

## REPOTTING YOUR ORCHIDS

Periodic repotting is an essential for orchids. The frequency of repotting is determined by the type of orchid and/ or the media it is in.

- Bark medias: every 2-3 years
- New Zealand Sphagnum: every 1 to 1 1/2 years
- Paphiopedilums (Paphs)- yearly. I know this is debatable. Glen Decker of Pipingrock Orchids holds to the 9-12 month length. He believes repotting stimulates new root production. I have noted that paphs roots tend to go downhill after the 1-year mark, even in rubber
- Dendrobiums – only if they are crawling out of the pot or starting to die.

When/ what time of the year do I repot? It depends on the plant type.

- Cattleyas- When you see a new growth beginning. Usually late winter or early spring
- Dendrobiums- When it's absolutely necessary because they are crawling out of the pot. Wait for a new growth to start.
- Paphs and Phalaenopsis (Phals) When they need it/ any time though preferably when they aren't in flower
- Oncidiums – I like early spring or when they are done blooming
- Cymbidiums- After flowering and before summer. I like late April to early May.

**STEP 1: Don't touch a plant until** you are sure you have the appropriate media and possible pot sizes needed. Nothing worse than have a bare rooted plant and no pot to put it in.

- A good suggestion is 1 pot @ ½" & 1" larger and smaller.
- Use only new or washed and sterilized pots.
- Have pots ready if you plan to divide an orchid.
- If you are heavy handed with water, clay for cattleyas (Catts) and oncidiums types. I never use clay with Phalaenopsis (Phals) or paphs.
- If you use bark media, you may want to pre-soak at this point



Top: Fill materials:  
Packing peanuts & limestone

Bottom:  
Rock mix for Dendrobiums, Paph  
mix, and Cattleya mix

## Step 2: Prepare your supplies



you will repot on. Do this between plants too!

Disposable rubber gloves, one pair for each orchid. If you are only doing 1 plant, these aren't necessary

Cutting tools: 1 for each plant

OR

Sterilization method: solution of 10% bleach or super saturated solution of TSP (Trisodium Phosphate- wallpapering product) 3 minutes in a solution before using on another plant, or torch

Use something on the surface that doesn't let water through. I like plastic Kroger bags, garbage bags for big catts. When you are done, throw away all the debris.

## STEP 3: Out of the pot!

To help get plants out of a plastic pot:

- Round: turn on side. Press on the side of pot and carefully roll back and forth to loosen media
- Square: Hold plant upright. Grab opposite sides of the pot and squeeze, compressing the pot carefully! Turn the pot and do the same to the other 2 side
- Clay: Soak for 10-20 minute. Try to get any roots that are on the outside of the pot off. Slide a knife between the root bowl, top to the bottom, and side the knife all the way around the pot. Don't cry if you cut roots. The plant will be fine! If this doesn't work, break the pot.



#### **STEP 4: Remove media: NEVER REUSE IT**

- Bark: get as much of it off as possibly
- Rubber bark/ mulch: Leaving some behind is not a problem
- Rock or rubber and dendrobiums: Try not to disturb too much just drop in a bigger pot
- New Zealand Sphag: Get all the dead/ decaying media out of the middle. You may need to pick some of the surface dead stuff off too. I like to use the plant's name label.

#### **STEP 5: Clean up the plant**

- Remove dead roots. Anything that squishes, the outside separates from the "vein" inside is no good. Cut them out
- Trim back roots on catts and Phragmipediums (phrags.) a little. I've seen people really cut back roots. That makes me nervous. I try to leave 4-5" if possible
- Remove old leafless or yellowed pseudobulbs. They DO NOT help you plant
- Cut off old flower spikes if you haven't already done so. They are a source for fungus



Old gray and squishy roots cut off. 3 old pseudobulbs removed. Roots trimmed

#### STEP 6: Divide where needed or wanted

- Rule of thumb is to leave 3-4 healthy pseudobulbs or fans per division (Paphs).
- Use a clean knife for cutting through the rhizome that connects plants
  - Cinnamon: You can sprinkle the cuts with cinnamon to keep fungus at bay.

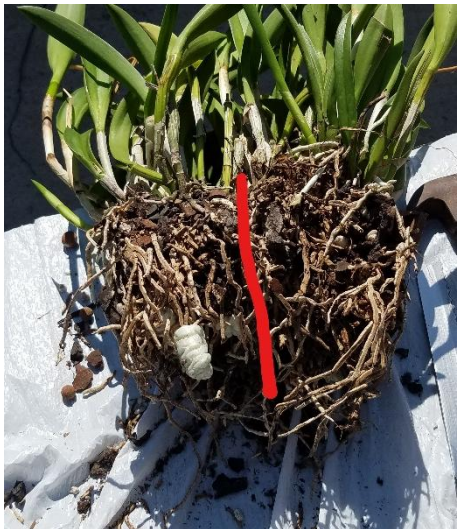




Natural Division: when the plant came out of the pot, the rhizome had already been broken and the 2 plants were growing independently. They could have been potted separately. I chose to put them both back in the same pot



This could have been divided into 2 really nice divisions. Simply cut through the middle with a knife. I wanted it to remain whole. It will be a lovely large plant next year.





Cut the ball in half, than half again carefully, going around growths if possible. But don't fuss too much. Pulled out pieces with at least 4 pseudobulbs and 1 eye. There were 7 nice divisions. Produced 1- 6" pot with 2 large divisions and 5 nice sized ones that will bloom by Fall! (See end of article)

### STEP 7: Repotting

- Select a pot  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch bigger than the root ball. Smaller is better than larger! You may need to repot a little more.
- Paphs: Put them back in the smallest pot you can get them into. (Tip from Sam Tsui of Orchids Ltd.)
- If your plant has failed since the last potting, you will need to down-pot it (go to a smaller pot size)
- If your plant will fit back into the pot it came out of, that's fine. BUT scrub it clean, spray it with 10% bleach and let it sit for a few minutes before you reusing it
- If you do not have a small enough pot, use the smallest one you have and only pot the plant in the bottom  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the pot. If it flourishes, next year you can pop it out of the pot gently, raise it up, and add new media to snug it up.
- Packing peanuts: Use to fill up some of the extra space in the pot or on the bottom of the pot (Oncidium types). They don't hold water (I use this with paphs a lot. If the paphs that grow naturally on limestone, I use large chunks of bluestone/ limestone to take up any extra space)
- Position the plant in the pot where you want it. Catts and oncidiums, older growth in 1 corner/ side of the pot, giving new growing portion of the plant room to grow forward.
- Paphs, phals, and vandous orchids, center in the pot or basket.
- Divisions back in one pot to make a specimen plant: Arrange evenly around the pot. Old growth to the center.
- Holding the plant in the position of the pot, add some larger media to the bottom of the pot, add media around the plant, pressing media in as you go. I don't like to mash roots. If you have a new growth with roots, be careful not to hit the growth or root tips. They break off easily. If you break one off, don't cry. The plants are master survivors. They pop out an "eye" to grow a new growth!
- Bring the media up to the bottom of the plant but not over the growing portion. A few exceptions are OLD pseudobulb on some phrags and oncid

#### **STEP 8: Name Tag**

- Making new tag at this time is a good idea if you have thin tags. Heavier tags probably won't need replacing every time.
- Put the repot date on the back.

#### **STEP 9: Water through**

- I know there are differing opinions on this. I always water through. Don't super soak, but make sure the medium is moist.
- Some people use wet media. I can't stand to work with this. I have never had fungus problems after repotting (Yeah, I know. This year might be a first!)
- Water on the light side for a couple of weeks until new roots get going.

Start to finish

Bllra. Tropical Lily





Started in 4.5 Pot

Out of pot. Oldest side up. Cut through root ball to the middle

Over grown the sides of pot





Pull rotten media out of the middle, pull off old pseudobulbs

Fold plant, old interior sides touching each other



Wrap new moss around the outside



Put in a 5.5 " pot with packing  
Peanuts. About an inch  
Set plant in the pot

Fill in around the sides and with moss.

1 of the pseudobulbs has roots

Put in NZ Sphag and a new plant will come!

BC. Maikai 'Spotted Star'





