

HOW TO DIAGNOSE A PLANT PROBLEM

1. What type of plants are affected?

Knowing the type of plant will narrow the possibilities. Some plants are especially susceptible to a particular pest, disease, or nutrient deficiency. Many reference books organize information by plant type.

2. Are other types of plants also affected?

Some problems are specific to one plant type and others affect multiple plant types.

3. What part or parts of the plant are affected (leaves, roots, stems, flowers)?

Some problems affect one part of a plant, others affect the whole plant. This provides clues to the cause. Are the symptoms caused by a pathogen, disease, insect or mite, nutrient deficiency, or environmental problem?

4. What are the symptoms and is there a pathogen?

Check for symptom patterns such as one-sided, top-only, older versus younger leaves, etc. Symptom patterns provide clues to causes.

5. When did you first notice the symptoms?

You may be able to relate other events, such as weather or changes in production practices, or the arrival of a plant shipment, to the problem.

6. Are there any signs of an insect or disease?

You may see the insect or disease organism (gall or fungal growth). Collect them in a bag for closer inspection or send to a specialist.

7. Check your references to confirm identification.

A list of references and websites are provided at the end.

8. If you aren't sure of the identification, contact a specialist in your region and send them a sample.