



FASTGROWINGTREES.COM GUIDE TO

# Diagnosing Plant Problems

Of course, we all hope for happy, healthy and green plants throughout the year - but plants are living things, and just like us, they have good days and bad days.

So - what do you do when your plant isn't looking its best? First of all, don't panic! Whether your plant is suffering from wilted leaves, brown spots or yellowing, with the right tools - and a little time - you can get your plants back in shape.

**In this guide, we'll cover 5 common plant problems, and how to diagnose and treat them:**

**RIPPED OR CREASED LEAVES**

**YELLOWING LEAVES**

**PALE, LIMP OR WEAK LEAVES**

**SPOTS OR DISCOLORATION**

**BROWN AND DRY LEAVES**

**WE'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE TOOLS YOU NEED TO BE YOUR OWN PLANT DETECTIVE - AND KEEP YOUR PLANTS HAPPY AND HEALTHY.**

**LET'S GET GROWING!**



**FastGrowingTrees.com**  
WE KEEP YOU GROWING.

# RIPPED OR CREASED LEAVES



ACCIDENTS HAPPEN, AND YOUR PLANT'S LEAVES MAY GET RIPPED OR CREASED. THE GOOD NEWS? THEY CAN BOUNCE BACK WITH JUST A LITTLE TIME AND CARE!

## ? What causes ripped or creased leaves?

When leaves get accidentally crushed, torn or creased, they become scarred. While these injuries will not heal, plants can grow a new leaf or, in most cases, continue to use the remaining, undamaged part of the leaf.

### Some plants are more prone to damage than others:

- Tropical plants with large leaves, like bananas or fiddle leaf figs
- Plants with thicker, succulent-like leaves, like the snake plant or aloe

Remember, just like all living things, plants can and will recover from cosmetic damage - it just takes time!

## 👍 Treating ripped or creased leaves:

### ***Cosmetic damage, like creases and tears: Give it time!***

There's no treatment needed for cosmetic damage - with some time, your plants should recover just fine. For faster growers, you can remove damaged leaves. For slower-growing plants, you can cut away any brown or dead areas.

## FGT PRO TIP:

WHEN CUTTING AWAY DAMAGED FOLIAGE, ALWAYS USE CLEAN, STERILIZED GARDEN SCISSORS OR PRUNERS, TO AVOID SPREADING PLANT DISEASE!

### ***Uniform tears on palms and bananas: No action needed!***

You might not know it, but these leaves are designed to rip! Some shallow-rooted plants evolved to tear easily, so they don't blow over in harsh winds. These kinds of tears will look very uniform, with no browning.

## What ripped or creased leaves might look like:



Palm leaf tearing correctly along the folds



A ripped cherry leaf that remains green and healthy



A creased leaf that will likely fall off

# YELLOW LEAVES



SEEING YELLOW LEAVES ON YOUR PLANTS?  
DON'T PANIC - IT'S TYPICALLY AN ISSUE WITH WATERING,  
AND IT'S EASILY RESOLVED ONCE IDENTIFIED.

## ? What causes yellow leaves?

A pigment called chlorophyll helps plants with photosynthesis - and gives leaves their signature green color. When this pigment goes away, leaves can appear yellow.

### **Yellow leaves are common, and can mean different things:**

- Older leaves will turn yellow before falling off - this is natural!
- See new growth turning yellow or rapid changes in leaf color? Take a closer look.

Think of yellow leaves as a plant telling you "I'm stressed!" Finding the cause of stress can help get your plant looking green.

## 👍 Treating yellow leaves:

### ***New location or recently replanted:***

Your plant is adjusting and trying to protect itself - the simple cure is just care and time. Discard any yellow leaves, and others will take its place as the plant grows.

### ***New yellowing leaves:***

Your plant needs more fertilizer! Nitrogen is a common ingredient in fertilizers and is responsible for green foliage growth. Make sure to feed your plant regularly.

### ***Yellowing around brown areas:***

This can be a sign of a fungal issue. Remove all affected leaves and dispose of them, and in severe cases, use a fungicide. Also make sure your plant has good airflow and the leaves are staying dry.

### ***Overall yellowing:***

Look at the care needs of your plant and make sure they are being met. Often, small insects, root rot or being rootbound can add stress and cause leaves to yellow.

## What yellow leaves might look like:



New growth yellowing  
on a Benjamina Ficus



Banana with older,  
yellowing leaves



Yellowing on  
the leaf tips



# PALE, LIMP, OR WEAK LEAVES

IS YOUR PLANT LOOKING A LITTLE SAD AND DROOPY?  
DON'T WORRY - IT'S NOTHING A LITTLE SUNSHINE  
AND TIME CAN'T FIX!



## ? What causes pale, limp or weak leaves?

You'll often see pale, weak leaves or stems on struggling plants that are in the wrong environment - most often because of light.

Plants convert light into the energy they need to grow strong. Low light conditions mean little energy is harvested, and plants will try to reach to get more sun with the little energy they have.

Preparation is the key to avoiding this issue altogether. Make sure you know your plant's light requirements before planting or placing it in your home!

## 👍 Treating pale, limp, and weak leaves:

### ***Leaves or stems are elongated or leaning to one side:***

Your plant is stretching towards the light source. Move your plant to an area that has brighter light, like a southern-facing window, and reposition your plant so that it's leaning away from the light source - over time, the plant will correct the bend. You can also rotate your plant occasionally to prevent this in the future.

### ***Pale leaves:***

Your plant needs more light to get its color back. Move your plant into an area with brighter sun, check for over-watering and remove dead leaves to make room for new ones. You can also feed your plant with fertilizer to help it along.

## What pale, limp, and weak leaves might look like:



A Lace Aloe stretching towards the light



Monstera with drooping leaves



Cold damage can also cause leaves to weaken

# SPOTTY OR DISCOLORED LEAVES



LEAVES CHANGING - BUT IT'S NOT FALL?  
KEEP ON READING TO FIND OUT THE  
REASON BEHIND SPOTS AND COLORS!

## ? What causes spotty or discolored leaves?

Leaf discoloration and spotting can occur for many reasons, but the most common causes are fungal or nutrition-related.

- If it's a fungal issue, you will notice random spots all over the leaves, along with the presence of moisture.
- Nutritional issues tend to discolor the leaves in a fairly uniform pattern. For example - all of a plant's new growth may turn red on the margins. These odd colors are often a result of too much or not enough of a certain nutrient.

One other reason a leaf can change colors? Insect or animal damage. If you suspect a pest, try to catch it in the act to rule out old scarring.

## 👍 Treating spotty or discolored leaves:

### ***Random spots with discoloration around them:***

This is a sign of a fungal issue. Remove all affected leaves and dispose of them, and in severe cases, use a fungicide. Make sure that your plant has good airflow and that the leaves remain dry.

### ***Leaves turning purple, red, orange or yellow (not in fall):***

This is a sign of a nutritional imbalance - to fix, try to narrow down what the issue might be. If you fertilized recently, try flushing the soil with water to remove excess. If you suspect a deficiency, add some fresh potting soil or fertilizer.

### ***Leaves have brown spots underneath:***

This is also known as edema, and it's caused by too much water, causing plant cells swell and burst. Check your watering habits and the container to make sure that excess water is not sitting in the pot.

## What spotty or discolored leaves might look like:



Rust, a fungal infection, on the underside of a Fiddle Leaf Fig



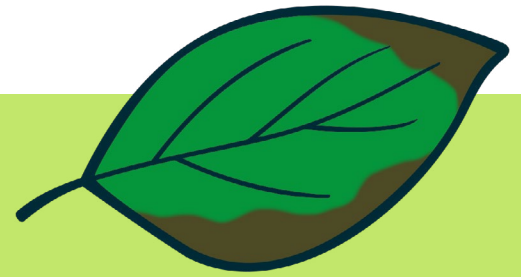
A Red Maple leaf undergoing normal fall color changes



A fungal issue on a palm leaf

# BROWN AND DRY LEAVES

LEAVES NOT LOOKING LUSH AND GREEN?  
DON'T WORRY - BROWNING AND DRY LEAVES ARE  
COMMON, AND EASY TO FIX AS NEW LEAVES GROW.



## ? What causes brown, dry leaves?

Plants are typically flexible and green due to the water content in leaves. When you experience brown and dry leaves, your plant is telling you that it doesn't have enough water to stay green!

**Many things can affect the moisture content of leaves, including:**

- Humidity
- Water available in the soil
- Fertilizer and salts in the soil

Remember that even evergreen leaves don't last forever, so you may see old leaves occasionally brown and fall off the tree. However, if browning is occurring rapidly throughout the entire plant, you'll want to identify and treat the cause.

## 👍 Treating brown and dry leaves:

***Too much fertilizer, or the wrong kind:***

Fertilizer is a form of salt, so when you apply too much, the salty soil pulls water out of the plant. To fix too much salt in the soil, deeply water the plant to flush it out.

***Dry air:***

Dry air could be geographical, seasonal or related to your AC/heat. Try to increase the amount of moisture in the air by misting your plant a couple of times a week, setting a shallow dish with water in it under your plant, or using a humidifier.

***Drought or dry soil:***

When this happens, it means there's not enough water for the plant to replenish itself. Supply water on a regular schedule, at a slow and low pressure so the plant's roots have enough time to absorb it.

## What brown and dry leaves might look like:



A stressed evergreen that should be replanted



This citrus tree and other tropicals can benefit from weekly misting



An Avocado that is browning from root rot