

How to Send Plant Samples to the Lab

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4/12/2026

Recently we noticed that several of our foundation shrubs were sick. I gathered one-foot-long branches from the Otto Luyken Laurels (*Prunus laurocerasus*), the Japanese Thornless Hollies (*Ilex crenata*), and two plastic baggies of soil to send to the Virginia Cooperative Extension Lab. I completed two Plant Diagnostic forms, one for each variety of shrub, which gave them more details. The cost was \$70 or \$35 for each shrub variety. I mailed out the box, which cost \$11 in postage, early in the week so that the plant material would be viable by the time the lab received the box. Five days later the lab emailed me and requested photos of the shrubs.

Within a few days they emailed their diagnosis. They suspected we were using a copper Shot Hole treatment that was defoliating the Laurels! They instructed to only use fungicides that state on the label “for use on Cherry Laurels”. As for the Hollies, the Insect Lab found living Japanese Maple (yes, Maple) Scale on the branches and Black Root Rot in soil. They recommended an insecticide for the scale and a fungal drench for the rot.

My wish in sharing this story is to encourage the public to make use of the Lab for plant disease and insect diagnosis! While it cost us \$81 to do this process it was far less than if we had to buy five new shrubs.....Knowledge is power!



Photo by Rebecca Crow

Resources:

<https://spes.vt.edu/affiliated/plant-disease-clinic/submitting-samples.html>