



Question of the Week

Q: My house plants have browning leaf tips and margins. What could be wrong?

A: There are four possible answers. 1. It could be root rot. The most common cause of root rot is over-watering. Always water a plant well until water comes out the drainage holes; then don't water again until the soil half an inch below the surface is dry. 2. The plant could be suffering from a potassium deficiency. When applying fertilizer always follow label directions and keep the fertilizer from touching the leaves. 3. Hot and dry air can also cause browning leaf tips. Keep plants away from heating vents and never place a plant on a radiator or other heat source. To increase humidity, run a humidifier or place plants over trays filled with small pebbles and a small amount of water. 4. Finally, the plant could be suffering from salts that have accumulated in the potting soil. Over time, potting soil will collect fertilizer salts or dissolved tap-water salts, evidenced by a white or yellow crust on the soil surface and along the outside edges of the pot. To prevent this, once a month drench the soil repeatedly with large amounts of water to dissolve the excess salts and flush them out of the soil. If the pot doesn't have a drainage hole you may need to remove the plant and repot it in new soil.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at fhgc@ceunh.unh.edu