

APPENDIX 13

COLLECTING AND PRESSING PLANTS

The purpose of collecting and pressing plants is to save them for future identification. To collect and press plant specimens, you will need a digging tool and a plant press.

- You can make a plant press from an old newspaper, cardboard and a piece of rope.
- A digging tool. A shovel or a geologist's hammer or work fine. Garden trowels are not as good.
- Old newspaper. Tear each double sheet of newspaper in half. If you use a tabloid newspaper, do not tear the pages in half. You will need one sheet for each plant specimen.
- 5-10 pieces of corrugated cardboard each 15 inches by 22 inches. You can cut up cardboard boxes from the food store. Cut the cardboard so the corrugations run short-wise rather than long-wise along the cardboard pieces. Single-wall paperboard, as in cereal boxes, will not work as well as corrugated cardboard.
- A six-foot length of rope or bailer twine or a bungee cord.

To collect and press plant specimens, follow these steps:

1. Select plants with flowers and fruits if possible. Or collect one specimen with flowers and another with fruits.
2. Dig plants from the ground so you collect the roots. Some plants can be identified only if you have the roots. Gently remove pieces of soil from the excavated plant.
3. Place one specimen on a sheet of newspaper and spread out the specimen so the leaves and flowers overlap as little as possible. If the specimens are small, you can fit several of them on a single sheet of newspaper. Don't mix different species on the same sheet of newspaper.
4. Write the date, location, elevation and your name on the outside of the sheet of newspaper with a pencil or a permanent marker. Regular ink may run and smear. If you think you know the name of the plant, write it, too, followed by a question mark.
5. Fold the piece of newspaper along the existing crease and lay it on two pieces of cardboard.
6. Cover the newspaper with two more pieces of cardboard and secure the bundle with a length of rope or twine or bungee cord.
7. If you collect more specimens, disassemble the plant press and add more specimens separated by single sheets of cardboard. If you collect more than about 25 specimens, make another plant press.
8. When you are finished collecting plants, tie the plant press together securely with a length of rope or twine. Keep the press as flat and as tight as possible.
9. Place the press in a warm place such as in direct sunlight or in a car with the windows rolled up for one or two days. Place the press with the long side down to allow the moisture to escape by travelling up the corrugations and out of the press.

When plants are dry, they will keep indefinitely if they are protected from insect or rodent damage. You minimize insect damage by placing the pressed plants in a plastic bag along with a mothball.

