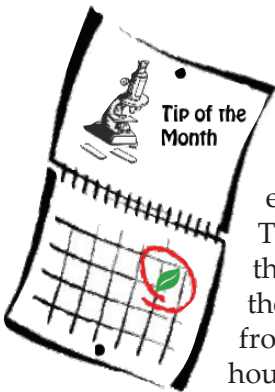
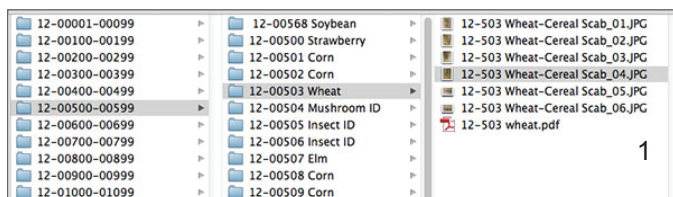


Sample Photography as a Standard Operating Procedure

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Last week our secretary got a call from a disgruntled client who sent in several evergreen samples. The client was upset that I had mixed up the arborvitae samples from the front of the house with the juniper from the back and had thus provided an erroneous diagnosis. Rather than get into an argument with the client our secretary wisely took his information and referred the problem to me. What might have been a difficult 'no-win' situation was easier to deal with because of the standard operating procedure (SOP) we have for photographing all sample submissions and scanning all submission forms. Each sample is photographed upon opening and the clinic form is scanned to a DF. These documents are stored on a network server accessible from all the computers in our clinic working group so that any additional pictures we take in the lab, including photomicrographs are stored together in a folder for that sample. We organize the sample folders by sample number and group them in folders of 100 (Fig 1 and 2). This allowed me to look at the photos of these samples as they were received and the PDF scans of the original forms, verify that the sample numbers given to the juniper and arborvitae were correct and call the client back with confidence that there had been no mix-up.



Our SOP for photographing samples also allows us to document original sample condition upon arrival. This is especially helpful in those cases when a diagnostician may not be able to see the sample until a day or two after arrival. Did the sample degrade before I saw it or was it really that bad when it arrived (Fig. 3)? The day of arrival shots let us be sure. These images are also helpful for training clientele on the importance of sample selection and proper packaging.

The photos also serve the purpose of helping to improve diagnostic skills. Some confirmations may take several days or even weeks. Having a good photographic record of the symptoms allows us to 'return' to that sample and review the symptoms and results when the testing is complete.

Good photos of symptoms or signs are useful teaching tools. We use many of the images in presentations however perhaps the best use of this SOP is for the 'just-in-time' learning experience that occurs when you send a client a diagnosis of the problem with a picture of the original symptom attached. The client is much more likely to remember that problem next time it appears. 🌿

Diagnostic Updates

