

## REPOTTING HOUSE PLANTS

A plant is only as healthy above the ground as it is below the ground. Generally speaking, a plant's root system is three times longer than a plant is tall. While we have fun watching our plants grow above ground, root growth is also occurring at a similar rate in our pots. Over a period of time these pot-constrained roots become pot bound, meaning the roots continually circle the pot and form a tightly packed mass which slows top growth and will adversely affect the general health of the plant.

### SIGNS A PLANT MAY NEED TO BE REPOTTED

- Roots emerging from drainage hole
- Roots surfacing at the top of soil
- Slowed or stopped top growth
- Loss of leaves or general leaf demise
- Container drying out more quickly than normal
- Water not easily absorbed by soil



It is always ideal to repot your plant when growth activity is expected to be picking up. For most plants, this is in the spring when daylight hours start to lengthen. When purchasing a new plant, it is also best to wait to repot it until that plant has had time to acclimate itself to its new surroundings. The change in light conditions, temperature, and even the ride home are a stressful event to some.

### CHOOSING THE CORRECT POT

- The new pot should only be 2-3 inches wider and/or deeper than the current pot. Just as top growth stops when plant is root bound, top growth also slows until the root system of the plant starts to fill out its new area. Also, more soil means more water retention and an increased chance your pot will stay soggy after watering, a roots worst nightmare.
- Be sure your pot has a good drainage hole to allow excess water escape
- If using a pot that has previously been used, be sure to disinfect it by soaking it in a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Rinse well after soaking.

### REPOTTING THE PLANT

- Remove the plant from its pot. Be sure the plant's soil mass is moist before removal. Turn the plant on its side and gently slide out of old pot. If plant resists, you may need to tap the bottom and sides lightly on a hard surface to dislodge roots, or slide a knife around the inside of pot. If roots have emerged from the drainage hole or have grown over the side of the pot, they may need to be pruned before removal.

- Examine the root ball. If the roots are heavily coiled around the bottom and sides of the pot, gently pull them straight out and prune off excess or damaged root material. Pruning old roots will stimulate new root growth that will “reach out” to the new pot for improved plant stability.
- Fill the bottom of the new pot slightly with potting mix; center the plant in the new pot, making sure the plant root ball is approximately 1 inch below the rim of the new pot. Fill in the sides with additional potting mix and tamp it down around the sides to eliminate any air bubbles and stabilize the plant.
- Water thoroughly to moisten the roots and settle the potting mix into the pot; add more soil as settling occurs.



#### POST-POTTING CARE TIPS

Do not fertilize for approximately a month if excess root pruning was necessary. This may result in root burn on exposed tips.

Do not expose to direct sunlight for at least a week. Let the plant recover from this stressful event before we introduce it to another.

Keep the soil moist, but not soggy. Frequent, shallow, watering is best while the root system re-establishes. Soil should resemble a moist sponge after wringing out excess water.