

COLLECTING PLANT SAMPLES FOR DIAGNOSIS

Tree and shrub samples – should consist of a section of twig or branch, with leaves attached;
multiple samples that reflect different stages of the problem are helpful

Garden Crops and Annual Flowers – include entire plant with roots intact

Perennial Flowers and Ground Covers - try to dig portion of the affected part (with some roots)

Turfgrass – samples should be six to eight inches across and a couple of inches deep taken at the
interface between good and bad grass (with some of each)

Plant Identification – the presence of flowers makes weed or landscape plant identification easier

Insect Identification – insects with all body parts intact are easier to identify

Handling Insect Samples

Fleshy Caterpillars and “Worms” – place in a liquid tight container of rubbing alcohol

Moths and Butterflies – place in a freezer for 24 hours, then place in a crush-proof box cushioned
with tissue paper (never cotton – legs and antennae get tangled up in cotton and break off)

Hard Bodied Beetles – rubbing alcohol or freezing is acceptable

CHECKLIST OF PERTINENT INFORMATION

1. Kind of plant – variety?
2. How long has it been established in its present location? – has it recently been transplanted?
3. Exposure – N E S W - full sun or shade?
4. What is the nature of the soil? - tight clay, drainage (surface and internal)
5. When did the problem first appear this season – was a similar problem experienced last year?
6. Are any other plants in the vicinity similarly affected? Is there a walnut tree in the vicinity?
7. What part of the plant was affected first? Top or bottom, which side?
8. Has there been any construction near the plant? How recently? Have underground utilities been
Installed or replaced near the plant recently?
9. Is the soil around the plant subject to foot or vehicular traffic that could lead to compaction? Is
there pavement near the plant?
10. Have there been any weed killers used nearby? If so, what and when? Has salt or other ice
melting material been used nearby?
11. What are the symptoms that have appeared? How have they progressed? Is there any pattern of
development?
12. What program of watering and fertilizing has been followed?
13. Have there been any fungicides or insecticides used on the plant? If so, what and when?
14. Is there evidence of mechanical damage to the plant (e.g. lawn mower/nylon cord trimmer). Are
stem girdling roots visible at the base of the tree?
15. Are there any suspicious insects present? What do they look like?