

# What's Wrong with my Houseplant?

Plants are like people! They all have different needs and sometimes they're not as happy as they could be. Luckily, when you learn to speak plant, you can help give them what they need! So here is a guide to help you listen in on the language of plants and troubleshoot common problems that could be keeping them from living their best.

“If a plant is sad,  
do other plants  
photosynthesize with  
it?”

## Wilting Leaves:

- ❖ Is the soil dry and pulling away from the pot? It could be you're Underwatering. (See “How to check your plant for watering” below.)
- ❖ Is the soil wet and soggy? It could be you're Overwatering. (See “How to check your plant for watering” below.)

**How to check your plant for watering:** Water only when a plant needs it. First, check your plant by sticking your finger a couple inches into the soil. If it feels moist, wait to water. If it feels dry go ahead and give it a good drink. Allow the water to drain out the bottom and be sure to empty any water that accumulates in the tray.

**Overwatering** happens from watering too often rather than too much at one time. This deprives the roots of oxygen. If you suspect root rot, then trim any blackened or mushy roots and immediately repot into fresh soil and allow the roots to dry. And always make sure your plant has adequate drainage and do not let your plant sit in water.

**Underwatering** can occur by either not watering often enough or not giving our plants large enough drinks. Setting your plant in the sink and letting the water drain out the bottom will ensure that your plant has gotten enough water.

- ❖ Is your plant near a drafty window or door? Or maybe a heater? Plants often wilt when experiencing Temperature change.

## Leaves Dropping:

- ❖ Is your plant new? Or did you move it to a new location? Leaves will often drop when plants have a sudden change in their environment.
- ❖ Are the leaves first yellowing or turning brown before they drop? (See “Yellowing Leaves” and “Leaves Turning Brown” below)

## Yellowing Leaves:

- ❖ Is the soil wet? It could be you're Overwatering. (See “How to check your plant for watering” above.)
- ❖ Is it possible that your plant is not receiving enough light? Be sure to match the right light with your plant's needs. (See below)

### Descriptions of different light requirements:

Bright Light – Bright-light areas are close to a window with nothing blocking the direct rays of the sun. Plants set in these areas will cast a distinct shadow. South-facing windows are usually the brightest.

Bright Indirect – This is a spot in your house that is bright but does not get touched directly by the sun's rays. A plant in this spot will cast indistinct shadows.

Medium Light – East-facing windows can often be good locations for medium light plants. Sheer curtains in a bright window will also create medium light.

Low Light – Low-light areas are those either near a sunless window (north-facing or shaded by an outside structure) or well away from a window. If there is enough light to read a newspaper, there is likely enough light for a plant adapted to low light.

### Leaves Turning Brown:

- ❖ Is the soil wet? It could be you're Overwatering. (See "How to check your plant for watering" above)
- ❖ Is the soil dry and pulling away from the pot? It could be you're Underwatering. (See "How to check your plant for watering" above)
- ❖ Is your plant too close to a bright window? Plants get sunburned too! Moving your plant farther away from the window should fix this issue.

### Browning Leaf Tips:

- ❖ Inconsistent Watering happens when you let a plant go too dry and then overwater it, or vice versa. (See "How to check your plant for watering" above)
- ❖ Low Humidity can cause browning tips. Placing your plants on a tray of rocks and water can add some humidity to the air around your plant.

### White Crusty Soil:

- ❖ Build-up of fertilizer salts - Watering thoroughly after fertilizing and pouring the water out of the tray so the plant doesn't soak it back up can help prevent salt build-up.

### Spindly Looking:

- ❖ Is your plant also drying out faster than it used to? Are there roots sticking out of the bottom of the pot? Your plant might be root-bound, and it might be time to give it a bigger home.
- ❖ Does your plant look stretched-out or leggy? It might be reaching for more light. Make sure and set your plant up for success by providing the right light for their need. (See "Description of different light requirements" above)

**Pests:** Along with watching for the insects themselves, keep an eye out for leaf curling, leaf distortion, webbing, mottling or sticky substance on leaves.

Mealybugs – Watch for white, cottony looking insects in leaf joints and crevices of plants and a shiny, sticky honeydew that they secrete. Mealybugs can be managed by hand on a small number of plants by dabbing each insect with an alcohol-soaked cotton swab.

Mites – Watch for tiny moving specs, mottling or discoloration on leaves and webbing. Increasing humidity around your plants can help deter spider mites.

Scales – Watch for small hard bumps or shells on stems and leaves. You can manually remove them by scraping off the scale or treating them with a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol.

Aphids – watch for small, soft-bodied insects that come in various colors whose feeding causes curling and wilting of the leaves. Several strong blasts of water in the shower can put a dent in their population.



**McCord's Garden Center and Landscaping**

2720 McShane Drive, Monument, CO 80132

(719)375-3573 | [www.mccordgardens.com](http://www.mccordgardens.com)