

Photographing weeds for identification – NETS 2012

Trevor James

Most cameras (compacts or reflex types) will take very good photos of weeds if used correctly. Some phones will as well.

The most important thing is focus, an unfocussed photo is difficult to use.

Most cameras have a macro function, some work automatically, some need to be switched on – **use the macro function for good focus close-up photos.**

Take diagnostic photos! In order of importance:

- **The whole plant**
- **The flower**
- **The leaf**
- **Any other part that you think stands out (berries, roots etc.)**

Try and compose photo with a neutral or uncluttered background – green on green is very hard to see! **A grey road or path is a very good neutral colour – avoid black or white**, as this frequently gives the wrong exposure for the actual subject. If possible pick a branch, flower or leaf and hold it up with the road as a background and photograph at arms length or closer.

Avoid harsh sunlight with lots of shadows. It is ok to take photos in sunlight but there will not be any detail to see in the shadows so try to avoid having shadows. You might have to take the photo in the complete shadow of your own body if you can't avoid problems with shadows. Shadows are a particular problem in early morning and evening.

If there is not much available light check the settings on your camera to ensure that the exposure time is not too long and results in camera shake. **Anything less than 1/30th of a second is likely to result in camera shake unless the camera is well braced (e.g. against a tree, on a post etc.).** You can still hold the camera, just brace your hands against something solid to stop the shake.

If there is insufficient light, use the flash, although the colour will be yellowish, you are more likely to get a crisp and clear photo.

If possible, **take high resolution photos (high pixel number)**. When identifying a plant there is frequently a need to zoom in on a particular part of the plant (flower, leaf, stem etc.) and this can be done easily with higher resolution photos.

Most cameras also have an enlargeable display function so before you leave **check that you have a good, in-focus photo!**

More advanced stuff!

- If you can control your camera settings the best photos with the greatest depth of field are taken with the smallest aperture (f16 or smaller) **so in bright light set camera to aperture priority and f16 or f11.**
- However, in low light camera shake is the greater enemy so work at a minimum shutter speed that you can hold without shaking, **so in dim light set camera to shutter priority and a slowish speed of 1/80th or 1/60th of a second.**