

# The Process of Problem Solving

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

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

## Reasonable expectations

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

## Unreasonable expectations

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

## What we can provide

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

## Beware of searching for nails...

### One step at a time

- Try to focus on site before issues
- Light, moisture, **chemicals**
- Make sure you know the plants involved
- Recent management/weather
- Then have them describe the issue

### **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

### **Keeping records**

- Plants and issues
- Archive of images (if possible)

### **Resources**

- UT Soil, Pest and Plant Center
- Extension publications

### **Knowing when to pass it on**

- Ask for samples
- Ask for photos- not just verbal descriptions
- Definitive IDs for diseases

- How much light and when?

- Fertility management

- How long has it been there?

- How has it performed in the past?

- Describe colors

- Top or bottom of leaf

- Not overpromising

- Try to address long-term success

- Dates and issues

- APS website- <http://www.apsnet.org/>

- IPM images- <http://www.ipmimages.org/>

- Soil tests for site concerns

- No shame in “I don’t know, but I’ll work to find out”