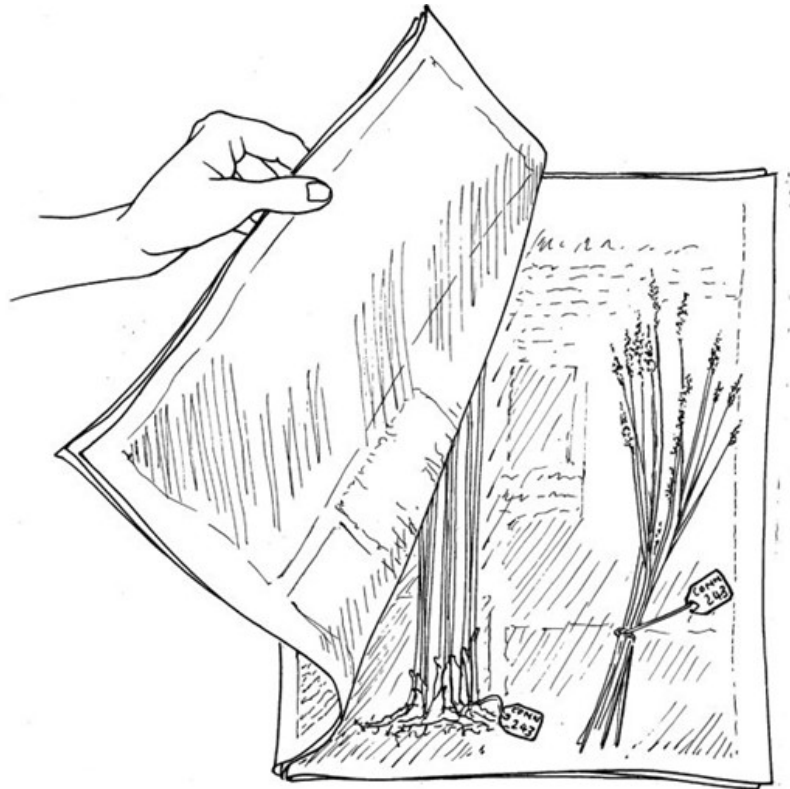


Figure 11.3.



Plant specimen inserted into folded newspaper or special drying paper with good absorbing properties. All specimens of the collections must be labelled with the collector's name and collection number.

11.5.1 The plant press

p. 270 A plant press consists of two strong, rigid lattice frames, made either of wood or of metal that is slightly larger than a standard herbarium sheet (Fig. 11.4). The botanical specimens are enclosed in drying paper. Newspaper is usually used because it is inexpensive, normally plentiful, and has adequate absorptive properties. Place the specimen in one folded sheet of newspaper and then enclose this in another folded sheet of newspaper that covers the opening of the first (Fig. 11.4). In this way, the specimen is more or less held within the two sheets. Corrugated cardboard or metal sheets (Nichols and St John 1918; Stevens 1926) are often used as ventilators to allow airflow across and between the specimens to assist the drying process. The press is usually held together and tightened by two expandable straps or by small ropes (Fig. 11.4). Polyurethane foam is also useful to maintain more or less even pressure on bulky specimens (Chmielewski and Ringius 1986).

Attention should be given to the pressing process: once a specimen is pressed and dried, its overall shape cannot be readily altered without damaging the material. Therefore, position specimens in such a manner so that the different features are clearly visible. Leaves should show both surfaces, so make sure that some leaves have their upper (adaxial) surface showing while the lower (abaxial) surface of other leaves face the opposite way. Likewise, turn some flowers so that both sides are visible when pressed. Spread the lobes of leaves, flowering and fruiting structures, and flower parts so as to show the shape and arrangement of these features more clearly. Arrange each specimen within the press so as to minimize any damage to other collections. Reduce the bulk of specimens with large fruits, thick stems, or underground parts by splitting or cutting away sections. The number of leaves, flowers, and fruits can be reduced if they obscure important features—but always leave sufficient material to make it clear that something has been removed.