

idea corner

Field Sampling Kit for Agents

In North Carolina, a modern laboratory, staffed by land-grant faculty and students, diagnoses plant problems from samples submitted by agents in 100 counties. Careful sample collection, storage, and shipment with thorough descriptive information are essential to accurate diagnoses with minimum effort and frustration.

During two months as a student trainee assigned to a county staff, I relied heavily on the bag of sampling equipment described and pictured here. This portable kit evolved from experience with earlier, less suitable sampling kits.

Equipment assembled in the kit enabled fresh collection and preservation of specimens ranging from root samples

of annual field crops to small branches of injured trees. Materials in the kit were easy to keep orderly and locate when needed. The whole kit was lightweight and comfortably worn while scouting fields or trekking into wooded property in search of samples. The kit was taken on one client visit made on a bicycle.

Saving time, effort, and confusion in sample handling, the kit projected a professional image to clients and was an educational tool in the field. It certainly helped boost confidence for this fledgling Extension worker.

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Plant disorder field sampling kit: waistbelt pack sold in sporting goods and hiking stores, folding pen knife, pruning shears, garden trowel, 17 power magnifier, pencils, small note pad, sawed-off clipboard and clinic report forms, plastic bags and twist ties, numbered plastic 35 mm film cartridge containers for insects, small paperback field guides for pest identification and client instruction (also used to press seedling weed samples), and Extension Teletip and other Extension brochures to give clients.