



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

Last Chance Repotting – Early Fall

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@hotmail.com

August is a great month for driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway, cruising in Alaska or floating down the Rhone River on a barge. But repotting, not so much! Repotting orchids between Independence Day and Labor Day is a dicey proposition. The plants are stressed from the high temperatures. High humidity levels mean pots dry out more slowly, an invitation for the water molds that cause black rot, the nemesis of cattleya growers. If you have to repot during these months, do your repotting dry. Let them stay dry for several days after repotting for wounds to seal over. Better yet, dust cut edges with a powder of Banrot. Put them under the bench or in a shady spot for a few weeks until they start to perk up.

The summer blooming bifoliate cattleyas present a dilemma every year. Bifoliate tend to throw off new roots only once a year, and that time period often coincides with their bloom cycle. If you repot them when new roots are not forming, they will suffer from an extended period of transplant shock because the old roots are damaged during repotting and new root growth is many months away. You can repot when you see that new root growth starting and accept you're going to shorten the blooming period, or repot Keith Davis style. Keith stabilizes the bare rooted plant in a pot splaying the roots over lava rock or Styrofoam, watering or misting the roots regularly and only adding a handful of mix into the pot weekly once new roots start to form.



If you have to repot bifoliate cattleyas midsummer, fill the pot with lava rock or Styrofoam 1/3 to 1/2 way up, add some potting mix, and splay the roots out on top and secure the plant so it is not wobbly. Add a handful of mix weekly once you see new roots forming.



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Sometime in mid to late September, the temperatures and humidity levels start to mediate. Our plants revive from their summer torpor and you start seeing new green root tips. You have several weeks of time to repot those plants needing fresh media or a new container. There is enough time for the roots to grow into the new potting mix and get established before their growth rate slows in response to shorter days and less intense sunlight.

After that you can put away your repotting supplies for the year, unless you grow catasetums. If you grow catasetums, you should check your dormant plants for signs of new growth on a weekly basis during the winter months. New growths can begin anytime from December to April or so depending on the variety. When you see that new green growth, the plant should be repotted and placed in a warm, sunny spot for it to grow until it is ready to be watered some weeks to months later.

The early fall is a beautiful time in St. Augustine. The high humidity is a distant memory, the days are warm and the nights are cool. Enjoy some quality time with your plants as you get them cleaned up and ready for their winter home.