



Plant Identification and Information Service ¹

N.H. Williams²

The Herbarium of the University of Florida maintains a plant identification and information service for the use of Extension personnel and the general public. The staff of the Herbarium will assist in providing such types of information as scientific names and authors for cultivated plants, weeds, and native species, their common names, range, dates of flowering, and possible human or animal toxicity.

The facilities of the Herbarium comprise a rather extensive taxonomic and general botanical library and a collection of nearly 400,000 preserved plant specimens, emphasizing the native and naturalized flora of the state and the plant species cultivated here, but also representing the flora of other areas. A large seed collection is maintained, permitting comparison identification of weed seeds and grain contaminants.

The following suggestions are intended to make the process of plant identification more efficient.

- All specimens should be routed through a local county cooperative extension office or another appropriate government agency.
- Unless special arrangement is made, do not send more than 5 specimens at a time, as storage and protection from insects cause problems that we are not equipped to handle.

- Specimens sent in should always be accompanied by IFAS Form 3100/03-2002.
- Please remove all dirt from roots.
- The best method to ship plants is by placing each specimen between a fold of newsprint and, if available, two pieces of cardboard. Each specimen should consist of a stem with attached leaves (and flowers and/or fruits, if present).
- **Never! Never enclose plants in plastic !**
- Be sure, if more than one plant is involved, that each specimen is separately numbered. These numbers will then be used for reference in our reply to you.
- Additional information about the plant is often critical in its identification. Include whatever comments or facts as to its source (especially whether it is cultivated), time of flowering, flower and/or fruit color, size, aroma, etc., that you think may be useful.
- Stand by to send additional material or information, should it be needed. Interesting specimens are often used to make permanent herbarium specimens, to ease the task of future identification for other people.

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- Please try to collect two of anything you send so that you can keep one for reference. Specimens sent in will not be returned as this is expensive and time-consuming.

IFAS Form 3100/03-2002 (Request for Plant Information) is available through EDIS at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/sr/sr02400.pdf>. For those unable to access the form on EDIS, one copy may be obtained from the Herbarium. This copy may be used as a master in your office for duplication as needed.

For more details and questions about the plant identification and information service provided by the Herbarium, contact:

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