NON-GLARE MATERIAL FOR POSITIONING SPECIMENS DURING STUDY

Light colored beach sand is commonly placed in a Stender dish to allow positioning of alcohol preserved specimens while they are being examined or drawn under a dissecting microscope. Although this holds a specimen in the desired orientation, reflections from this light background produce glare. This can be particularly problematic at greater magnifications where glare increases due to the higher light intensity required for proper illumination and combines with reduced depth of field to limit resolution of fine details.

An inexpensive solution to this problem is the use of silicon carbide abrasive powder. The irregular particles of this black material are small enough to allow easy positioning of all but the smallest structures and, although facets of a few particles may reflect light, the net effect is a background with no glare. A few initial rinses are sufficient to remove particles that float to the surface or cloud the alcohol. The only difficulty encountered when using this material is that ocular grid or reticule lines are not easily discernible against the black background.

Silicon carbide abrasive is available from lapidary and hobby shops and is also sold in small packets as a spark plug cleaning abrasive by auto parts, hardware and discount stores.

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