



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 is 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 be 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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