



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES

Garden Problem Solver

Your SOS Guide to Stressed Plants

Something looks wrong with your plants! Don't panic. Use this flowchart to diagnose the problem and find a fix. Follow the yes/no branches until you reach a solution. Remember: plants are resilient and often bounce back with a little TLC!

♥ YELLOWING LEAVES

🌿 Your Plant Looks Jaundiced

Is the soil wet or soggy?

YES: Overwatering or poor drainage. Check if water drains from the pot. If not, repot into fresh, well-draining soil. Reduce watering frequency.

NO: Continue to next question.

Is the soil dry and hard?

YES: Underwatering! Water deeply until water drains from the bottom. Check soil moisture regularly — let top inch dry between waterings.

NO: Continue to next question.

Do you see tiny bugs on the leaves or undersides?

YES: Pest infestation (aphids, mites, scale). Spray with insecticidal soap or neem oil. Repeat every 7–10 days as needed.

NO: Likely nutrient deficiency.

+ **Solution:** Give your plant a gentle dose of balanced fertilizer (like 10-10-10). Follow package instructions carefully. Plants need regular feeding during growing season!

♻️ WILTING & DROOPING

🌿 Your Plant Looks Sad & Floppy

Is the soil completely dry?

YES: Your plant is thirsty! Water deeply right now. If potted, water until it drains from the bottom. The plant should perk up within an hour or two.

Is the soil soggy or waterlogged?

YES: Root rot (roots are drowning). This is serious. Gently remove plant from pot, trim away black/mushy roots, and repot in FRESH, dry, well-draining soil. Don't water for a few days.

Is the soil moist but plant still wilts?

YES: Check the roots. If roots are wrapped tightly around the soil ball (root-bound), repot into a larger container. Or, check for pests/diseases below.

Recently moved or repotted?

YES: Transplant shock! Give it time and consistent care. Keep soil lightly moist and place in indirect light for a few days. It'll recover.

NO: Continue observing and check other conditions.

● SPOTS, DISCOLORATION & DAMAGE

🍄 Brown, Black, or Fuzzy Spots

Are the spots brown with a yellow halo?

YES: Likely fungal disease. Remove affected leaves. Avoid watering foliage — water at the base only. Improve air circulation. Apply fungicide if it spreads.

Do you see small moving insects?

YES: Pests! Spray with insecticidal soap or neem oil. Repeat every 7–10 days. Isolate the plant so pests don't spread to neighbors.

Are leaves scorched or papery?

YES: Sunscald or heat stress. Move plant to partial shade. Ensure consistent watering. Avoid direct afternoon sun in hot climates.

+ **General tip:** Pinch off affected leaves to help the plant redirect energy to new, healthy growth.

STUNTED GROWTH & TINY PLANTS

Your Plant Isn't Growing (Or It's Growing Super Slowly)

Is the plant root-bound (roots circling the soil)?

YES: It's outgrown its pot! Repot into a container 1-2 sizes larger with fresh potting soil. Don't use the same soil — it's depleted of nutrients.

Is the plant getting enough light?

NO (dark/shaded): Move it to a brighter location or add a grow light. Most veggies need 6+ hours of direct sun. Insufficient light stunts growth.

When did you last fertilize?

A while ago or never: Hungry plant! Feed with a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10 or similar). Follow package instructions. Feed every 2-4 weeks during growing season.

Is the temperature too cold?

YES: Most veggies prefer warm temps (60°F+). Move plant to a warmer spot. Cold slows growth significantly.

➔ **Remember:** Plants need three things to thrive: light, water, and nutrients. Check all three before assuming something's wrong!

QUICK PROBLEM REFERENCE

At a Glance: Common Problems & Quick Fixes

Yellowing Leaves

Overwater, underwater, or hungry. Check soil & feed.

Wilting

Thirsty or root rot. Check soil moisture ASAP.

Brown Spots

Fungal disease. Remove leaves, avoid wet foliage.

Tiny Bugs

Pests! Spray with insecticidal soap or neem oil.

Slow Growth

Not enough light, nutrients, or space. Check all three.

Scorched Leaves

Too much sun or heat. Move to partial shade.

➔ Don't Panic: Plant Recovery Tips

Your plant might look terrible, but plants are RESILIENT! Here's what helps:

- Remove damaged/dead leaves to redirect energy to new growth.
- Give consistent care (water, light, feeding) and wait. Recovery takes time.
- Use a flashlight at night to check for pests. Many bugs hide during the day!
- Trust your instincts. If something feels wrong, investigate!

X When It's Time to Move On

- **Entire plant is mushy/black:** Root rot has won. Toss it and try again with fresh soil.
- **Pest infestation won't quit:** After 3 sprays still have bugs? It might be time to compost this one and start fresh.
- **Plant has been struggling for weeks:** Sometimes a plant just isn't meant to be. That's gardening! Learn and move forward.