

# Repotting Mature Epiphyllum Plants

Information provided through the efforts of Ron Crain



February 2018

Epiphyllums can or should be repotted for the following reasons:

1. The old potting medium has broken down to the point where it is no longer of benefit to the plant. *Not more often than two years.*
2. The plant has outgrown a small container and is demanding water/fertilizer more often than is convenient.

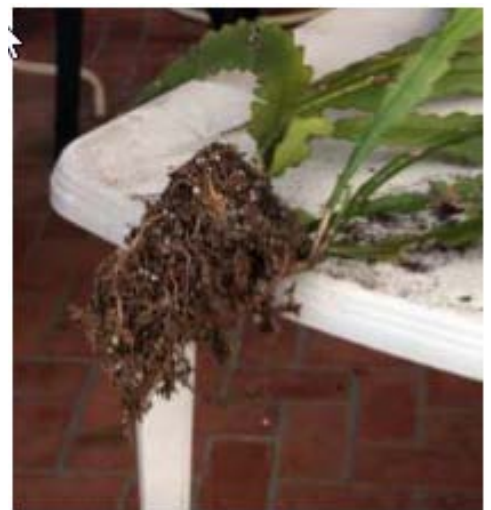


Removing the plant from the pot can be one of the more difficult parts of the process. In some cases you may have to destroy the pot to minimize damage when removing the pot.

Once the plant is out of the pot, there are two methods I use to remove as much of the old potting soil as possible from the roots. One is using my fingers to remove as much old potting soil as possible taking care to not treat the roots too roughly when doing so. The more of the old potting medium removed the better. This will help prevent having to move up to ever-larger containers with each repotting.

The second method is usually required when repotting older plants, especially those that have not been repotted in some years. It may be very difficult to remove enough old soil with your fingers. In that case, after removing the container I will try to remove as much soil as I can, then switch to using a pressure nozzle on the hose to remove even more old potting soil. This method is a little messier but works quite well and does not seem to bother the plants.

When repotting a large mature epi there is always going to be a certain amount of breakage of stems and disruption of the root system while you are handling the plant. For this reason, *I like to do any major pruning of the plant after it has been repotted.*



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At that point, I can evaluate the size of the above soil portion of the plant, consider the amount of damage I've done to the roots and prune accordingly. If I'm repotting a tough, vigorous plant like Padre, for instance, with minimal repotting damage to the root system, I may not do any pruning at all other than the usual cleanup of dead stems, etc.

If the plant is a difficult grower with a weak, flimsy root system or a good grower that has suffered a lot of root loss and or damage while repotting, I will cut the top portion of the plant back considerably more. You want the root system to be able to handle the plants requirements for growth. You do not want a weakened root system trying to support a large plant while the roots are recovering.

If I have really butchered the root system of the plant, I will use what I have pruned off to make several cuttings to start a new plant in case the original plant does not recover.



When putting the plant in its new container try to spread the roots out in the new mix as much as possible rather than leaving them clumped together in one mass. I like to fill the new container about half full of potting soil and mound it up into a cone. *I spread the roots out over this cone and then fill in more potting soil up to the original planting depth or even slightly deeper.* This will encourage the roots to grow throughout the mix more quickly.

Occasionally when repotting mature plants, you will encounter the problem, even after cutting back the top portion, where a plant tries to climb out of its pot because the roots and potting soil have not consolidated enough to keep the plant in the container. In this case, I like to drill a couple of holes opposite each other in the rim of the pot and stretch a thick wire (a thick wire will not cut into the plant) across the crown of the plant to hold it in place until the roots have grown throughout the medium once this has happened this wire can be easily removed.

When repotting the epi varieties that have a lot of spines, I will wrap the above soil portion of the plant in a thick towel and hold it in place with duct tape until it is in its new container.

