YELLOWING OF HOUSE PLANT FOLIAGE

Of the many questions received by Cornell Cooperative Extension, one of the most common is, “What causes my houseplants to have yellow leaves?”

The causes of this problem are many and varied. Checking plants for one of the following will most likely help to reveal the cause or causes of yellowing:

- **EXCESSIVE LIGHT** - Some plants cannot tolerate prolonged exposure to direct sunlight.
- **INSUFFICIENT LIGHT** - This impairs photosynthesis, normal leaf growth and the flowering of many plants.
- **HIGH TEMPERATURE** – Especially at night, reduces plant vigor and growth rates. This as usually accompanied by leaf yellowing. 60 - 65°F. are preferred night temperatures for most houseplants.
- **OVER WATERING OR POOR DRAINAGE** – Excessive soil moisture content reduces soil aeration causing roots to suffocate and die. Then water and nutrients are not properly absorbed and foliage yellows.
- **TOO MUCH FERTILIZER** – Overfeeding burns plant roots, leading to foliage yellowing.
- **LACK OF FERTILIZER** – A deficiency of nutrients required for plant growth also leads to foliage yellowing.
- **COMPACTED SOIL** – Reduces root growth and activity
- **AIR POLLUTION** – Usually caused by manufactured or natural gas released from faulty appliances.

House plant leaf yellowing usually may prevented by:

- Providing adequate direct or indirect light according to the varying needs of individual plants.
- Water regularly. Fertilize at 3-4 week intervals, April through October. During the winter months, stretch fertilizer applications out to a 5-6 week interval.
- Keep plants cool at night. Do not place near heat sources or in drafts.

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