Questions to Ask Clients

Recommendations for client interaction:

- Take your time. It is OK to call a client back after you find the right information.
- Don’t advise clients on issues of personal health or commercial horticulture.
- Look for patterns and determine uniform or random damage (plant part, whole plant, community)
  
  **Uniform damage** on many plants or an individual plant indicates abiotic (nonliving) factors:
  - Mechanical- Damage from equipment, animals, children, vandalism, etc.
  - Physical- Proper drainage and/or soil porosity, excessive heat, excessive cold, freezing, changes in light intensity, etc.
  - Chemical- Application drift, toxic chemicals, nutrient deficiencies/toxicities.

  **Random** damage on one or only a few plants indicates biotic (living) factors:
  - Pests such as insects, slugs, mites, birds, and rodents.
  - Pathogens such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses.

- Formulate a tentative diagnosis based on your research using reliable resources.
  - Use your MG handbook, PNW Handbooks, clinic reference books, and the new Master Gardener Web Resources at http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/metro/online-research-tools.

- Determine possible controls: 1) cultural, 2) biological, 3) least-harmful chemical.
- If you are stumped, refer the question to the next MG shift.

### Plant

**What is the problem plant(s) or issue?**
Identify the plant: Common name, scientific name, variety/cultivar. Compare your plant to a healthy specimen of the same species/variety. Is there a problem?

**What symptoms and signs are present on the plant(s) in question?**
Symptoms (the plants response to stress or invader): dieback, changes in color/pattern, blotches, curl, necrosis, shothole, wilt, scorch, rot, scab, gall, mosaic, mottle, ringspot, stunted growth, water soaked. Signs (evidence of other organisms interacting): fungal fruiting bodies, frass, insects, cast skins, mycelium.

**What part of the plant is affected?**
Roots, trunk, stems, branches, leaves, flowers.

**How much of the plant is affected?**
Estimate the percent damaged.

### Plant’s Environment

**Where is the plant located?**
Think about soil, sun, shade, drainage, nearby structures and materials, container size if applicable.

**What is the appearance of nearby plants?**
Do they have the same symptoms?

**What have the weather patterns been?**
Freezes, excess heat, hail, wind, etc.

**What’s going on nearby? Is the problem spreading?**
Possible sources of injury or pesticide drift.

### Cultural Conditions

**What is the history of the soil where the plant is growing?**
Think compaction, new development, toxins.

**If recently planted, how was it done?**
How was the soil prepared? Was it watered in?

**How much/often is the plant watered?**
Watering is critical for newly planted or transplanted woody plants for at least two years after planting.

### Treatments to Date

**What treatments have been applied?**
Which treatments? When? Application rate? Results?