Taking Quality Photos for Seeds of Success

Photos are a key part of every Seeds of Success (SOS) collection. Along with the datasheet and herbarium specimen, photos provide valuable data about a collection. Photos can be used to help clarify possible plant misidentifications, possible contamination by other seed, and are also used for training and marketing purposes.

SOS Photo Requirements

🌱 *Each collection should contain 3 photos (minimum)*
- **One photo of the landscape/plant community:** This photo helps future collectors or researchers understand the habitat and plant community where the collection was made. If other seed is found in a collection during processing or cleaning, possible associated species can be identified from the photo.
- **One photo of the individual plant:** This photo should be of a representative individual in the population. This photo can help if the plant identification needs to be verified. Additionally, photos of the plant in its natural seed dispersal stage can help future collectors know what to look for.
- **One photo of the seed:** Photos of the seed help future collectors know what the seed of a target species looks like, and can help with further plant identification if necessary.

🌱 *Naming Convention*
- Photos should be named using the following format and each photo should have a unique picture number (A,B,C, etc.)

  Plants Code_Collector Code-Collection Number_Letter

- For example – For one collection of *Atriplex parryi* made by the collector CA650, there should be 3 photos with the following labels: ATPA3_CA650-101_A, ATPA3_CA650-101_B, ATPA3_CA650-101_C
- The lettering can be in any order you wish, just please be consistent.

ATPA3_CA650-101_A

ATPA3_CA650-101_B

ATPA3_CA650-101_C

Taking Quality Photos

🌱 *Lighting:* Light quality and direction are extremely important to quality photographs
- **Time of day:** Sunrise and sunset, or golden hour, are ideal times to take photos and will show more detail than photos taken during the middle of a sunny day where things will appear washed out. If you do need to take photos during mid day, try to keep the sun over your shoulder, but watch out for your shadow.
- **Cloud cover:** A cloudy day can also provide good lighting for photos, however, it is possible to have too much cloud cover and cause photo details to become hazy. Please, do not get caught in a storm or let your seeds get wet and moldy for the sake of a good picture.

🌱 *Stay in focus:* Blurry photos are not helpful pieces of data, so do you best to prevent this. Take multiple photos if it is too bright to see if your first shot is blurry or not. Also try turning your back to the sun, shading your camera screen, or review your photos back in your vehicle. The goal is to check them while still in the field.
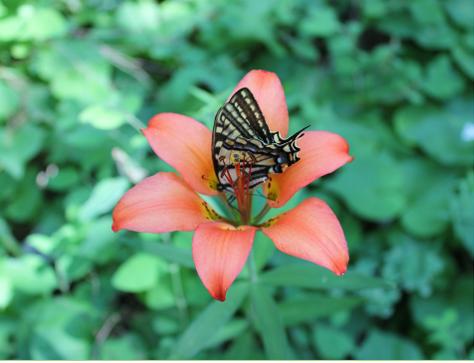
- *Landscape photos:* The goal is to capture the habitat and associated species of the area, so make sure those are the main subjects of your photo. Photos where signage, fences, or roads make up the majority of the space are not helpful.
- *Indivivdual plant photos:* Photos of the individual plant can be taken during any phenophase – budding, flowering, setting seed, etc. However, make sure any identifying characteristics of the plant are readily visible, especially if they helped you identify the species. Using a ruler to help establish the scale of the plant is also helpful.
- *Seed photos:* Photos of the seed can be taken either in the field or back at the office – just don't forget! Rulers, your hand, or a penny are all great for scale.
- *Other photos:* We also love receiving photos of the seed collecting process! The best photos are of people when they are in action, can see their eyes, and they are not in shadows. Photos of other things like pollinators, wildlife, nurseries, events, meetings, or your piles of seeds are also welcome! You do not need to follow the naming convention for these photos, however, you should include a general description.

Submitting Photos

- Photos are due at the same time as your other collection data – December, 15th.
- Please send photos electronically to the SOS National Curator via a zipped folder attachment in an email, or a Google Drive link
- Please only submit one folder with all the photos – no subfolders
- DO NOT! Include location information in your photos. This includes paper or white boards with GPS coordinates. These plant populations are generally on public land and as such are a natural resources that needs to be protected. We do not give out location information to prevent over harvest by others who may not be trained in the SOS protocol.
- Before submitting your photos, please scrub all geo reference data from your photos. To do this, upload all your photos to your computer and save them in one folder. Select all your photos, then right click and select "Properties" at the bottom of the menu. In the new window, select the "Details" tab and scroll to the bottom to see the GPS Latitude and Longitude. Next, click "Remove Properties and Personal information" at the bottom of the window. The "Remove Properties" window will appear. Click "Remove the following properties from this file" and scroll down to GPS and select the boxes next to "Latitude" and "Longitude". Click the "OK" button. Confirm the GPS coordinates were removed and click the "OK" button in the Photo Properties window to finish.

To view photos from past collecting seasons, visit seedsofsuccess.smugmug.com

For more information, visit blm.gov/sos

If you have any questions, please contact the SOS National Curator