

Outdoor Facts

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Game Information Leaflet

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PHOTOGRAPHIC BACKDROP - A RANGE STUDY AID ^{1/}

Early range enclosure studies indicated a need for clear, sharp pictures of shrubs in which individual plants would be distinctly separated from those in the background. Use of a backdrop was believed to be the best means to graphically depict these individual shrubs. Although the idea of using such a device was not new, photo backdrop specifications were not available in the literature. Following is a description of a satisfactory aid developed for use in photographing shrubby vegetation; construction materials are listed, and procedures for building and using the backdrop are given.

MATERIALS

For One-Piece Backdrop

Plywood: 1 - 4' x 5' x 3/8", exterior, A-C grade
Paint: 1 quart, flat, white, oil base
Enamel: 1/2 pint, black

Additional Materials Needed for Folding Backdrop

Plywood: 12 - 4" x 4" x 3/8"
Strap iron: 4 - 6" x 1/2" x 1/8"
Hinges: 6 pair, 2-1/2", narrow butt
Screws: flat head, wood, size and number to suit needs
Screws: 8, round head, wood, size as needed
Washers: flat, assorted, number and size as needed

CONSTRUCTION

Apply two coats of flat, white paint to the good side of the 4 x 5-foot piece of plywood. Next, using a stripping brush and black enamel, paint 1/8-inch wide grid lines at 6-inch intervals top to bottom and side to side across the white surface. Grid-spacing numbers can then be painted on with black enamel and the aid of the numbers template. This will provide a very usable one-piece backdrop.

If a more portable backdrop is desired, the one just made can be converted into one that folds. Cut

the plywood twice vertically to yield three pieces that are 17, 22, and 21 inches wide respectively, from right to left facing the painted side. The next step is to attach six opposing pairs of 4" x 4" x 3/8" plywood plates on adjoining edges of the unpainted sides of the three sections to provide additional support for hinges. Then, screw the six hinges in place, being careful to fit the sections of the backdrop together as tightly as possible to avoid noticeable cracks. The above procedures will allow the 17-inch wide right-hand section to first fold backward and inward upon the 22-inch wide center section; then the 21-inch wide left-hand section can be folded upon both of the others (Figure 1). The folded backdrop can then be

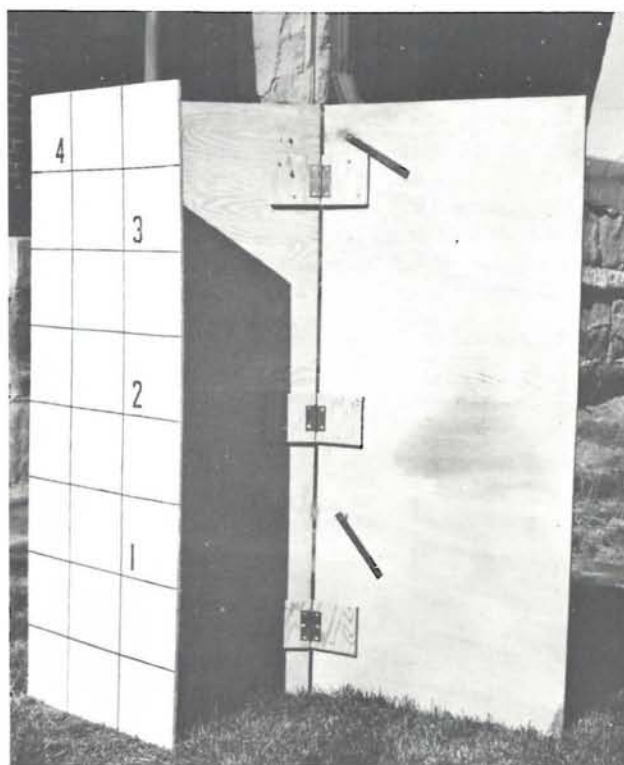


Fig. 1 Photographic backdrop showing placement of plates, hinges, and pivotal iron braces. Photo by G. Andrews

¹Contribution from Federal Aid Project W-38-R.

carried under one arm which is a big advantage when it must be carried through brush and trees.

To keep the sections of the backdrop open and its surface flat when in use, four iron braces are attached to the back, as shown. Each of the pieces of strap iron has a hole drilled at one end and a notch cut at the other end to accept round head screws. Attach two braces, spaced to suit, to each outside section of the backdrop with round head screws and flat washers at the drilled holes. On the opposing sections attach round head screws to receive the notched ends of the braces.

A brace with which to prop the backdrop upright and prevent the wind from blowing it down is a handy accessory. It is easily made from a 5-foot length of 1" x 4" board. Attach a small gate hook at one end to accept a screw eye or small staple fastened to the left plate of the upper right-hand pair of plates of the backdrop.

APPLICATION

To use the backdrop, place it flush against the shrub to be photographed, with the painted side toward the camera. Prop the backdrop upright with the brace stick by snapping the gate hook at one end into the screw eye provided on the back of the backdrop and sticking the other end against the ground. Pertinent photo data can be recorded on a slate (1' x 1-1/2' piece of masonite coated several times with slating paint). The slate is placed to best advantage against or attached to the backdrop (Figs. 2 and 3).

Also, to permanently locate the camera point, rebar stakes can be driven below the camera tripod after the picture is taken. A wood or steel stake can be driven at one edge of the backdrop to serve as a guide stake and help in positioning the backdrop for future pictures (Figs. 2 and 3).

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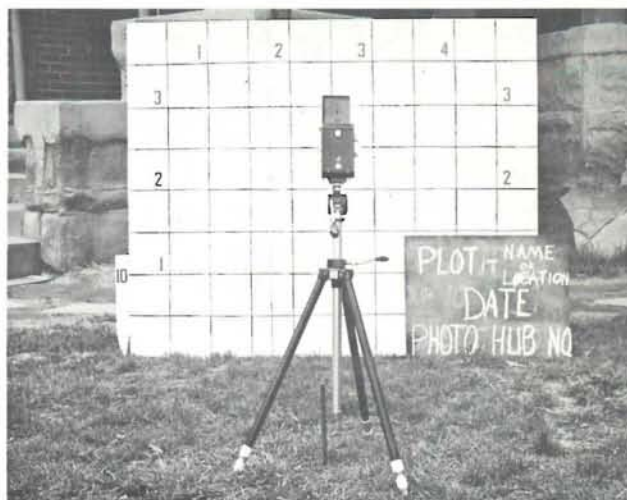


Fig. 2 Photographic backdrop with other photographic equipment. Photo by G. Andrews



Fig. 3 Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) plant at Sinbad Valley Exclosure demonstrating use of backdrop. Photo by B. Baker