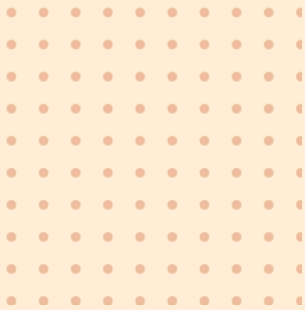


THE

Leaf First-Aid Chart

What leaf color tells you, and what to do about it today



stick it on the shed wall



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The Leaf First-Aid Chart

What leaf color tells you, and what to do about it today

BY MAX SIDOROV

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

How to use this guide

3

Notes

5

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● How to use this guide

Find the leaf color you are seeing, read the cause, and do the first aid. This chart is the first section of the full Leaf First-Aid Manual, which also covers fungal diseases, pests and stress problems.

Leaves are the plant's warning lights. When the soil runs short of a nutrient, the leaves change color in a typical pattern. Yellowing from a lack of green pigment is called **chlorosis**.

Symptom	What's happening?	Cause	First aid (What to do NOW)	Super recipe
Leaves turn YELLOW (the whole leaf goes pale, veins too; older leaves suffer first)	Chlorosis. The plant moves nitrogen out of its old leaves and into the young ones.	Nitrogen (N) deficiency. ¹	Give fast-acting nitrogen right away. Water with herbal tea or liquid manure. In a Croatian trial, watering with nettle tea raised green bean yields by about half. ²	Nitrogen punch: 1 L (1 qt) of nettle tea (steeped 24 hours) + 1 tbsp urea per 10 L (2.6 gal) of water. Water at the roots.
Leaves turn YELLOW (veins stay GREEN, young leaves pale)	Young leaves turn pale yellow, sometimes almost white, while the veins stay dark green. Growth slows down.	Iron (Fe) deficiency (iron chlorosis). Common on alkaline soils, where the iron is locked up. ³	For a quick fix, spray the leaves with an iron chelate (iron bound to a carrier molecule so the leaf can absorb it). For a lasting fix, start lowering the soil pH (for blueberries, hydrangeas).	Iron antidote: 1 tsp citric acid + 1 tsp ferrous sulfate (iron sulfate) per 1 L (1 qt) of water (together they make a simple homemade chelate). Spray twice, 3 days apart.
Leaves turn RED or PURPLE (on the underside)	Leaves take on a purple tint, especially underneath.	Phosphorus (P) deficiency. Common in cold soil, where roots can't take it up. ⁴	Warm the soil (mulch) and feed phosphorus right away.	Phosphorus brew: Pour 1 L (1 qt) of boiling water over 3 tbsp superphosphate (a common phosphorus fertilizer sold at garden centers), let it steep 24 hours, strain, and dilute in 10 L (2.6 gal) of water. Water at the roots.
Leaf edges and tips turn BROWN AND DRY (edge scorch)	The leaf edges look burned, and the leaf turns "rusty."	Potassium (K) deficiency. Especially in tomatoes and potatoes while the fruit is filling out. ⁵	Give potassium right away (wood ash). ⁶	Potassium cocktail: 1 cup of wood ash + 1 tbsp potassium humate (a soluble humic-acid product) per 10 L (2.6 gal) of water. Let it steep 2 hours, then water at the roots.

Symptom	What's happening?	Cause	First aid (What to do NOW)	Super recipe
Leaves SMALL, CURLED, with dying tips	The growing tips die, and new leaves come out misshapen.	Calcium (Ca) or boron (B) deficiency. ⁷	Spray the leaves with a micronutrient blend.	Boron-calcium cocktail: 1 tsp boric acid + 1 tbsp calcium nitrate per 10 L (2.6 gal) of water. Spray on the leaves.
Leaves MOTTLED like a MOSAIC (yellow-green patches)	A random, patchy pattern on the leaves.	Viral disease (mosaic).	There is no cure. Pull out the plant and destroy it: burn it where that's allowed, or bag it for the trash. ⁸	Protect the neighbors: No spray can make plants immune to a virus. Pull nearby weeds (the virus can live in them), cover young plants with row cover to keep off aphids (they carry the virus), and wash your hands and tools often. A one-minute soak in a 20% nonfat dry milk solution cleans tools of some viruses. ⁹ Some gardeners also spray neighbors with turmeric milk (2 tbsp turmeric + 1 L (1 qt) milk + 1 tsp pepper per 10 L (2.6 gal) of water) every 5 days, but no research shows it protects against viruses.

● Notes

Each number matches a small number in the text. A source used more than once keeps the same number.

1. African Plant Nutrition Institute. (n.d.). *Generalized Reference Guide to Nutrient Deficiency Locations in Plants*. <https://www.apni.net/?p=9324> (Nitrogen deficiency: even yellowing that starts on older leaves.)
2. Maričić, B., Brkljača, M., Ban, D., Palčić, I., Franin, K., Marčelić, Š., & Goreta Ban, S. (2022). Non-aerated common nettle (*Urtica dioica* L.) extract enhances green beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.) growth and soil enzyme activity. *Life*, 12(12), 2145. <https://doi.org/10.3390/life12122145> (Croatian pot trial; yield up 48%, soil respiration up 74–91%.)
3. University of Maryland Extension. (n.d.). *Nutrient Deficiency of Trees and Shrubs*. <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/nutrient-deficiency-trees-and-shrubs> (Iron chlorosis: yellow leaves with prominent green veins, usually linked to high soil pH.)
4. University of Maryland Extension. (n.d.). *Nutrient Deficiency of Trees and Shrubs*. <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/nutrient-deficiency-trees-and-shrubs> (Phosphorus deficiency: bronze-to-purple leaf undersides.)
5. University of Maryland Extension. (n.d.). *Nutrient Deficiency of Trees and Shrubs*. <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/nutrient-deficiency-trees-and-shrubs> (Potassium deficiency: yellowing at the leaf edges followed by scorch.)
6. Smith, K., Majumdar, A., Mitchell, C., Everest, J., Sikora, E., Kemble, J., & Ward, R. (rev. 2021). *The Alabama Vegetable Gardener* (ANR-0479), web excerpt on wood ashes for lime and potash. Alabama Cooperative Extension System. <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/wood-ashes-for-lime-and-potash/> (About 1–10% potash; can raise soil pH sharply, so use sparingly.)
7. African Plant Nutrition Institute. (n.d.). *Generalized Reference Guide to Nutrient Deficiency Locations in Plants*. <https://www.apni.net/?p=9324> (Calcium and boron deficiencies show as misshapen young leaves near the growing point.)
8. Draeger, K. R. (2024). *Cucumber Mosaic* (UW Plant Disease Facts D0036). University of Wisconsin–Madison, Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic. <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/cucumber-mosaic/> (No cure; remove infected plants and weed hosts; row covers keep aphids off.)
9. Schuh, M., Johnson, A., Grabowski, M., & Orshinsky, A. (n.d.). *Tomato viruses*. University of Minnesota Extension. <https://extension.umn.edu/disease-management/tomato-viruses> (Clean hands and tools; a 20% nonfat dry milk soak cleans tools of some viruses.)

WANT THE WHOLE METHOD?

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This was a taste. **Grow Like a God** walks you through all 5 Laws of living soil and how to create new life in your garden, step by step, with every table, recipe and guide.

Biology first. No chemicals.