Insects can appear out of nowhere on your houseplants, so regular checks are essential. High health plants equal plants that are less susceptible to pests and diseases. You can minimise stress to your plant with adequate watering and fertiliser. You may notice the pests with a change of season or when you introduce a new plant into your home. While suppliers and plant shops take the utmost pest care, some pests have a rapid breeding cycle, so you can quarantine your plant to one room for a week to safeguard yourself before adding it into your collection.

Mites
Often, small infestations can be blasted off with a heavy stream of water. Many insecticides don't work on mites, and a specific spray is required. Mites thrive in hot environments.

Whitefly
They are slow-moving in the morning, so this is often the best time to treat them. They have a sixteen-day life cycle so we recommend you spray two times, 7-10 days apart.

Aphid
Has a three-day lifecycle. Therefore you need to spray every third day for a few weeks until gone. Often you can tell you have an aphid issue as the tips of the plants look deformed as they grow.

Mealybug
Dab with meths on each bug for best results. Otherwise, use an oil-based spray. They can also be in the soil; in this case, you will also need to use a soil insect killer. Requires regular treatment 7-10 days apart as the fluffy body provides them with protection.

Scale
Sucks the sap out of plants' leaves and stems, resulting in deformed and stunted growth. The other visual signs are yellowing on leaves, brown pockmarks and possibly leaf drop. As the scale feed on the plant, they leave a sticky residue behind. When spraying for scale, the outer shells can be left behind after their bodies die. You may need to remove these by hosing down your plant lightly.

Fungus Gnats
Can also lay eggs in the soil. Check the soil, and if there are no eggs, regular treatment can resume. If there are eggs in the soil, you will need to repot or try Neem granules. Otherwise, treat with insecticide, or you can place a saucer of low-lying water close to the infested plant. The most common reason for getting fungus gnats is overwatering.

Leaf Problem Solver

On top of insects, we can often tell what is going wrong with your houseplant by the leaf colour and markings.

Oedema (Edema)
This can not spread to other plants as it's a water retention disorder. The plant uptakes too much water too quickly and attempts to lose this via the leaf, causing markings from cell expansion. To minimise, when watering, don't over (or under) water, and water the plant's soil, not the plant leaf. Oedmea presents differently on different plants.

- **Ficus lyrata:** The brown veins on the leaf can sometimes diminish as the plant ages and the leaf becomes greener. In bad cases, chop the leaf off.
- **Peperomia**: Raised blisters in colours of tan, off-white or brown are found on the underside of the leaf and indentations on top. The leaf will not grow out of this; remove the leaf.
- **Cissus discolour and pothos:** Clear spheres in clusters on the underside of the leaf. Do not mistake for insects.

Brown Leaf Tips
Houseplants are tropical from high humidity environments, which our homes don't naturally have. Increase misting to minimise. Look at your watering and ensure it's consistent, don't allow your plant to dry out for weeks on end.

Yellow Leaves
Yellow leaves are a bit tricky as it can be for a few reasons. Overwatering can cause yellow leaves, which are usually soft (not crunchy to touch). Yellow leaves are also a sign of a cold plant over winter (2); the yellow will start at the tip of the leaf and move down to the stem. It could also be because the plant is hungry and needs fertiliser or repotting. Or lastly, it could be an older leaf ready to fall off to give the rest of your plant energy, which is natural (1). If unsure, take a picture or bring your plant in for us to look at.

Brown/Black Markings
Soft brown markings are common in Ficus and Hoya and a few other plants from overwatering, inconsistent watering or waterlogging. The markings vary in shape and present near the leaf's middle vein or edges. The bottom leaves will present first and then spread up the plant. The brown spots will get larger and sometimes cause your plant's leaf to look dehydrated and fall off. The markings are soft to touch not crunchy. You will need to repot or address your watering schedule and ensure your plant is in a warm position. Remove affected leaves. A fungicide spray will not remedy this situation.

Brown Crunchy Leaves

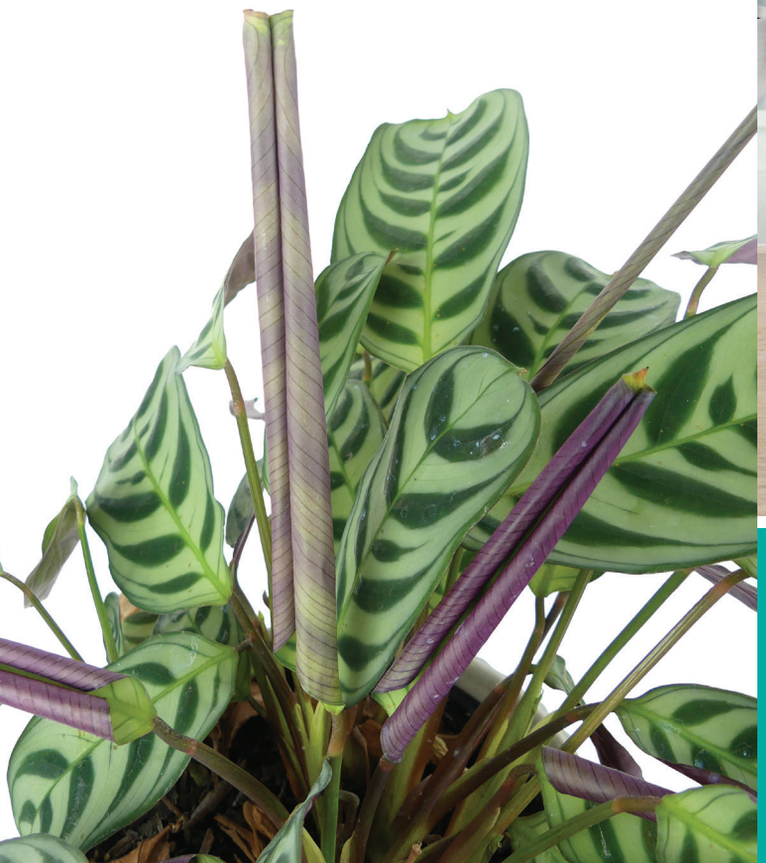
This is a sign of your plant not getting enough water. The soil will have potentially dehydrated to the point where it cannot retain moisture anymore. The plant may need to be repotted into fresh soil. The crunchy brown leaves will not amend themselves, and your plant may need a tidy up.

Root Rot

Please refer to the Oderings Gardening Guide – Houseplant soil.

Curling/Distorted Leaves

Insect is (or was) present and has sucked the nutrients out of the new leaf. Treat with appropriate product and Tui Seawood Tonic.



KIWICARE

PROUDLY NZ MADE

GROW WITH Gro-Sure CERTAINTY

Trust the experts to make houseplant care **easy**

For more information and handy houseplant tips visit kiwicare.co.nz

ODERINGS GARDEN CENTRES

www.oderings.co.nz

Houseplant Problem Solver

ODERINGS GARDENING *guide*