

# UAF Indoor Plant Program (IPP) - Pest Management Information

Updated 10/21/19

Most indoor plant problems are related to environmental stress. Table 1 shows symptoms, possible causes and treatments to help you recognize and deal with some of the many indoor plant problems. Stressed plants usually recover once they receive acceptable growing conditions but it may take weeks to months. If unsuccessful in controlling problematic issues, it may be best to discard or donate the plant and acquire varieties that are successful in the conditions you can provide. Other problems are caused by insects and prevention is key to managing. The key to success against pests is to control them during their life stages so know your pest. Reference table 2 for Pest Life Cycles

[Information taken from Cooperative Extension Service Fairbanks Master Gardener Class, 2018 Curriculum](#)

Indoor plant pests can be managed but not eradicated; over exposure or prolonged use of some pest management treatments may harm your plant.

**Caution: Do not use chemicals. They can be harmful to humans and animals! Few pesticides are registered for indoor use on houseplants.**

Listed below are a few suggested methods for pest management:

1. **Green Solution:** If there are only a few pests, dip a Q-



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Table 1: Indoor plant problems, causes, and treatments

Symptoms (what you see)	Possible causes	Treatment (corrective action)
Spindly, stems grow abnormally long. Leaves lack color, are undersized and may fall off.	Too little light	Move plant closer to window or other light source. Don't fertilize when plants are dormant (winter)
Old leaves curl under. New leaves are smaller than old leaves. Leaves may brown.	Too much light	Move plant farther from window or light source, or filter light through a curtain.
Yellow, brown or white (bleached) spots on leaves (particularly on upper leaves).	Sun scorch caused by sudden increase	Shade plant. Move plants from shade to sun gradually so they can adapt. Some require shade.
Leaves turn yellow, curl downward or wilt.	Too much heat	Move plant to a cooler spot. Avoid placing plants near heat registers or hot-air outlets.
Wilt even if soil is moist. Margins and tips of leaves burn. White crust may appear on leaf edges and on the soil surface when dry.	Salt buildup in soil	Water three times at 30-minute intervals to wash the salts out the drainage hole. Do not use soft water.
White crust on rim and sides of porous pots. Leaves touching rim wilt and die.	Salt accumulation on pot	Leach soil as described above. Wash excess salts off pot with clear water. Wax the rim of the pot to prevent future salt deposits that might touch leaves.
White or yellow spots on leaves of African violets, gloxinias and other hairy leaved plants.	Cold water on leaves or in soil	Use room-temperature to lukewarm water for watering,
Dark brown spots around leaf margins of tropical foliage plants (especially philodendrons). Plants wilt between watering, roots fill pot and may grow out drainage hole. Growth slow.	Raw natural gas or incompletely burned gas in room Plant is too big for its pot	Check gas lines and fittings for gas leaks. Adjust gas burners for blue flame. Have furnace checked for leaks or adjustments. Repot in a larger container with a good potting soil mixture.

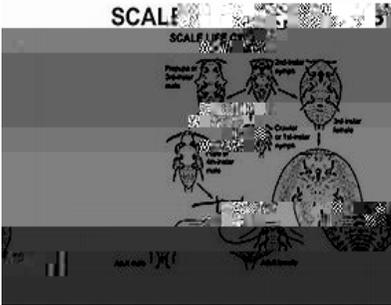
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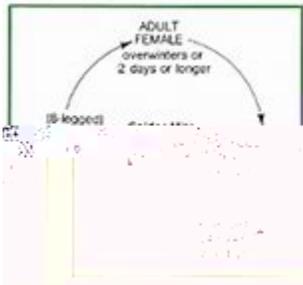
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**Scale** Sap sucking insects that resemble a disc like shield or a round wart or blemish adhering to the plant's leaves and stems.



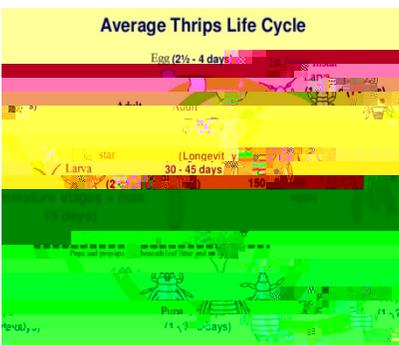
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<http://www.davey.com/arborist-advice/articles/scale-insects/>

**Spider Mites** Tiny web-spinning mites that will suck the cell contents from plant's.



<https://www.bing.com/images/>  
[https://www.gardenguides.com/about\\_6393590\\_life-cycle-spider-mites.html](https://www.gardenguides.com/about_6393590_life-cycle-spider-mites.html)  
<http://www.davey.com/arborist-advice/articles/mites/>

**Thrips** Small, slender and elongated insects that damage plants by rasping and scraping the plant's surfaces, leaving brown or silvery scars on the infested tissues.



<https://www.bing.com/images/>  
<https://www.gardenguides.com/12565413-how-to-kill-thrips.html>

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