

WHAT CAN GO WRONG WITH HOUSEPLANTS

SYMPTOMS & SIGNS	CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Small green, yellow, or brown insects cluster on leaves, buds, and tips of shoots.	Aphids	For controls: WSU Pestsense
White powdery insects cluster at nodes, undersides of leaves and shoot tips.	Mealybugs	For controls: WSU Pestsense
Round or flat insects on leaves and stems suck juices, causing yellowing and overall poor growth. Leaves have sticky deposits.	Scale Insects (scale crawlers)	For controls: WSU Pestsense
Leaves have fine webs and silvery spots.	Two-spotted (spider) mites	For controls: WSU Pestsense
Foliage is off-color. Have tiny white moth-like insects.	Whiteflies	Yellow sticky traps are available and work well indoors and in greenhouses. For controls: WSU Pestsense
Water-soaked spots with yellow margins occur on leaves. Entire leaves may wilt and stems rot.	Bacterial leaf spot	Pick off and destroy infected leaves.
Upper surfaces of leaves have loose white powdery masses. Leaves may be distorted and blackened.	Powdery mildew (fungus)	Pick off and destroy infected leaves. Use only fungicides registered for indoor use on host plant. Read and follow label instructions.
Blooms are poor or absent; stems are weak, elongated; leaves are small and pale. Plant is lopsided with stems and leaves bending to one side.	Light deficiency	Increase light intensity. If necessary, use artificial lighting. Give pot one-quarter turn every other day.
Stems and leaves grow slowly even though plant is fed. Soil dries out quickly. Roots grow through drainage holes.	Pot too small	Move plant into larger pot. Increase pot size by only one or two inches.
Leaves curl under; new leaves are undersized.	Too much light	Give plant more shade or move it farther away from plant growing lights.

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Stems become mushy, dark in color and rotten, lower leaves curl and wilt; soil at top of pot is constantly wet.	Too much water	Do not water so much or so frequently. Water only when topsoil is dry to the touch and reduce watering while plant is dormant. Make sure the pot's drainage hole is not clogged. Do not let plant stand in water in its saucer for more than half an hour.
Tips of leaves become brown and leaves wilt. Lower leaves turn yellow and fall off.	Not enough water	Water until the water runs out the bottom of the pot. Do not water again until the soil is dry to the touch.
Leaf edges are crinkly and brown.	Lack of humidity	Increase humidity by placing pots on a bed of moist pebbles in a tray, or by grouping plants in a planter with moist peat moss around them. Mist the leaves. Install a humidifier in the hot-air heating system, if the house has one, or use a cool-vapor room humidifier.
Plant bears few or no flowers and an excessive amount of foliage. Stems may be elongated. Green scum may be present on the sides of clay pots.	Too much fertilizer, especially nitrogen	Fertilize less often, or at half the suggested rate, particularly during winter months when the plant is receiving less light. Do not use high-nitrogen fertilizer during the blooming season. Do not fertilize dormant plants (late fall to winter).

Use chemicals that are registered for use INDOORS AND ON HOUSEPLANTS. They are usually packaged as premixed sprays or as aerosol sprays. It's best to discard plants that are badly infested with scale, mites, mealybugs or whiteflies.