



## Why Were My Specimens Rejected?

*“The purpose of our instruction is to teach the art of creating museum-quality specimens upon which to base further scientific study.”*

### Tips on Getting Started

All the plant specimens that are submitted to us are carefully examined by our staff, and the identities are verified (and if necessary, corrected) by a professional botanist. Here are some suggestions that will help you to collect the best possible, archival quality specimens, and avoid having the botanist reject your submissions.

- Start gradually. Especially if you are learning to collect plant specimens for the first time, bring in the first 10 or 12 plants you collect, so that we can go over them with you and give you feedback early in the process. That way, if you have the procedures down correctly, you can keep on collecting with confidence. If there happen to be any problems with your technique, we can work on that together before you expend a lot of field time that may end up causing you undue frustration.
- Read up before you go. We have written detailed instructions to help you learn how to properly collect plants, record field data, and submit specimens. They can be found on the website ([www.sdplantatlas.org](http://www.sdplantatlas.org)) in the form of printable handouts or as answers to Frequently Asked Questions. Please read these over before you begin collecting.
- Ask for help. Call us at 619.255.0298 or send an email to [plantatlas@sdnhm.org](mailto:plantatlas@sdnhm.org) to ask for help. You can make an appointment to come in to the Herbarium to look at finished plant specimens so you can see what the final product is supposed to look like.

### Most Common Reasons Why Specimens Are Rejected

Occasionally, we may have to reject a specimen that has been submitted to us. These are some common reasons why the botanist may find a submitted plant specimen unidentifiable, or inadequate:



1. No Index Number was written on the newspaper that the specimen was wrapped in so there was no way to link the specimen with the data or data label. The Index Number consists of your assigned login initials, a # mark, and your unique collection number (for example, mh1#27 or jg2#347).

2. No fruit or flowers were provided along with the rest of the plant. Reproductive parts are usually required to verify the identity of the species, and they make the specimen complete.
3. Only leaves (or only fruit or only flowers) of an herbaceous plant were submitted, without including the rest of the plant. Leaves or flowers alone are not sufficient (and the roots of grasses or small herbs are useful for positive identification).
4. The specimens were moldy (i.e., not dried sufficiently and/or newspaper was not changed regularly during drying) or were damaged by insects during storage.
5. The specimens were taped or glued down to the paper (or otherwise mounted).
6. There was not enough plant material for a good quality herbarium sheet. If the plants are tiny, several must be collected to provide enough material to be useful to scientists.



7. There was too much plant material sticking out beyond the plant press. Pressed plant material must fit onto a standard 11 x 17 inch herbarium sheet or the specimen cannot be mounted (you must also leave sufficient space for the specimen label to fit at bottom right of the sheet).
8. The specimen was broken or damaged beyond repair and/or is not “museum-quality”.
9. The plant was not well pressed (e.g., not spread out to show flowers and fruit clearly, and/or some leaves were not turned over to show the underside; or too much plant material was collected and it was all stuck together so features couldn't be clearly seen).
10. The data were entered but no corresponding specimen was submitted (e.g., either the newspaper with the Index Number was empty or the specimen was not in the group brought in).
11. The specimen was submitted but no data were entered into the online data entry form beforehand. You must enter the data online first, before bringing in the plant specimens, so that we can print out the specimen labels.
12. The plant was a horticultural species, not a naturalized plant species (i.e., it was growing in a garden, was planted by someone, and/or was on irrigation).
13. The plant was parasitic and you neglected to include a sample of the host plant that it was growing on.