bunched up or stuck together. Let samples sit overnight.

Pack for shipping. Securing samples will depend on the type of tissue, amount of tissue, and choice of sample container. For example, if using Ziploc bags, roll a group of sample bags together with the seam interior and rubber band the roll tightly. This way if a seam opens, some desiccant will be lost, but not the leaves. For organization, you may want to place all samples from a location into a gallon size Ziploc and seal/rubber band it tightly as well.

SHIPPING:

It is important to coordinate shipping of materials with NFGEL so that samples may be processed quickly upon arrival. **NEVER MAIL THE PACKAGE SO THAT IT ARRIVES AT THE LAB ON A FRIDAY OR THE DAY BEFORE A HOLIDAY.**

1. **SEND** by a quick and traceable delivery service. (Federal Express has the best delivery time for us, but UPS or U.S. Postal Overnight Service are fine). Send to:
USDA Forest Service - NFGEL
2480 Carson Road
Placerville, CA 95667
phone: 530-622-1609; fax: 530-622-2633
2. **MARK** on the outside of the package: "VEGETATIVE MATERIAL-DESICCATED"
3. **ENCLOSE** a packing list in the shipment. E-mail an electronic copy of sample identification information to NFGEL at vhipkins@fs.fed.us. We will reply when materials are received.
4. **CALL** NFGEL at (530) 622-1609 when material is shipped.

