

# Houseplant Health: Recognizing and Treating Common Problems

## Common Problems:

### Yellowing Leaves:

- **Causes:** Yellowing leaves are often due to overwatering, lack of nutrients, or insufficient light. Overwatering can lead to waterlogged soil, which suffocates roots, preventing them from absorbing nutrients properly. Nutrient deficiency, particularly nitrogen, can also cause leaves to turn yellow. Inadequate light hinders photosynthesis, leading to chlorosis, where leaves lose their green color.
- **Diagnosis:** Check the soil moisture level by inserting your finger about an inch into the soil. If it feels wet, overwatering might be the issue. Inspect the plant for signs of pests and ensure it is receiving adequate light. Check for nutrient deficiency by observing the overall growth and color of the plant.
- **Treatment:** Adjust the watering schedule to ensure the soil dries out between waterings. Provide a balanced fertilizer to address nutrient deficiencies. Ensure the plant is placed in an area with sufficient light for its specific needs. Consider repotting if the soil is compacted or lacks proper drainage.

### Root Rot:

- **Causes:** Root rot is primarily caused by overwatering and poor drainage. When the soil remains waterlogged, it creates an anaerobic environment conducive to fungal growth, which attacks the roots. This condition is exacerbated by using pots without drainage holes or improper soil mixes.
- **Diagnosis:** Carefully remove the plant from its pot and inspect the roots. Healthy roots should be firm and white, while rotting roots appear mushy, dark, and emit a foul odor. Wilting leaves and stunted growth are also indicators of root rot.
- **Treatment:** Immediately reduce watering and allow the soil to dry out. Trim away the affected roots with sterilized scissors. Repot the plant in fresh, well-draining

soil and a pot with adequate drainage holes. Avoid overwatering and ensure the plant is in a well-ventilated area to prevent recurrence.

### **Leaf Drop:**

- **Causes:** Leaf drop can be triggered by sudden environmental changes, such as temperature fluctuations, changes in light exposure, or relocating the plant. Pests and diseases can also stress the plant, leading to leaf drop. Additionally, overwatering or underwatering can cause leaves to drop prematurely.
- **Diagnosis:** Observe the plant for signs of environmental stress, such as drafts from windows or doors, or recent changes in its location. Inspect for pests like aphids, spider mites, or scale, which can cause stress and leaf drop. Check the soil moisture level to ensure proper watering.
- **Treatment:** Stabilize the plant's environment by placing it in a consistent location with stable temperature and light conditions. Treat any pest infestations promptly using appropriate methods, such as insecticidal soap or neem oil. Adjust watering practices to maintain consistent soil moisture without overwatering or letting the soil dry out completely.

### **Diagnosis and Treatment:**

#### **Yellowing Leaves:**

- **Diagnosis:** Check soil moisture levels to avoid overwatering. Assess the light conditions and nutrient levels. Look for signs of pests.
- **Treatment:** Water only when the top inch of soil is dry. Move the plant to a brighter location if needed. Apply a balanced fertilizer according to the package instructions.

#### **Root Rot:**

- **Diagnosis:** Remove the plant from its pot and inspect the roots. Healthy roots are firm and white; rotting roots are mushy and dark.
- **Treatment:** Trim affected roots with sterilized scissors. Repot in fresh, well-draining soil. Ensure the pot has adequate drainage. Reduce watering and improve soil aeration.

## Leaf Drop:

- **Diagnosis:** Observe recent environmental changes or pests. Check for consistent watering practices.
- **Treatment:** Place the plant in a stable environment with consistent light and temperature. Treat any pests promptly. Maintain a regular watering schedule, ensuring the soil is neither too dry nor too wet.

By regularly monitoring your houseplants and addressing these common issues promptly, you can maintain their health and ensure they continue to thrive in your indoor environment. Proper care and early intervention are key to preventing and treating common houseplant problems.