

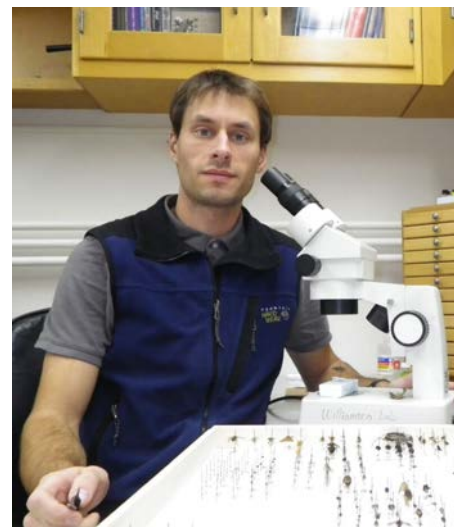
University of Wisconsin-Madison Insect Diagnostic Lab: A New Face and Same Outstanding Service

By Dr. R. Chris Williamson, Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin – Madison

After 36 years of outstanding service and leadership as manager of the Insect Diagnostic Lab in the Department of Entomology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Phil Pellitteri retired at the end of February. Phil was the first and only manager of the Insect Diagnostic Lab, which was established in 1978. The mission of the lab has been, and continues to be, to identify insects and insect damaged plant material from around the state, and the region. Primary service is to the county extension offices and commercial concerns. Home-owners are welcome to submit samples to the diagnostic lab but are encouraged to check with their local extension office first because many samples can be handled in a more efficient manner locally.

Mail-in samples, e-mails (with pictures whenever possible) and walk-in samples are accepted. The Insect Diagnostic Lab handles between 1,500-2,300 samples annually and does not charge any fees for services.

On March 1, 2014 Patrick John (PJ) Liesch became the interim director of the Insect Diagnostic Lab. After a search committee was assembled, several outstanding candidates were interviewed. The search committee provided a recommendation to the faculty in the Department of Entomology where a final decision was rendered. The position was offered to PJ Liesch, PJ accepted the position and officially began his role as the manager of the Insect Diagnostic Lab on August 1, 2014.



New Manager Of The Insect Diagnostic Lab Patrick John (P.J.) Liesch

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In addition to managing the Insect Diagnostic Lab, PJ is an instructor for the Wisconsin Pesticide Applicator Training program, the Wisconsin Master Gardener Program, the UW Farm and Industry Short Course program and the First Detector Network.

One of his firsts tasks as interim manager was to launch an updated website for the diagnostic lab, which features a blog titled “What’s Crawling in the Lab?” This blog features short stories, pictures, and highlights from the UW-Madison insect diagnostic lab. Topics range from the insects most commonly diagnosed in the lab to emerging insect pests and even some unique and bizarre creatures that are submitted to the lab. The blog can be accessed via the Insect Diagnostic Lab’s website at <http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/insectlab/>

PJ is life-long Wisconsin resident, he grew up in the Racine area. After high school, he attended UW-Parkside where he earned a degree in biological sciences (B.S., 2007). It was during his undergraduate studies that he became fascinated with insects. Two summers of entomology fieldwork helped solidify PJ's interests in entomology. After completing his B.S. degree, he accepted an offer to come to UW-Madison where he earned a M.S. degree in entomology in 2010. PJ began work as an assistant researcher for over three years in the UW-Madison Entomology and Plant Pathology Departments where he was heavily involved with turfgrass and ornamental research. He currently lives in rural Dane county with his wife and two dogs. In his spare time, PJ enjoys mountain biking, rock climbing, hiking, and fishing. Please welcome PJ the next time you have an opportunity! Don't hesitate to send him an insect sample should you need assistance in identification.

To maximize the success of an accurate diagnosis, please consider the following directions and guidelines when submitting a sample to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Insect Diagnostic Lab:

How to Submit Samples: The diagnostic process often involves piecing together many different clues. Providing background information with a submitted image or specimen can greatly assist in the diagnostic process. In many cases, insects can be identified through digital images. However, in other cases, physical specimens must be inspected under a microscope for an accurate determina-

tion. Crushed or damaged specimens are very difficult to identify and many specimens are damaged during shipping if not cared for. In general, specimens should be placed into small vial or other container and padded to protect them.



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Turfgrass and Ornamental Entomology

Do not put specimens on tape, as this can make identification difficult. Instructions for shipping specimens vary slightly with the type of specimen:

Hard-bodied insects such as beetles and

true bugs can be placed in a small clean vial or box. Put cotton or tissue paper inside the mailing tube with the specimen to increase its chances of arriving intact.

Soft-bodied insects such as aphids, caterpillars and other worms are best preserved in alcohol. Freezing or placing the insects into very hot water will kill specimens. Specimens should then be preserved in alcohol for shipment. Seventy percent ethanol is best, but rubbing alcohol, or clear cocktail alcohol like gin or vodka will work in a pinch.

Adult moths and mosquitoes have scales on the wings that are needed for identification and need to be kept dry and intact. Carefully place these specimens into a vial or tub. Cushion during transit using cotton or tissue.

Specimens can then be shipped to: Insect Diagnostic Lab 240 Russell Labs 1630 Linden Drive Madison, WI 53706 



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