

# Soil, Plant and Pest Center

## Instructions for Collecting and Packing Insects for Identification

February 2025

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The Soil, Plant and Pest Center's Plant Diagnostic Lab provides identification of insect plant pests.

### Submitting an Insect Sample

Insect samples should be sent with a completed submission sheet. It is important to relay relevant information using the submission sheet. Include the location where the insect was found, if the insect was found indoors or outdoors if the insect was found on a plant (if so, then what plant) and approximately how many insects were present if there were multiple.

### Collecting an Insect Sample

There are several methods that can be used to catch insects. Use glue boards or yellow sticky traps designed for insects. Glue boards should be placed where the pests are active (Figure 1). Yellow sticky traps can be placed near insect activity on plants. (Figure 2). Yellow sticky traps may not catch insect crawling on stalks of plants. Wrapping tape around a stem or branch, with the sticky side facing out, may help detect those.



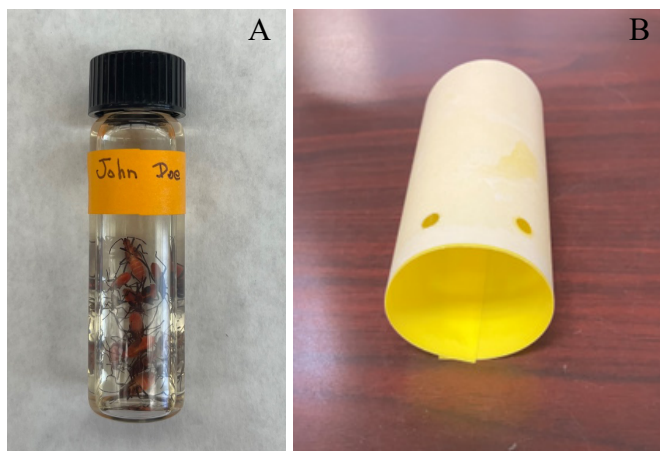
Figure 1. Glue board placed in active insect area.



Figure 2. Yellow sticky traps placed near or on plants with active insect activity.

Specimens also can be collected and placed in any clear plastic or glass container. Specimens should be placed in a clear vial of propylene glycol with a label or tape with your name on the sample (Figure 3A). You can contact your county Extension office to see if they have vials on hand. Greater than or equal to 70 percent ethanol-based hand sanitizer also may be used to preserve insects in place of propylene glycol, but it has shipping constraints as it is considered flammable. Inform USPS or your shipping company that you are shipping ethanol, so they can help you choose the correct route. Soft-bodied insects (e.g. aphids, caterpillars, maggots, etc.) should be stored in propylene glycol as they can degrade rapidly.

No live specimens should be submitted, as they could escape and prevent identification. If one does not have access to vials and propylene glycol or hand sanitizer, then freezing an insect will kill it and keep it intact. Insects can be killed by placing them in the freezer. The length of time to death in a freezer varies by insect and can range from a few hours to five days (or more).



*Figure 3. Insects placed in a vial with propylene glycol (A); Rolled up sticky trap for shipment so it does not stick to itself (B).*

## **Mailing an Insect Sample**

When shipping insects for identification, it is important to package samples securely. Glue boards and sticky traps should be individually placed in a clear, plastic bag. Protect the sticky trap from sticking to itself. This can be done by rolling it into a cylinder (Figure 3B).

Insects submitted in vials should have the vials wrapped in bubble wrap and placed in a properly sized box.

Any extra space inside the box should be filled with packing material to prevent movement and damage of the sample (Figure 4). The completed submission form with, either check or online order information, also should be placed inside the box.



*Figure 4. Packing insects into a shipping container.*



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