

ISU Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic



Digital Photography for Insect Diagnosis

We can identify many insects with a picture. Pictures are free and easy to submit.

Here are tips to help send better pictures.

1. Fill the frame
 - Get as close to the specimen as possible with the camera.
2. Work with dead or chilled insects
 - Place live insects in the freezer for 15 minutes before taking the picture. They will be immobile for a few minutes before they warm up and resume moving about. Freezing overnight will kill the insect. Take the chilled/dead insect out of the bag or bottle before photographing it.
3. Use plenty of light
 - Take photographs in a brightly lit room, next to a window or outdoors.
4. Focus, focus, focus
 - Make sure the object wanting to be seen is clear.
 - To focus a cell phone camera, often simply tapping the screen will adjust the focus automatically. For standard point and shoot cameras, push the capture button down half-way, most cameras will then focus.
5. Include a size-reference
 - Put a coin, pencil, ruler or yardstick (depending on size) next to the specimen in the photograph.
6. Take several pictures (digital film is free!) but send only the best 1 or 2
7. Take a top and a bottom shot
8. Attach the image file to an email message
9. Include basic information about the insect in the message

Provide the background information from the insect identification form bit.ly/PIDC_0033.

- Where when, what it is doing, how many, what would you like to know?

10. Send message and images to insects@iastate.edu
11. Keep the insect
 - If we can't identify it from your photo, we may ask you to send it in.
12. Don't apologize
 - We're all in this together and insect photography is difficult (they are so small!).
13. Practice and patience
 - Pictures will get better with practice.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

PLANT and INSECT Diagnostic Clinic

By Lina Rodriguez Salamanca, Ed Zaworski, and Laura Jesse
327 Bessey Hall, Iowa State University, Ames
pidc@iastate.edu

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