

OSU Extension Metro Master Gardener™

Questions to Ask Clients

Recommendations for client interaction:

- Take your time. It is OK to call a client back after you find the right information.
- Don't advise clients on issues of personal health or commercial horticulture.
- Look for patterns and determine **uniform** or **random** damage (plant part, whole plant, community)
 - **Uniform damage** on many plants or an individual plant indicates abiotic (nonliving) factors:
 - **Mechanical**- Damage from equipment, animals, children, vandalism, etc.
 - **Physical**- Proper drainage and/or soil porosity, excessive heat, excessive cold, freezing, changes in light intensity, etc.
 - **Chemical**- Application drift, toxic chemicals, nutrient deficiencies/toxicities.
 - **Random** damage on one or only a few plants indicates biotic (living) factors:
 - **Pests** such as insects, slugs, mites, birds, and rodents.
 - **Pathogens** such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses.
- Formulate a tentative diagnosis based on your research using **reliable resources**.
 - Use your MG handbook, PNW Handbooks, clinic reference books, and/or reliable, researched based online content.
- Determine possible controls: 1) cultural, 2) biological, 3) least-harmful chemical.
- If you are stumped, refer the question to the next MG shift.

Plant

What is the problem plant(s) or issue?	Identify the plant: Common name, scientific name, variety/cultivar. Compare your plant to a healthy specimen of the same species/variety. Is there a problem?
What symptoms and signs are present on the plant(s) in question?	Symptoms (the plants response to stress or invader): dieback, changes in color/ pattern, blotches, curl, necrosis, shothole, wilt, scorch, rot, scab, gall, mosaic, mottle, ringspot, stunted growth, water soaked. Signs (evidence of other organisms interacting): fungal fruiting bodies, frass, insects, cast skins, mycelium.
What part of the plant is affected?	Roots, trunk, stems, branches, leaves, flowers.
How much of the plant is affected?	Estimate the percent damaged.

Plant's Environment

Where is the plant located?	Think about soil, sun, shade, drainage, nearby structures and materials, container size if applicable.
What is the appearance of nearby plants?	Do they have the same symptoms?
What have the weather patterns been?	Freezes, excess heat, hail, wind, etc.
What's going on nearby? Is the problem spreading?	Possible sources of injury or pesticide drift.

Cultural Conditions

What is the history of the soil where the plant is growing?	Think compaction, new development, toxins.
If recently planted, how was it done?	How was the soil prepared? Was it watered in?
How much/often is the plant watered?	Watering is critical for newly planted or transplanted woody plants for at least two years after planting.

Treatments to Date

What treatments have been applied?	Which treatments? When? Application rate? Results?
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