



Re-potting Your Houseplants

Now that spring is almost here, your houseplants should begin to perk up, sending out new growth under the influence of longer days and more intense sunlight. It's a great time to shift those that are pot-bound into larger containers if your plants aren't in bloom or ailing.

How do you know if your plant is pot-bound? If you have roots growing out the drainage hole in the bottom of the container, if the roots are twining around the inside of the container when you remove the plant from the container, or if your plant requires frequent watering or wilts between waterings, then it's probably pot-bound. Plants that grow quickly and require frequent re-potting include spider plants, Swedish ivy and wandering jew. Some plants, like clivia and amaryllis, actually thrive when pot-bound so be sure to check on your plants' preferences.

When repotting, choose a container that's not more than two inches larger than your rootball. If you use a container that is too large the plant will not respond well and may actually develop root rot.

To re-pot, you need to turn the plant upside down and remove it from the container. I find it's much easier to do this if I first run a knife around the inside edge of the pot next to the rootball. This loosens the plant from the pot. Next hold your hand over the soil, straddling the plant between your thumb and fingers, holding back the soil. Turn the pot upside down and gently tap the rootball out of the container. If the root ball is tight you can gently tease roots out to induce new root growth.

Place a small piece of paper towel or a coffee filter over the drainage hole, and then place enough potting soil in the bottom of the container so that the rootball comes within an inch of the container's top. The space at the top allows for watering. Fill the remaining space with soil, and then tap the pot to settle the soil, adding more if necessary. Do not pack the soil to firm or settle it. Water so that excess water drains out the bottom of the pot, and add more soil if needed.

Be careful not to overwater your newly re-potted plants during the first few weeks, and hold off on the fertilizer for 2 to 4 weeks after transplanting.

Margaret Hagen

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