

Collecting and Mailing Household Pest Samples

Household pests (insects, mites, millipedes, centipedes, etc.) and incidental insects about which you are curious can be submitted to the Iowa State University Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic for identification at a nominal charge. Specimens can be submitted through your local county extension office, or sent directly to the Clinic at the address below.

1. Collect multiple (6–12) intact specimens if available.
2. Specimens should be dead when shipped and mailed in a bottle, box or padded envelope.
3. Preserve soft-bodied insects such as caterpillars, aphids, ants, spiders, mites and ticks in a small bottle with a tight fitting lid. Place enough hand sanitizer gel in the bottle to just cover the specimens.
4. Place hard-bodied insects such as moths, butterflies, beetles, grasshoppers, bees and wasps in plastic bags, pill bottles, or vials. Do not add hand sanitizer. Do lightly restrain specimens inside the container with crumpled tissue or layers of dry paper toweling so they don't bounce around during shipment.
5. Tiny insects can be collected on transparent tape as a last resort. Lightly press the sticky side of the tape against the surface where the insects are located, then attach the tape, unfolded, to clear plastic wrap, then mail.
6. Fill out the Household Insect Identification Form as completely as possible.
7. Mail samples in a padded mailer or box to protect against crushing.

Mail sample to:
Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic
327 Bessey Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-3140 USA

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The Terms and Conditions applicable to the services offered by PIDC can be found at http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/info/terms_and_conditions. By submitting a sample or image, you signify that you have read and agree to the Terms and Conditions.

Digital Images

As an alternative to mailing a specimen, you can e-mail a close-up digital image. Here are tips for sending usable digital images.

1. Photograph dead or chilled insects. Place live insects in the freezer for 15 minutes to immobilize them before you take their picture.
2. Get as close to the specimen as possible with your camera.
3. Focus, focus, focus.
4. Use plenty of light.
5. Include a size-reference such as a coin, pencil, ruler or yardstick (depending on size) next to the specimen in your photograph.
6. Take several pictures but send only the best one or two.
7. Attach your images to an email message. In the message explain where the insect was found, what it was doing, how many there were and other background information. Please include where you live and how best to get in touch with you.

E-mail digital image to: insects@iastate.edu

... and justice for all

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cathann A. Kress, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.