

Troubleshooting Houseplants

Yellowing, brown edges, leaf spots, or drops are all symptoms that something is wrong and cultural, or environmental conditions are often the culprit.

Adjustment Period After Moving

Many plants go through an adjustment period anytime they are moved, even short distances. The plant will eventually adjust if it is in favorable conditions. If yellowing or leaf drop continues more than a few weeks, move the plant and change its watering schedule.

Yellowing Leaves Over or Under Watered

How to Determine: Remove the plant from its container and check the roots. With some exceptions, healthy plants have white roots. If the roots are rusty orange to light brown, it is under watered. If roots are dark brown to black, it is over watered.

How to Fix: Withhold water until the soil is dry and gradually begin a new watering schedule. After two weeks, apply a water-soluble fertilizer. If there's no improvement after two weeks, repot in fresh soil.

Need Fertilization

How to Determine: Yellowing may begin on leaf edges, from the vein outward, or the leaf may curl. Become familiar with a plant's fertilization needs. A plant may need fertilizer when it is root bound and should be repotted into a larger container.

Leaf Spots Too Much Sun

How to Determine: Besides spots, leaves may look bleached or faded. **How to Fix:** Move the plant to a less sunny location or turn it occasionally for even growth.



Fungal Diseases

How to Determine: Check disease symptoms online for identification. **How to Fix:** Ensure proper circulation, remove and destroy infected plant parts, and allow soil to dry between watering.

Brown-edged leaves

- Erratic watering schedule or exposure to drafts
- Accumulation of fertilizer salts on containers
- If other issues have been eliminated and brown edges continue, scrub the edges of the pot and flush the soil with clear water.

Common Houseplant Insects

- **Scale:** Discard if heavily infested.
- **Fungus gnats:** Reduce numbers by letting the plant dry completely between watering.
- **Aphids:** Wash away with water or insecticidal soap.
- **Spider mites:** Infect already stressed plants, so keeping plants healthy is the most effective control measure. Horticultural oil or insecticidal soap may be used for large infestations.
- **Mealybugs:** Wipe away with a cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol.

Make sure pesticides are labeled for indoor use and read and follow all label directions. If problems persist, contact your local Illinois Extension office. Find it at go.illinois.edu/ExtensionOffice.



Learn more about light, water, and soil needs at go.illinois.edu/CaringForHouseplants

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