The Process of Problem Solving

Dr. Natalie Bumgarner, Knox Co. Extension Master Gardeners
June 6, 2016

• What is our goal??
• What is our goal??
• Getting a sense of the site
• Getting a sense of the site
• Taking the patient’s ‘history’
• Taking the patient’s ‘history’
• Knowing key culprits
• Knowing key culprits
• Relying on our resources
• Relying on our resources
• Passing the baton if necessary
• Passing the baton if necessary

Reasonable expectations

• Interest and clear questions
• Interest and clear questions
• Time focused on their concern-some discussion
• Time focused on their concern-some discussion
• Suggestions for further reading
• Suggestions for further reading
• Suggestions for next steps (labs, images)
• Suggestions for next steps (labs, images)
• Recognition of serious management issues
• Recognition of serious management issues

Unreasonable expectations

• Not always simple
• Not always simple
• Not always certain
• Not always certain
• Not always salvageable
• Not always salvageable
• Not for commercial producers
• Not for commercial producers

What we can provide

• Benefit of our training
• Benefit of our training
• Broader understanding of the problem
• Broader understanding of the problem
• Suggestions for managing plants in the landscape and garden (future focus)
• Suggestions for managing plants in the landscape and garden (future focus)
• Sources of information
• Sources of information

Beware of searching for nails...

One step at a time

• Try to focus on site before issues
• Try to focus on site before issues
• Recent management/weather
• Recent management/weather
• Light, moisture, chemicals
• Light, moisture, chemicals
• Then have them describe the issue
• Then have them describe the issue
• Make sure you know the plants involved
• Make sure you know the plants involved
Critical site questions
• Are they growing in soil?
• History of disturbance?
• How does water move on the site?
• What is nearby?

Important ‘patient’ information
• What is it?
• No, really, what is it?
• What is abnormal?
• Have any steps already been taken??

The issue
• Where on the plant
• How much of the plant is covered
• On fruit, flowers?

Responsible recommendations
• Backed by resources (not just verbal)
• Not anecdotal
• Actionable steps
• Not overpromising
• Try to address long-term success

Keeping records
• Plants and issues
• Archive of images (if possible)

Resources
• UT Soil, Pest and Plant Center
• Extension publications
• APS website- http://www.apsnet.org/
• IPM images- http://www.ipmimages.org/

Knowing when to pass it on
• Ask for samples
• Ask for photos- not just verbal descriptions
• Definitive IDs for diseases
• Soil tests for site concerns
• No shame in “I don’t know, but I’ll work to find out”