

Quality Photo Tips

Taking a photograph may not always be possible, but it is extremely valuable. Here are some tips for taking good quality photographs that will allow the pros to properly identify the species.

Overall Tips

- Include something with a standard size for scale, such as a ruler, pen, or coin. This is especially helpful for identifying smaller organisms.
- Avoid photographs with other plants or animals in the background. Try using a solid, dark background (notebook, binder, clipboard, etc.) to provide good contrast.
- Take a few photographs and send along the best ones.



Lighting Tips



- Light from above or the side is best.
- Indirect sunlight is ideal. Direct sunlight is often too strong (left). You can try shading the subject to get softer indirect light (right).
- If the camera flash is too strong, try using a flashlight for better lighting.
- You can diffuse light for a better shot by taping a bit of vellum or 1-2 layers of tissue over the light source.



Insect Tips

- Try to take photographs of the entire insect from above, below, and any distinctive markings or features.
- Photographs of the damage done by the insect (ex: bore holes in trees, chewed-up leaves) also help to identify the species. Including information with the report, like where you found it, what it was doing, and how many you saw, can help with identification.

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Plant Tips

When taking photographs of different plant parts, it helps to focus on just one part per picture in order to ensure high quality photos of each part of the plant, including the following:

- Entire plant
- Twig showing the leaf arrangement
- Leaf close-up
- Flowers or fruits if present
- Leaf buds if present; helpful during the winter when leaves are absent)

Note other characteristics in your report:

- Is there fuzzy hair or are there thorns anywhere on the plant?
- Was it growing in sun or shade, a wet or dry area?
- How big was the plant (including estimates of the sizes of the plant, leaf, flower, seed, fruit, thorns etc.)?

Plant Diseases

- Take a few photos, starting with the big picture (the entire landscape or plant)
- Move closer with each picture until you capture the symptoms of concern, such as leaf blights or visible pathogen structures (such as mushrooms)

Example Photographs



Poor:

- Subject is blurry
- Dimly lit
- Busy background



Poor:

- Busy background
- Plain background



Good:

- Focused
- Nice lighting