

ORCHID REPOTTING BASICS

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I. A STRONG HEALTHY ROOT SYSTEM IS OF PRIME IMPORTANCE TO THE SUCCESSFUL GROWING, MAINTENANCE AND BLOOMING OF YOUR ORCHIDS

II. WHEN TO REPOT YOUR ORCHID?

- a.** Best time to repot nearly all orchids is DURING ACTIVE PERIODS OF ROOT GROWTH (roots with green or reddish tips), just as the roots are emerging. Usually occurs when plants are initiating new growth of pseudobulbs or after blooming, but not always. Some members of cattleya alliance produce new pseudobulbs prior to sending out new roots, so repot them only when new roots begin to appear. Paphiopediums are an exception. They can be repotted almost anytime and benefit from fresh medium. Cymbidiums are best repotted after blooming.

III. REASONS TO REPOT

- a.** Orchid has outgrown pot
- b.** Medium has broken down
- c.** Want to change medium to suit your growing conditions. New plants, particularly from Hawaiian growers, can be a problem as well as plants grown in sphagnum peat moss (phals)
- d.** Plants are not growing well in existing medium
- e.** Desire to multiply (divide) plant

IV. REPOTTING TIPS

- a.** Use gloves and clean tools (sterilize all tools or use sterile, disposable razor blades, potting sticks, clean surfaces, etc) to avoid transmission of disease or viruses from plant to plant.
- b.** Remove plant from pot and discard old media and dead roots. Try not to disturb viable roots with attached media, which are usually on lead pseudobulbs of plant produced during the previous growing season.
- c.** Use repotting time as an opportunity to clean up plant by removing dead leaves, old pseudobulbs, and spent sheaths or spikes. Check for disease and remove any scale (soap or alcohol and old toothbrush) from bulbs, rhizomes and leaves. Scale tends to hide under old protective sheaths of the pseudobulbs and flower sheaths, so be sure to examine plant carefully and remove any visible scale.
- d.** Add styrofoam peanuts (not biodegradable ones) to bottom inch of pot to aid air circulation and drainage.
- e.** Do not over pot, since most orchids like to be root bound. Use smallest pot to accommodate roots and allow up to 2 years growth. Place back of plant (old growths) at back edge of pot to allow for growth from newer leads in the front of the rhizome. For orchids that are grow in multiple directions, position plant in center of pot.

- f. If plant is not vigorous and roots are not very healthy, place in smallest pot possible to encourage new root growth.
- g. Avoid damaging new roots and new growths during potting process.
- h. Type and size of media should be proportional to size of pot and root type. For smaller pots use finer medium and for larger pots use more coarse medium. Also fine roots prefer fine medium, while coarse roots do well in larger medium). Terrestrial and semi-terrestrials need a moisture retentive media.
- i. Repotting media – use good quality bark (Kiwi bark) and medium to coarse perlite (a ratio of 3:1) – works well for cattleya, oncidium and dendrobium alliances. Some use charcoal or other inert material to open up mix and improve drainage. Size of bark gauged to size of pot, thickness of roots. Paphs use fine or mixed fine/medium bark and perlite. Cymbidiums do well in coconut husk chips (pre-soaked three times to leach out salts) or in bark/perlite mix (3:1).

V. RESOURCES

Texts for beginners and advanced hobbyists (paperbacks):

Miracle-Gro's Complete Guide to Orchids, Ned Nash, Steve Frowine, Meredith Books, 2008.

Orchids for Dummies, Steven A. Frowine, Wiley Publishing, 2005.

Supplies (the most economical sources I have found):

Premixed orchid bark, small quantities: Home Depot, Lowes or Walter Anderson Nursery

Kiwi orchid bark (small, medium, large) and coarse perlite (no. 3) – Fred Clarke, Sunset Valley Orchids, Vista, CA <http://www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com> Ph: 760.639.6255; Cell: 619.948.5942; email: fred.clarke@att.net

General Orchid Supplies: coarse charcoal, coarse perlite, clear plastic pots and misc. orchid supplies - Calavo Gardens, La Mesa, CA, Ben Machido, Ph&Fax: 619.660.9810; Cell: 619.948.5942; email: bnmach16814@aol.com

Coarse charcoal (50 lb. bags) – Western Farm Service (now Crop Protection Services), San Marcos, CA (<http://www.westernfarmservice.com/index.html>)

Coarse perlite (no. 3 and 4) – US Orchid Supplies, Oxnard, CA (<http://www.usorchidsupplies.com>)

Coconut husk chips – Loren Batchman, Casa de las Orquedas, Solana Beach, CA <http://www.orquideas.com> Ph&Fax: 858.755.7572, email: casa@orquideas.com. Loren's website also contains excellent, detailed instructions on dividing, repotting and propagating cymbidiums

Plastic and latex gloves – Smart and Final

Single edge razor blades (100 packs, paint department), clay azalea pots (3 and 6 inch slotted orchid or plain) and small amounts of orchid bark – The Home Depot or Lowes

Plain clay azalea pots (4 inch) – Walter Anderson Nursery, Home Depot