

TAKING PLANT PHOTOS FOR IDENTIFICATION

Identifying plants can be challenging and even more so from photos. For many grasses and sedges identification from photos is impossible because microscopic features often determine the difference between species. For most plants a single photo is usually not enough for positive identification. To increase the chances of having your photo identified thus making it useable for the EIS Plant Information System, consider the following:

1. Photos **must** be in focus – this is not negotiable.
2. The plant/feature you are trying to show should be taken so that it fills the frame.



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3. The sun should be behind or to the left or right of the photographer; never take photos against the sun or bright light. In very bright sunlight it is often better to shade the plant/plant part when taking a photo, but then make sure the entire photo frame is shaded.



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4. Choose a representative individual/plant part to photograph, not one with odd appearance. Wilted, dried, discoloured, damaged specimens should be avoided.

- If at all possible, chose an individual plant that is free-standing, not mixed in with other plants. If there is no such plant, try to gently untangle plants to show the individual you are photographing more clearly.



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better, not perfect but best under the circumstances

- Sterile plants, those without flowers or fruit, are mostly not identifiable with acceptable accuracy.
- Take a photo of the entire plant in its surroundings. Plants can often be identified by the environment in which they grow, like e.g. in a pan, on a river bank, in calcrete soil.
- Take a photo of the leaves, including their attachment to the stalk (showing alternate or opposite arrangement for instance). If there is a visible difference between the upper and lower surface of the leaf, try to turn a leaf around to show both surfaces in one picture or take separate photos of the upper and lower surface. Be aware that some plants, especially trees, have large, divided (pinnate) leaves consisting of many leaflets (e.g. Moringa) – take a picture of the entire leaf too and not just a leaflet.



- If present, take a picture of the flower, as close-up as your camera allows, but not cutting off any parts of the flower. For some flowers it is good to have a picture of the “face” of the flower as well as from the side, to show e.g. the calyx, the flower tube, different colour. When flowers are arranged in an inflorescence (a spike, raceme, umbel etc.) take a photos of the entire inflorescence too.



10. If present, take a picture of the fruit/seed. The same, as for flowers, applies here.

11. For trees and large shrubs take a photo of the bark.

12. Take photo/s of any other feature that catches your eye, like thorns, spines, prickles.

In the real world it is not always possible to achieve all of the above – most plants for instance do not bear flowers and fruit at the same time – but the more you get right, the better the chances are of getting the plant identified and included in your count for The Competition.