

Definitions of Symptoms and Signs used in Plant Problem Diagnosis

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Blight: Sudden discoloration and death of tissues over certain parts of the plant. Used as a general way to describe a disease condition which may include dieback of new growth, severe wilting or death of leaves, stems, flowers or entire plants. Usually coupled with the name of the plant part affected, such as twig blight, blossom blight, tip blight, bud blight, or leaf blight.



Blotch: Large and irregularly shaped spots or blots on leaves, stems, shoots or fruit.

Bronzing: Copper or bronze color of leaves or needles.

Canker: A definite, localized, discolored, dead, often sunken and cracked area, on a stem, twig, branch, limb or trunk surrounded by living tissues. Cankers may girdle affected parts, resulting in dieback.



Chlorosis : Yellowing or paling of normally green tissues due to the destruction of chlorophyll. Many diseases cause chlorosis, and often the pattern of the chlorotic area helps to diagnose the disease.

Conks: fungal fruiting structures formed on rotting, woody plants (shelf or bracket fungi)

Cracking: Splitting of tissue usually associated with drying cells. May result from different growth rates in adjoining tissue.

Damping-off: A disease of young seedlings caused by soil-borne fungi. Infected seedlings topple over and die just after they emerge from the soil. In some cases, seedlings may damp-off before they emerge from the soil.

Decline: progressive, gradual weakening and death of a plant or population of plants

Defoliation: Loss of leaves.

Dieback: Progressive gradual weakening and death of individual branches or shoots beginning at the tips and moving toward the main stem or trunk. Often leading to decline.

Distortion: Abnormally shaped or malformed plant tissues.



Exudate: Any substance formed inside a plant and discharged through a natural opening or wound.

Flagging: A one-sided wilt.

Gall: A pronounced localized swelling or outgrowth, often more or less spherical and composed of unorganized cells.



Lesion: A localized spot on a leaf or other plant part, usually roughly circular and discolored. Spots, cankers, blisters, scabs, etc. are lesions.

Mosaic: Disarrangement of the chlorophyll content of plant tissue, especially leaves, resulting in areas that are dark green and light green, or yellow areas forming a variegated pattern. Typical symptom of some viral diseases.

Mummy: A dried, shriveled, fruit, partly or completely replaced with fungal structures.

Necrosis: The death or disintegration of cells and tissue, usually resulting in the tissue turning black or brown.

Ringspot: A circular area of chlorosis or necrosis with a green, healthy-appearing center.



Rot: Disintegration, discoloration, and decomposition of plant tissue. A dry or hard rot if the decay is firm and dry; or a wet rot if soft, watery and foul smelling.

Scorch: Sudden browning and death of tissue from infection, unfavorable weather conditions, or a lack or excess of some element. Scorch often is expressed as burning of leaf tissue, observed between the veins or as a uniform marginal necrosis (burning or browning and dying of leaf margins).



Shot hole: A symptom in which small roundish fragments drop out of leaves making them appear as having been riddled by shot.

Stunting: The underdevelopment of any organ of the plant, or the entire plant itself.



Water-soaking: Usually a greasy, wet, dark, sunken, translucent appearance of tissue caused by the movement of water from cells into spaces between the cells; a common symptom during early stages of many bacterial diseases.



Wilt: Loss of rigidity and drooping of plant parts. Similar to flagging except a wilt usually involves a greater portion of the plant while flagging is more of a one-sided wilt.

Witches' broom: An abnormal, brush-like growth of many weak shoots

