

Kansas State University Extension Entomology Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, Extension Personnel & Homeowners

Department of Entomology
123 West Waters Hall
K-State Research and Extension
Manhattan, Kansas 66506
785-532-5891
<http://blogs.k-state.edu/kansasbugs/>
<http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/extension>



May 3, 2024, No. 7

Learning Corner

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LEARNING CORNER

Strong Suit: Card Deck helps to Teach Weed Identification

Agronomists, farmers, Extension agents and ag students now have a new resource created by the Kansas State University IPM team available to help them better identify thirteen common Kansas weeds.

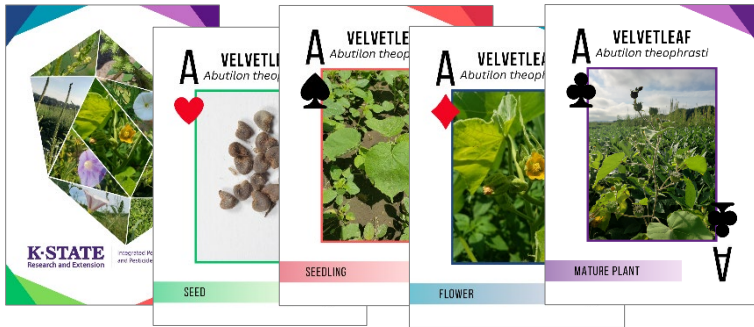
Frannie Miller, Pesticide Safety and IPM coordinator and Sarah Lancaster, Agronomy Extension Weed Specialist came up with the idea of designing a playing card deck after the previous IPM card deck was such a success. The card deck provides an innovative medium to teach identification skills in an interactive manner and a way to see the different growth stages of the plant.

Each suit in the deck provides a visual representation of the seed, seedling, flower and mature plant for each featured weed common in Ag production. The booklet provides a description for each weed featured in the card deck.

Card decks cost \$10 each and may be ordered online at <https://commerce.cashnet.com/IPMKSU>. Select IPM Card Decks and then Weed Identification Card Deck and fill out the requested information. Get yours while they last!

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Frannie Miller – Pesticide Safety and IPM Coordinator

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DIAGNOSTIC CORNER: KANSAS INSECT ID AND PEST SOLUTIONS

Specimen Photography Tips: The Importance of Focus and Lighting

The advancement of cameras on cellphones and other mobile devices has made it possible to capture high quality images of insects and other arthropods quickly and with ease. However, as we've all likely experienced, it is also possible to get poor quality images using these devices as well. When photographing a specimen to submit to our digital diagnostics program, there are several helpful tips that can increase the odds of getting your subject properly and quickly identified. In this issue, we are going to discuss the importance of focus and lighting.

Focus is critical

Simply put, focus is the most important thing to get right when photographing anything. Often time with insects, if you cannot really see the subject, you won't be able to get a good identification. Take the caterpillar photos below (Figure 1). The first image submitted on the left was not focused well enough to say for sure what species of caterpillar it was. A second attempt, on the right, while not perfect, had enough focus to allow it to be identified as an Io Moth caterpillar, one that can sting!



Figure 1. The photo on the right had enough focus to allow the caterpillar to be identified ([KSU Insect Diagnostics](#)).

Proper lighting can improve many factors of a photograph

While they are two separate factors affecting how successful a specimen photograph will be, focus and lighting can go hand in hand. Proper lighting can make focusing on the subject much easier and help to reveal important details to aid in identification. For example, look at a photo of an ant (Figure 2). Since there was no adequate lighting you cannot tell what the true body color of the ant is and certain features of its anatomy are impossible to distinguish, making a reliable identification impossible. Another good lesson from this photo is the importance of backgrounds. Had the ant not been so intensely contrasted on the white paper, the camera may have been able to light the scene adequately.

So, what are ways to achieve proper lighting? Often, we do not realize we are casting a shadow on the specimen of interest. Position yourself or camera in a way that allows natural light to hit the subject. Additionally, be careful to avoid backlighting the subject as that could end up with results like what we see in the above ant photo.

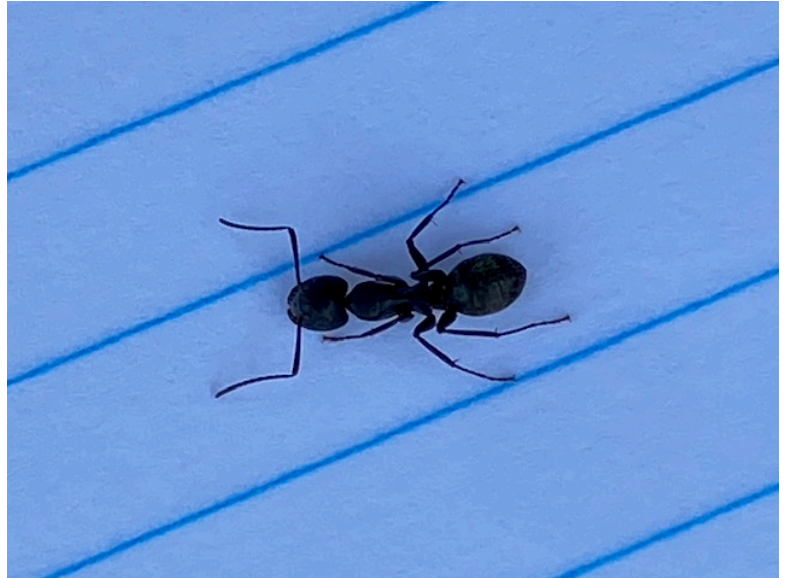


Figure 2. The lighting in this image does not allow for a proper identification ([KSU Insect Diagnostics](#)).

Anthony Zukoff—Southwest Research and Extension Center – Garden City, KS

HOME

Sincerely,

Frannie Miller
Pesticide Safety & IPM Coordinator
Kansas State University
600 W. Woodside
McPherson, KS 67460
Phone: (620) 241-1523
Fax: (620) 241-3407
<http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/pesticides-ipm>

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Anthony Zukoff

Extension Associate – Entomology

Southwest Research and Extension Center

Garden City, KS

Phone: 620-275-9164

e-mail: azukoff@k-state.edu

@westksbugs

[Need an insect identified? Visit the Insect Diagnostics Program Website](#)

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Department of Entomology

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