



Environmental Horticulture Notes

DIAGNOSIS OF HOUSE PLANT TROUBLES

The symptoms seen in an ailing house plant can often help determine the cause of the trouble. The following is a list of symptoms commonly seen in many kinds of house plants along with the possible cause of each symptom.

Symptoms

Possible Causes

LEAF DROP

1. Overwatering resulting in root injury.
2. Sudden changes in temperature.
3. Sudden change in light intensity from high to low.
4. Severe nutrient deficiency.

LOWER LEAF DETERIORATION

1. Overwatering in presence of too low light intensity for the specie.
2. Too low light intensity alone.
3. Disease due to high moisture.

LEAF EDGES AND/OR TIPS SCORCHED

1. Too light watering.
2. High salt accumulation in media.
3. Excess fertilizers.
4. Insect damage.

SHOOT TIP DAMAGE OR DEATH

1. Overwatering--roots standing in water.
2. Sudden exposure to high light intensity after prolonged exposure to low light intensity.
3. Insect damage.

FOLIAGE COLOR LIGHTER GREEN THAN NORMAL

1. Overwatering.
2. Low fertility in media.
3. Insect damage.
4. Extremely high temperatures.

DRIED SPOTS OR DAMAGED AREAS ON FOLIAGE

1. Burning from exposure to direct sunlight.
2. Improper watering (usually too light watering).

WATER SOAKED AREAS ON LEAF BLADES, EDGES OR TIPS

1. Drip from plants growing overhead.
2. Bacterial or fungal diseases.

PLANT GROWTH STUNTED, FOLIAGE SMALL, NEW LEAVES HAVE EDGES CURVED DOWNWARD AND/OR MIDRIB ALSO CURLED DOWNWARD

1. Ethylene gas arising from improperly burned heating gas. Also, manufactured gas used for cooking.

PIMPLE-LIKE GROWTHS ON LOWER LEAF SURFACE

1. Caused by a pathogenic fungus, Cercospora.

Prepared by Leland S. Frey, Farm Advisor (Retired) in Sacramento County with information from Ray Hasek, University of California, Specialist in Environmental Horticulture.

The University of California prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities. (Complete nondiscrimination policy statement can be found at http://danr.ucop.edu/aa/danr_nondiscrimination_and_affir.htm). Direct inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies to the Affirmative Action Director, University of California, ANR, 1111 Franklin St., 6th Floor, Oakland, CA 94607, (510) 987-0096.

Agriculture • Community Resource Development • Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences • Master Food Preservers • 4-H Youth Development • Horticulture • Master Gardeners University of California, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County of Sacramento cooperating.

Sacramento County Board of Supervisors -- Phil Serna, 1st District; Jimmy Yee, 2nd District; Susan Peters, 3rd District; Roberta MacGlashan, 4th District; and Don Nottoli, 5th District. Also, Steve Szalay, County Executive; Bruce Wagstaff, Countywide Services Agency; and Yvonne Nicholson and Chuck Ingels, Cooperative Extension.