

'After Flowering Care For Orchids'

Ryan "The Orchid Guy"

You see, after your orchids flower they are at their most vulnerable. In fact, many people's orchids die directly after they flower which is horrible because it means they will never flower again.

Once the flower has passed on cut the flower stalk about one inch from the base with a sharp knife or pair of scissors. Many think that cutting the stalk this low is a mistake but this will ensure that the next flower is as close as possible to the first in size and beauty.

The next step is to evaluate the root system. To do this I will always remove the plant from its pot to make sure it is still moving along and is healthy. No good flowers will come from a plant with a troubled root system. The roots need to be healthy so make sure everything looks ok and the orchid is taking on water. Without this you will get minimal flowers.

So remove the plant from the pot. Look real close. If you find black or brown mushy root, remove them - all of them. If the roots are white, off-white and green you are okay... as is the plant.

There's no telling how long the plant has been in that mix so it would be a good time to repot. As for the green-gray external roots hanging out of the pot, tuck them inside the pot. If they are too long for the pot, trim them down to size. For future reference, external roots are not necessarily indicative of a plant that needs repotting, but rather simply the nature of the plant. Once you get to this stage, simply take care of your orchid as you normally would and wait until it blooms again and simply enjoy the beauty.

There you go, a bonus tip that most orchid growers never talk about.

Winter Pests

Susan Taylor

With most growers having moved their orchids indoors for the winter, there are a number of pests which might be plaguing you. The most common, of course, is the fungus gnat. These are those annoying little gnats which seem to be everywhere around plants and fruit in a house. They do not hurt your plants since they feed on the fungus in the media or potting soil in houseplants, but they can be very bothersome. The easiest thing to do is to sprinkle ground cinnamon around the top of the planter which will kill the fungus where the gnats normally feed. Be sure to only use ground cinnamon, not cinnamon sugar.

An added bonus is the good smell of the spice during the holidays.

Another more invasive pest, is the cockroach. These insects can be brought in from plants which were summered outside or invade your house when the weather turns cold. Roaches love the openness of orchid media and they will grow and reproduce there. They will eat on the new roots in media and sometimes chew on flowers. Diatomaceous Earth (DE) is an effective deterrent if there are no children or pets around. Roach traps placed near your plants will also be effective with these pests. In bad cases, soak the pot in water with dish soap for about five minutes and then allow to drain thoroughly. This will kill any insects in the media which come in contact with the mixture. Be aware that it takes about half an hour for roaches to die.

In addition to the above, sometimes snails will be transported into the home. They live in the media and come out at night to chew on roots, new growth, buds and flowers. DE will slowly kill snails, but again use in the home around children or pets is not recommended. Immersing the pot in water will force the snails to flee upward on the plant and they can be picked off by hand. Be sure to put them in an enclosed container or alcohol so that they do not manage to get back to their home. Snail bait is not recommended for use in orchid pots since some of them can be harmful to the plants. It can be placed in containers around the pots if you are sure that it will not attract pets or children.