



Seven Steps to Give Your Root-bound Plants a New Lease on Life

Step 1: Recognizing when it is time to re-pot

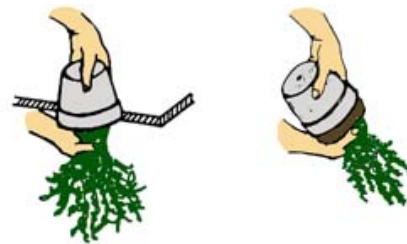


Some telltale sign that a plant needs to be re-potted include soil that dries out quickly or has become degraded, roots that are tightly packed within a pot or are growing out of the drainage hole of the pot, and water that sit on the soil surface too long after watering. More often than not the plant looks top heavy or as if it might burst out of the pot. The best time to re-pot most plant is when they are actively growing in

spring or summer; however plant can handle being re-potted whenever the situation a raises.

Step 2: Getting the Plant out of its pot

If the plant is root-bound, begin by watering the root-ball thoroughly. For plants in a small to medium size pot; turn the pot upside down and support the top of the root-ball with one hand. With the other hand on the bottom of the pot, use a downward throwing motion with an abrupt stop. Most plant will slip out after one or two throws. If not, tap the sides of the pot with your hand, it may take a few good taps to release the plant.



Step 3 & 4: Trim and loosen the root-ball



Roots that are packed tightly in a pot do not take up nutrients efficiently. To promote nutrient absorption trim the roots and loosen the root-ball before replanting. Use a sharp knife or pruning shears to remove the bottom third of the root-ball. After removing this portion of the root mass, make four vertical cut a third of the way up from the bottom of the remaining root-ball. Be sure to cut through any roots growing in a circular pattern to prevent the plant from choking itself with its own roots as it grows.



Gently untangle the root-ball with your fingers, and loosen the

top of the root-ball as well.

Step 5: Prevent soil from leaking out the bottom of the pot



Pots have holes in the bottom so plants do not sit in access water. Depending on the size of the pot it may have big or small holes, which will also allow the soil to fall out. To prevent this from happening you can use a paper towel, coffee filter, mesh screen or pot shard. If you use a potshard place it round side up, to avoid sealing the hole. Some nurseries recommend using gravel or charcoal in the bottom of pot to improve

drainage. Unless you are using pots without drainage holes I do not recommend it. It does not help with drainage in pot with holes in the bottom and it also takes up valuable space which could be used for soil.

Step 6: Re-potting the plant



The size of the new pot depends on the plant and its potential growth rate, how well it grows under the current conditions and the desired size of the plant. When in doubt, go with a pot the next size up from the original pot. Place a layer of moist soil about 2 to 3 inches deep in the bottom of the pot and tamp it down lightly. Place the plant in the center of the pot. The top of the root-ball should line up with the rim of the

pot. If the plant is too deep remove it from the pot and add more soil, and if the plant sits too high in the pot remove some of the soil until it sits at the desired height.

Step 7: Filling in with soil



There are two approaches to filling the space around the root-ball with soil; stuffing and filling. Stuffing is when soil is pressed around the plant and filling when the pot is filled to the brim and the soil is allowed to settle over a few waterings. If the plant is top heavy stuffing is the best way to re-pot if not filling is fine. Once the pot is filled with soil trim the top of the plant relative to how much you pruned the roots. If you removed one third of the roots, remove one third of the top growth as well. Water the plant thoroughly and keep it moist. In no time new healthy growth will begin to appear.

Happy planting everyone!