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Medicinal Plant Collection and Voucher Specimens

Experiment 14 - Practical Notes

Name: _____ Roll no.: _____ Date: _____

Aim

To document an authorised medicinal-garden visit, identify plant material and prepare a traceable voucher record.

Principle

A voucher preserves material and collection information so that an identification can be checked later. Field observations supplement laboratory study, but ethical collection, correct authentication and traceable labels are necessary. A photograph alone may not show every character needed for botanical identification.

Requirements

- Authorised garden visit, notebook, camera where permitted and plant-identification support.
- Labels, paper and press materials approved for the specimen type.
- Collect only material permitted by the site and educator.

Procedure

1. Plan the visit

Confirm access, collection permission and any protected-species restrictions. Define which plants and organs will be studied.

2. Record in the field

Assign a unique collection identifier. Record date, location, habitat, plant habit and visible flowers, fruits and leaf arrangement.

3. Collect appropriately

Use an authorised representative portion; do not damage a plant unnecessarily. If collection is not allowed, record an image-based observation and its limitation.

4. Prepare the specimen

Arrange permitted material to preserve diagnostic parts and dry using the institution's method. Succulent or bulky material may need a specialised preparation rather than ordinary pressing.

5. Authenticate and label

Have the identity checked by the designated botanist or educator. Label botanical name, family, collector, identifier, date, locality and examined part.

6. Archive

Link the voucher or authorised photograph to the practical record. Retain the identification date and any later correction.

Introduction to Pharmacognosy

Observations and Record

Field	Record	Verification
Collection identifier / date	_____	_____
Locality / habit / part	_____	_____
Botanical name / authenticator	_____	_____

Worked Example

The numbers below are illustrative; enter your own observations in the record.

- Illustrative label: FirstHope-Tulsi-01; collection date ____; authorised garden locality ____; botanical identity *Ocimum tenuiflorum*; family Lamiaceae; collector ____; identified by ____.
- If 12 plants are observed but only 3 authorised vouchers collected, report both numbers accurately. Do not present photographs as pressed specimens.

Result

The visit documented ____ plants. ____ authorised vouchers and ____ image records were linked to authenticated identities and field notes.

Precautions

- Do not collect protected, rare or restricted plants without the required permission.
- Do not taste field material or assume a local name establishes identity.
- Preserve enough collection information for future checking and avoid mixing material from different plants.

Viva Questions and Answers

1. Why prepare a voucher?

It preserves evidence that supports later verification of the botanical identity.

2. Why record flowers or fruits?

Reproductive structures often help distinguish similar species.

3. What should be done when collection is prohibited?

Document authorised observation or photography and state that no specimen was collected.

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