

Digital Photography for Plant Problem Diagnosis, Mushroom or Plant ID

Digital images of plants, plant problems and mushrooms can be very useful for diagnosis and identification. Digital pictures are free and easy to submit. Here tips to help you send better pictures.

1. Get different perspectives
 - a. Try to get a variety of pictures
 - b. Take pictures of the whole plant or mushroom
 - c. Take close up pictures of disease symptoms or other small features on a plant or mushroom
2. Make sure the lighting is right
3. Make sure that the features of the plant, mushroom or the plant disease are in full light, as shadows can sometimes obscure your specimen (what you want to be seen)
4. Focus, focus, focus.
 - a. Make sure the specimen (plant, plant symptoms or mushroom) you want to be seen is clear
 - b. To focus a cell phone camera, you will often time simply need to tap the screen, and the focus will adjust automatically. For standard point and shoot cameras, if you push the capture button down half-way, most cameras will then focus
5. Include a size reference.
 - a. Place a coin, pencil, ruler or yardstick (depending on size) next to the specimen in your photograph
6. Take several pictures (digital film is free!) but send only the best one or two.
7. For mushrooms take a picture of the top and a bottom of the cap as well as the stem.
8. Attach your image file to an email message. Send your digital files attached to an email to pidc@iastate.edu. If your sample is associated with a physical sample make sure to include in the subject the submitter last name, crop and sample submission date (MM/DD/YY). Example: Smith-maple-05/20/15.
9. Include basic information about the subject of your photo in your message
 - b. Provide the background information about the plant or mushroom.
 - c. Double check, did you include: where it is growing, when you noticed symptoms, how many plants you have, any other details.
10. Don't get rid of any specimen material.
11. If we can't identify your plant problem from the photo, we may need you to send us a sample.

Don't apologize. We're all in this together and photography is difficult. Practice and patience. Your pictures will get better with practice.

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