

# La Trobe University Herbarium – Users’ Guide 2023

## **Collecting and lodging voucher and other specimens in the La Trobe University Herbarium**

Voucher specimens are vital to ensure the scientific robustness of any botanical research (see the article “Why Vouchers Matter”). A major role of university herbaria is to hold these vouchers so that they are available indefinitely. The La Trobe University Herbarium (LTB) is part of the collective of Australian university herbaria and is represented on the Council of Heads of Australian Herbaria (CHAH). We regularly contribute collections data to The Australasian Virtual Herbarium (AVH). We aim to actively expand our collection, based mostly on research being undertaken in department. Herbarium specimens, including vouchers, should be prepared to the highest possible standards – easy to get right, but also easy to get wrong. In order to make sure new specimens are of an acceptable standard these guidelines should be followed. Questions and requests for individual training or advice are welcome, and should be directed to Alison.



**The following guidelines MUST be followed if you are planning to lodge specimens in the herbarium (which you are strongly encouraged to do).**

**Collecting:**

Herbarium specimens are only useful as long as they are traceable. That means recording all the collecting details in notebooks as you go; recording detailed locality information; recording other notes on habit and habitat as appropriate; giving every collection an individual, sequential collecting number; and keeping your collecting books for future reference. Alison can provide you with a tailored collecting book to make data entry easy.

**Pressing, Drying and Freezing:**

Make sure specimens are fertile where possible. Please carefully press and fully dry specimens. Your press must be kept tight and dried as quickly as possible. A press-drying cabinet is available in the herbarium lab.

Once fully dried, and before preparing for lodging in the herbarium specimens must be frozen for at least a week to kill any insects that may be present. Even if you cannot see them, tiny insects such as thrips can destroy a specimen if this is not done. It is a good idea to do this immediately to avoid damage to your specimens. Bag your bundled specimens, label with name and date and place in the herbarium chest freezer.

**Mounting:**

Specimens must be mounted on proper herbarium card, which is available in the herbarium lab. Please use gummed paper tape or if this is not practical, PVA glue (tape is preferable in most cases - see Alison for supplies). Fragment packets are also available. If you are not sure the best way to mount your specimens, please ask Alison for advice. Good guidelines are also available on

<http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/science/information-and-resources/national-herbarium-of-victoria/preparing-herbarium-specimens>

If you will not be mounting specimens yourself, please provide them in the pressing newspaper, clearly labelled with a paper tag, or on the newspaper with AT LEAST your collecting number.

**Labelling:**

All new specimens will be entered into the database. Labels are printed directly from there. You do NOT need to provide labels.

**Databasing:**

All new specimens must now be databased. Our database uses “Specify” and is based on the database used at and developed by MEL (The National Herbarium of Victoria).

Databasing is managed by entering all your collecting information into an Excel spreadsheet. It is essential that you use the spreadsheet provided (on Teams) and follow the user guide exactly. This may seem laborious, but in the long run it will save a LOT of time. Data must be HISCOM compliant or they cannot be accepted.

Once your spreadsheet is ready, please send it to Alison (or upload to Teams) and she will import it for you. Please do not attempt to use the database directly. (If you wish to search the database, you can access collecting data via the AVH, or ask Alison to run a query)

When publishing your research, you will be able to cite LTB numbers for databased vouchers and the information will be also made available on the AVH.

**Filing:**

Make sure you do not file anything directly into the herbarium. New specimens must be Frozen -20°C for at least a week and databased.

*Once both these things have been done, and you have checked with Alison....*

Put a flimsy around each sheet (or sheets if one collection is mounted on more than one sheet). File in the appropriate grey folder. If a folder does not exist for your taxon, please make a new one. Label it as for the other folders, using ONLY black waterproof ink.

**Vouchers for other herbaria.**

Your collecting permit may require you to send your vouchers to the relevant state herbarium. This is often known as sending specimens “on exchange”.

Duplicates: Most herbaria prefer to receive duplicate exchange material unmounted, but with either electronic data in a spreadsheet – or in the case of LTB duplicates, printed labels which we will provide. It is important that specimens are frozen before sending. Postage should be handled by Alison in the herbarium .

Any questions – just ask!

Thanks. Alison.