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## **DIAGNOSIS OF COMMON HOUSEPLANT PROBLEMS**

**RAPID DEFOLIATION:** Extremes in temperature; changes in light (plant taken from bright light to relatively low light); changes in location or other cultural practices; overwatering; underwatering; or cold exposure.

**GRADUAL DEFOLIATION (lower leaves yellow and fall):** Overwatering (root damage); underwatering (not enough water to support full foliage); lack of sufficient light; or lack of fertilizer.

**NEW GROWTH WILTED, BURNED, OR BLACKENED:** Too much fertilizer (leaching needed); cold drafts; hot drafts; too dry; sunburn; too warm; or freeze damage.

**WILTING OF ENTIRE PLANT:** Too little water; too much water (root rot); too much fertilizer (roots burned); or overexposed to cold temperatures.

**SPOTTED FOLIAGE:** Overwatering (check roots); burn from direct sun; cold water on foliage; bacterial or fungal infection (especially if plants are in very humid, wet conditions); or pollutants in the air (fumes from cleaning agents, gases, etc.).

**TORN FOLIAGE:** Animal damage (cats, dogs, rodents, etc.); children or adults (toys, maintenance equipment, carts, jewelry, chairs, doors, curtains, drapes).

**OVERALL LIGHT-GREEN COLOR OF FOLIAGE:** Low light conditions; too dry (soil or air); excess light (direct sun); or lack of fertilizer.

**BROWNING OF LEAF TIPS OR LEAF MARGINS:** Low humidity; excess fertilizer; poor water quality; excess of damaging ions in the water supply or soil (chlorine, fluoride, sodium, boron, soluble salts, etc.); deficiency of fertilizer; spray damage (insecticides, oil, leaf-glossing materials); unfavorable soil pH (too high or too low); or pollutants in the atmosphere.

**STUNTED PLANTS:** Excess fertilizer (root damage); too dry (lack of water); or overwatered (root damage).

**NEW FOLIAGE SMALL, LIGHT GREEN, AND SPINDLY:** Too little light; lack of fertilizer; or soil too dry.

**LEAVES YELLOWING BETWEEN VEINS (veins remain green):** pH either too high or too low; iron deficiency (when pH is too high or alkaline); or magnesium deficiency (when pH is too low or acidic).

**CUPPED LEAVES, NUMEROUS SMALL LEAVES AT GROWING TIP, LEAVES CURLED, LEAVES DROP CONTINUOUSLY:** Unburned gas injury; spray or vapor damage from cleaning fluids, industrial pollution, or general pollutants in the atmosphere. Aphid or mite damage.

**TINY WHITE SPOTS ON LEAVES, COTTONY MASSES ON STEMS, ROUND OR OVAL-SHAPED BUMPS ON LEAVES OR STEMS, STICKY SPOTS ON LOWER FOLIAGE OR PLANT STAND:** Usually caused by insects (primarily spider mites, mealy bugs, scale, and aphids). Look on undersides of leaves as well as top of foliage. Many times a hand lens is needed since the pests are small.

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