

Wait! Before You Use That New Orchid Potting Mix...

Ryan "The Orchid Guy"

In last month's newsletter, we talked about the importance of choosing the RIGHT potting material, and I included some critical tips

Well, I have to admit... I left out one VERY important piece of the puzzle when it comes to orchids and potting materials, and that is:

No matter what potting material you choose to use - and whether you go with a ready-made potting mix, or custom concoction - you must SOAK the material in water before using it!

Here's how to soak your potting material:

1. Place your potting material in a large plastic container (don't use metal, because the mix will absorb unwanted minerals).
2. Make sure the container has plenty of room to spare, because the potting mix will expand.
3. Fill the container with HOT water.
4. Let the potting mix soak in the hot water overnight.

The next day, drain the water by pouring the mix in a strainer and rinse the mix with warm water. The additional rinsing will help remove any dust and small particles.

And then that's it! Your new potting mix is now ready to use on your plants :-)

How to Repot Your Orchid, Step-by-Step

In last's month newsletter we talked about the importance of SOAKING your potting material in water overnight, before using it on your orchids.

Today, I'm going to take you through the entire process of how to repot your orchid, step-by-step

Before you begin, make sure that you thoroughly wash your hands and sterilize all your tools under a flame, or using a diluted bleach solution.

(I sometimes like to use latex gloves to ensure I do not spread any foreign contaminants to my plants.)

STEP 1: Turn your orchid & pot upside down, with one hand held over the potting material to prevent loose potting matter from falling out.

STEP 2: Tap the bottom of your pot and/or use a sterilized knife to lightly scrape around the inside of the pot and potting matter.

Gently remove the orchid from the pot and remove old potting matter from the roots with your hands. You might need to gently shake the roots to remove any material that sticks to the roots.

STEP 3: Remove old, loose, damaged or diseased roots by using a sterilized cutting tool. A pair of garden shears works great or you can also use a knife.

(Again, I know I've mentioned this to you several times, but I cannot over-stress how important is to sterilize your tools before trimming your plant - particularly when working with the roots.)

STEP 4: If the roots are healthy for the most part, position the orchid in a pot one size larger than the previous pot.

(Now is also the chance to change to a plastic or natural clay pot based on what you learned from one of our previous newsletters: Choosing The Perfect Pot for Your Plant.)

You should position your orchid with the old growth toward the back, so that the new growth has space to grow (frontwards).

Monopodial orchids (orchids that grow upwards rather than sideways) should be repotted in the center of the container.

Now, if the majority of your orchid's roots are damaged/ diseased and need to be removed, repot your orchid in a new, sterilized pot of the same size (or smaller if necessary).

STEP 5: Place the plant so that the new shoots are level with the pot rim. Position it in the new pot at the same depth as it was prior to repotting.

STEP 6: Fill the bottom of your pot with a layer of Styrofoam peanuts to ensure proper drainage (optional). Then add your fresh potting matter.

For more info on choosing the right potting material for your orchid, please refer to the previous newsletter on that topic...