

How to Submit Insect Specimens for Identification

1. Fill out a [Request for Insect Identification](#) form. The information on the form will speed our work and increase our confidence in the diagnosis.
2. Be sure the insect is in sound condition; we cannot identify moldy, crushed insects. Prepare your specimens as follows:
 - a. **ALL INSECTS EXCEPT BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS**
Place in a vial or other tightly-capped container filled with rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol or ethanol (grain alcohol such as vodka). DO NOT send specimens in water (your specimen will decay in transit) or in formaldehyde or any other preservatives except alcohol.
 - b. **BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS**
(and alternatively, large beetles, bees & wasps, flies, other hard-bodied insects)
Submit as dead, dry specimens inside crush-proof containers. Gently rest the specimen on Kleenex; loose specimens break in transit. Do not use cotton because insects stick to the fibers and cannot be removed without breakage; likewise, do not tape specimens to sheets of paper.
3. Never send living insects:
 - a. Kill insects by placing overnight in a freezer inside a zip-lock bag OR kill via fumigation with ethyl acetate
 - b. NOTE: ethyl acetate is an ingredient in some fingernail polish removers, check labels for local products. A few drops on a crumpled-up paper towel inside a tightly lidded glass jar should kill most insects within 15 minutes. Do NOT use plastic containers because the ethyl acetate can dissolve plastic; avoid letting the insect directly contact the ethyl acetate (add another dry paper towel inside the jar) because it often discolors the specimen.
4. **PLANT SPECIMENS** or other commodities showing insect damage symptoms
 - a. Place between several sheets of paper toweling (to absorb moisture) inside a zip-lock bag or other suitable container. It is usually best to also include suspect insect specimens with plants because damage alone may not be diagnostic for a specific insect.
5. When possible, always send more than one insect/plant specimen.