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## Beginning a Herbarium

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A herbarium is a collection of dried plants preserved for comparison and study. It consists of plants, with their flowers, roots, leaves and seeds in a displayed state mounted on plain mounting sheets along with information about the plant and its habitat. A herbarium may be made to illustrate a particular botanical problem, to study the flora of a given region and to study variations in plant populations.

The necessary items for a beginner who wishes to increase his knowledge about plants include a trowel, plant press, corrugated board, mounting sheets, collecting sheets, wild-plant handbook, tape, glue.

A plant press can be made from two pieces of  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 17 x 12 inch plywood. Fastening straps can be tied to hold the boards together. Collecting sheets can be made from newspaper which has been folded to be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  x  $16\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

The preparation of a herbarium can be divided into two parts: the collection of the specimens, and the preservation and proper identification of the specimens.

The herbarium has its beginning in the field where suitable specimens are located and obtained. A specimen is chosen which has all of its leaves, stems, and preferably its flowers or seeds intact. The plant is removed from the ground by digging around the plant at a safe distance so that the roots remain uninjured. It is often necessary to dig relatively deep so that the tap roots of some specimens can be obtained.

Data such as the locality, height of plant, mode of flowering, color of the flowers, etc., should be recorded before or immediately after collecting the specimen.

When the plant has been removed from the ground, it should be placed in a collecting sheet until the time for mounting it.

When ready to press the specimen; i.e., to dry it, the specimen is placed while it is still in the collecting sheet between two pieces of blotter paper. The plant should be arranged as neatly as possible. Each specimen should have each of the parts of the plant represented; at least one flower should be visible, and both sides of the leaf should be displayed. If the root is not too large it should be displayed in its entirety, otherwise a portion of it will suffice. If any part of the plant is too thick for the press it should be split at this time.

The blotters containing the plants should be placed inside the plant press and the straps of the press should be tightened. Weights up to about ten pounds may be placed on the press. The press is then placed in a warm place for twenty-four hours. At the end of this time new blotters should replace the old ones.

Most specimens should not need to have more than three changings of blotters. The total time for drying the specimen should not exceed ten days. When each specimen has been dried it should be properly identified and pertinent data should be recorded.

The specimen is then placed in a centered position on standard mounting paper and is taped to the mounting sheet. The mounted specimen can then be covered with cellophane sheeting for further protection.

A label, which was made when the specimen was identified, should be placed in the lower right-hand corner of the sheet. This label should contain as much information as possible regarding the specimen, its scientific and common name, the collector's name and other data of collection.

"People and Timber," a review of America's timber resources, is now available in single copies from The Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. This booklet is a concise summary of the current timber situation.