

Nutritional deficiencies in the garden can be fixed

Eileen Ward
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With garden season well underway, you might start noticing a problem with your plants: nutritional deficiencies. These can come in many varieties, and they require targeted care.

The following is a guide to help you with the various deficiencies that you might notice. This can help you decide which, if any, fertilizer to use.

There are 16 known elements required for healthy plants. Three of these – carbon, hydrogen and oxygen – can be obtained directly from air and water. The other 13 elements are supplied through the soil. These are nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, chlorine, copper, zinc, manganese, iron, boron and molybdenum.

Each of these elements has a specific function in plant growth and development. If one or more of these nutrients are present in excessive amounts, toxicity or a nutrient imbalance can occur. Or if one or more of these essential elements are in short supply, a deficiency can result. Either way, plant growth and quality may be affected.

General symptoms of nutrient deficiencies are as follows:

Nitrogen: Yellowing of entire plant with lower leaves worse and stunted.

Phosphorus: Main veins of old leaves become purple or reddish. On fruit trees, blossoms drop, fruit is small and matures slowly and few flower buds are formed for next year’s crop.

Potassium: Light yellowing, then browning of leaf margins on old leaves. Then veins become yellow.

Manganese: Mottled yellowing between midrib and primary veins. Entire leaf may turn yellow; midrib and large veins stay green longest. Frizzle top, yellowing, dwarfing and distortion.

Iron: Pronounced yellowing on younger leaves, with veins appearing as a pale green or yellow to white if acute. Dwarf leaves, leaf fall, dead wood, dead tips and reduced growth.

Magnesium: Yellowing begins on the margin and near the center of old leaf, then progresses inward and downward; the tip, upper margin and lower central veins may remain green; necrosis and



Prominent yellow discoloration reveals signs of possible plant disease or nutrient deficiency. GETTY IMAGES

leaf drop.

Molybdenum: Often mistaken for herbicide damage. Dwarfed leaves with irregular, wrinkled margins and prominent midribs and main veins on young leaves and shoots.

Boron: Plants grow slowly. Terminal buds die and plant tends to be bushy. Later, lateral buds die, leaves thicken and fruits, tubers and roots become cracked and discolored.

Copper: Usually confined to peat or muck soils. Slow growth or complete cessation of growth. Tips affected first and eventually die back.

Zinc: Leaves become long and narrow, then turn yellow and become mottled with dead areas. Symptoms similar to iron deficiency.

Individual micronutrients are available with suggested rates provided for application. However, it is essential that all micronutrients be provided in your fertilizer program at least once a year.

To avoid problems, your plants should get a good feeding in the spring

months using a quality slow-release fertilizer with minors.

Lawns, trees and shrubs do not need as much fertilizer as some would have you think. Begin with twice a year for your shrubs and then just fertilize those that are showing signs of need. Most native plants in your yard should breeze right through the seasons with almost no needs at all.

Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are the main components, or macronutrients, of fertilizer. Sulfur, the remaining macronutrient, might not be a component of a basic fertilizer and should not be overlooked. Look for fertilizer containing sulfur-coated urea nitrogen.

When applied as a granular fertilizer, the micronutrients can be tied up in alkaline soil, due to improper pH, and may not be available to the plant. Therefore, when a micronutrient deficiency is apparent, it is more effective to apply a nutritional spray. These are liquid formulations that allow the elements to enter the plant through the leaf surfaces.

The micronutrients to be used sparingly are boron, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum and zinc. Chlorine ordinarily is not valued as a plant food in fertilizer. It can be injurious if high percentages are present, though small amounts may be beneficial under some conditions. If you have plants or lawn around pool equipment or overflow that don’t do well it may be chlorine toxicity.

Micronutrients are required by plants only in low quantities, so you should apply them cautiously. If a deficiency is suspected, it would be unwise to randomly apply all of the micronutrients. The result might correct one deficiency while inducing a toxicity of another.

Foliar analysis is the most accurate way to determine if a micronutrient deficiency needs correcting. When in doubt, send a soil or tissue sample to your local agricultural extension service to determine the plant’s exact needs.

Learn more about Eileen Ward at her website, [TheWickedGardener.com](#).

What landlords must fix – and what they can ignore

Dear Monty
Richard Montgomery

Q: Is the owner or real estate agent of a rental property obligated to paint the walls and fix leaks and leak damage before a tenant moves in?

A: The answer depends on two things: what was agreed to in writing, and whether you have already moved in. Those facts change your legal position considerably. Here are some thoughts on both issues.

First, a note on agents. Real estate agents who manage rentals act on behalf of the property owner.

Legal obligations rest with the landlord. If an agent made promises on the landlord’s behalf, those promises bind the landlord, but only if they are in writing.

No. 1: Painting the walls

In most states, fresh paint is a cosmetic condition, not a legal requirement. If you saw the walls before signing and said nothing, you likely accepted them as-is. That is an expensive lesson many tenants learn once.

Some states and municipalities require landlords to repaint between tenants at specified intervals. Check your local housing code.

And if the paint is peeling or the home was built before 1978, the situation changes. Federal law requires landlords to disclose known lead-based paint hazards before a lease is signed. Peeling lead paint is no longer cosmetic; it becomes a habitability concern. You can read the full disclosure requirements on the Environmental Protection Agency website.

No. 2: Fixing leaks and leak damage

This is a different matter entirely. Nearly every state recognizes an implied warranty of habitability, a legal doctrine requiring landlords to deliver and maintain units in a livable condition.

Active leaks and water damage fall squarely under this protection, regardless of what was or was not discussed.

Mold deserves special attention. If active leaks have created or are likely to

create mold conditions, this moves beyond a repair dispute. Mold is a public health issue. Many states give tenants the right to withhold rent, hire a contractor and deduct the cost or terminate the lease. In serious cases, the local health department has independent authority to compel action, a move that landlords often respond to faster than a legal notice.

Your options, in order of priority:

- Get everything in writing before you sign. If the landlord agreed to fix leaks or repaint, that commitment belongs in the lease or a signed addendum. Oral promises are nearly impossible to enforce.
- Document conditions with dated photos. Whether pre- or post-move-in, a photographic record is your most important evidence. Do this immediately.
- Know your state’s habitability remedies. Most states allow tenants to withhold rent, repair-and-deduct or terminate the lease when habitability is genuinely compromised. Procedures vary. Contact your state’s tenant rights hotline before acting.

● Contact the local health department if mold is present or likely. Their inspection report carries weight that a tenant’s complaint alone does not.

● Consult a landlord-tenant attorney. If the landlord is unresponsive and conditions are serious, an attorney’s letter often moves things faster than any other step.

A final thought: A landlord is not obligated to repaint walls you accepted at viewing.

A landlord is obligated to address active leaks, and if mold follows their neglect, the legal and financial exposure shifts heavily in your direction. The time to negotiate repairs is before you sign, not after.

Richard Montgomery is a syndicated columnist, published author, retired real estate executive, serial entrepreneur and the founder of DearMonty.com and PropBox Inc. He provides consumers with options to real estate issues. Follow him on Twitter (X) @montgomRM or DearMonty.com.

The time to negotiate repairs is before you sign, not after.

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