

Top Ten Causes of Houseplant Problems

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1. Overwatering

More houseplants die from overwatering than from any other cause. Never let the pot sit in water. Make sure there are adequate drainage holes. Allow soil to dry out slightly between waterings.

2. Insufficient Light

Consult plant labels and books to determine light requirements. Plants that need full sun seldom make good houseplants. Plants adapted to the low light levels of tropical forests do best.

3. Low Humidity (especially November through February)

It helps to place pots on gravel filled trays of water. Warm air blowing on a plant will quickly desiccate it.

4. Night Temperature Too Warm

Night temperatures needs to be 10 degrees lower than daytime temperatures.

5. Not Enough Water or Pot Bound Plants

If your plant wilts a short time after watering, it's probably pot bound.

6. Soil Problems

Start with a good quality potting soil. Plants, such as orchids, bromeliads or cactus, need special mixes. Never use garden soil in a container because it will become very compacted.

7. Growing Condition Changes

Some plants, like weeping figs, drop their leaves when you move them to a new location. Make the change gradually to cope with the shock. Especially true when moving plants out for the summer or indoor in the fall.

8. Insect Pests (fungus gnats, mealybugs, scale)

Remove and destroy infested leaves. For fungus gnats mulch containers or drench the pot with Bt Use rubbing alcohol on Q-tips to rub out mealybugs. Spray Neem oil or Insecticidal soap to control most insect pests.

9. Spider Mite (not an insect)

A common problem under dry conditions. Blast leaves with water to wash mites away. Remove badly infested leaves and discard them. Insecticidal soap sprayed directly on the pests will kill them.

10. Plant Diseases (such as fungus and bacteria)

Pick off infected leaves and put them in the garbage. Don't crowd plants allow for air movement. Keep foliage dry when watering. Sulfur or a simple spray made from baking soda prevents fungal spores from germinating.