



How to Get the Best Results from the UNH Extension Infoline

Guidelines for asking questions, reporting problems and requesting advice

Nate Bernitz, Infoline Program Coordinator

Since 2001, the UNH Cooperative Extension Infoline has answered over 4,000 questions every year from New Hampshire citizens about home, yard and garden topics.

Common Homeowner Topics Addressed through the Infoline

- ✓ Growing fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Establishing, maintaining or replacing lawns
- ✓ Identifying plants
- ✓ Controlling invasive species
- ✓ Caring for annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs
- ✓ Understanding soil test results
- ✓ Addressing nuisance wildlife

Over the years, after answering tens of thousands of questions, we've developed the following best practices for gardeners to get the most out of the UNH Extension Infoline service.

Gathering Evidence

Before you contact the Infoline, you may be able to anticipate some of the questions we'll ask you. Like detectives, clues and details help us to identify your problem accurately and offer personalized recommendations consistent with your objectives.

Clues to Report

Plant Health Diagnosis

- ✓ When did you first notice the problem?
- ✓ Is the problem present on just one plant species or variety?
- ✓ What is the color, shape, texture and size of the symptoms?
- ✓ Is the problem uniform or distributed randomly?

Ask UNH Extension

Ask Questions, Explore Opportunities,
Get Ideas

- **Toll free:**
1-877-EXT-GROW (398-4769)
- **Email:** answers@unh.edu
- **Walk in or mail to:**
Education Center
329 Mast Rd, STE 115
Goffstown, NH 03045
- **Connect on social media:**
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter,
and Reddit @AskUNHExtension
- **Explore our online resources:** extension.unh.edu/askunhextension

Infoline Hours:

Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

If you contact us outside Infoline hours, we'll typically respond within one working day.



Factors including soil type, sun exposure and required maintenance are important considerations when selecting plants for your landscape.

Plant Suggestions

- ✓ What are your goals? Is it to grow food, improve aesthetics, create wildlife habitat, provide pollinator habitat, increase privacy, improve water conservation or create recreational space?
- ✓ Is the soil mostly clay, sand or loam?
- ✓ Is the plant exposed to six or more hours of direct sunlight, or less?
- ✓ Can the site be regularly weeded, mowed, pruned and watered?
- ✓ Do you plan to incorporate new plants into an established landscape, or do you want to start over?

These are just two examples of common topics for the Infoline. The more information you can share with us, the better we can serve you.

No matter what your question is, it's helpful if you share where you live so we can provide suitable recommendations for your area.

Submitting Pictures

Including photos with your question is often helpful. Here are some tips for how to best submit pictures to the UNH Extension Infoline:

- ✓ Photos should be emailed or sent through social media with a description of what is in the picture(s) and your question.
- ✓ Photos should be in focus.
- ✓ Include an object or ruler to demonstrate the size of the subject in the photo.
- ✓ Send several pictures, especially of trees and large shrubs. Include a close-up of the issue and a shot of the entire plant.
- ✓ For plant identification, send a photo of the entire plant and closeups of the flowers, seed heads or other distinguishing features. A description of where the plant is growing or what it looks like at other times of the year will be helpful.
- ✓ Provide pictures that show healthy parts and problematic parts of the plant. Let us know what percentage of the plant is in the same condition.
- ✓ The tops of mature trees are difficult to see and photograph, so we may need to refer you to an arborist who can do an inspection at your home.

Like detectives, clues and details help us to identify your problem accurately and offer personalized recommendations consistent with your objectives.

Why Use the Infoline?

Whether you're an experienced gardener or just starting out, we know that you have more options than ever before to get information and advice.

We also know that sometimes you just want one answer that you can count on, and the UNH Extension Infoline provides personalized information and research-based recommendations from trained Master Gardener volunteers and university staff.



A picture showing symptoms of cedar apple rust on an apple tree in June with a quarter to show the size of the damage.

What to Expect

When you contact the Infoline you should expect that we will:

- ✓ Answer your question to the best of our ability with research-based information.
- ✓ Consider the specifics of your situation.
- ✓ Respect you and your time.
- ✓ Treat your personal information confidentially and with care.
- ✓ Offer recommendations that may save you money, keep you and your family safe, and help minimize your environmental impact.

You should not expect that we will:

- ✓ Recommend specific products or services offered by companies.
- ✓ Answer questions from commercial businesses; UNH Extension specialists work with commercial clients. We will make referrals to the appropriate specialist.
- ✓ Endorse or recommend taking actions that are unlawful, unsafe or damaging to the environment.

Please provide us with feedback on the UNH Extension Infoline service, as we are always striving to better serve the needs of all New Hampshire citizens.



Master Gardener Infoline Volunteer Laura Conner

Most questions at the UNH Extension Infoline are answered by Master Gardener volunteers who have completed an extensive training program and are dedicated to continuing education. The volunteers and staff work as a team to respond to each request and provide the best quality recommendations.

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The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.

About the Author

Nate Bernitz supports Master Gardener volunteers with the tools, organization and training they need to deliver outstanding service to New Hampshire residents through the Education Center and Infoline.

For More Information

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