



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

Repotting Hoss Cattleyas

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@hotmail.com

Seedling cattleyas are so much fun. They don't take up much space in your growing area when you first bring them home, so you can buy lots of them at orchid shows without worrying about where you're going to put them. You get to watch each plant grow bigger and stronger and imagine what its first blooms will look like. If you decide the flower was worth the wait, you give it a permanent home in your growing area. When it starts growing out of the pot, you move it up into a larger pot and look forward to it throwing off multiple flower spikes and putting on a real show. Then one day your plant is growing out of an 8 or 10 inch pot, you start running out of options, and eventually you have to decide to either find a bigger pot or divide the plant.



I got this Lc. Panipasa 'Royal Satin' from Bill Tippit when we lived in Houston. It is a cross between Lc. Adolph Hecker and C. guttata made by Raymond Burr of Sea God Nurseries. This prolific fall bloomer was in a place of honor in a 16 inch pot until it outgrew it. Time to find it a new home(s).

I have a serious orchid addiction so it goes without saying that I am always running out of bench space. A compounding problem is my love of the large standard cattleyas that not coincidentally take up a lot of space. I needed a way of potting up my overgrown cattleyas without having one pot turn into two or three or four, so I often pot divisions into the same pot. Spoiler Alert: You will be ineligible for AOS cultural awards by having more than one plant in a pot, but if your primary goal is getting the most flowers per square inch of pot space, read on.



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

Repotting Hoss Cattleyas

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@hotmail.com

Before you start, work out a plan for how you're going to repot that hoss cattleya. Start pondering by finding the youngest growth and working backward until you have counted off three to five pseudobulbs, that is a potential cut point. If you have the plant growing in several different directions, trace all the growths back from youngest to oldest. Envision how the cut up pieces will look in the pot.

Slc. Tuchenbach – an Overgrown Bifoliate



This bifoliate cattleya is starting to grow new roots so it is time to stop neglecting it and start the overdue repotting session.



There are two active leads growing. Work from the back of the plant to protect the tender young growths. Remove the old tired pseudobulbs.



You may have to use a knife to separate the roots attached to the outside of the pot, making sure the roots are wet and soon they're free!



If this plant is potted in a single piece into this 10 inch pot, the lead on the left will be out of the pot within a year.



Cut away the older growths that will never bloom again, and rid the plant of ugly leaf syndrome at the same time.



There are only two pseudobulbs plus the new growth; eliminating ugly leaf syndrome prevailed over leaving the desired three growths.



Situate the first piece in the pot and splay the roots over a layer of lava rock placed at the bottom of the pot.



Then situate the second piece in the pot and spread those roots out, hold both pieces so they will be at the right elevation in the pot..



Backfill with your potting mix of choice making sure the midpoints of the rhizomes are about even with the top of the potting mix.



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

Repotting Hoss Cattleyas

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@hotmail.com

Choose the right time to repot, when new root growth is initiating, so your plant will reestablish the most quickly. Always work from the back of the plant whether water blasting, pulling off papery sheaths or performing surgery. Work away from the tender new growths so you won't break off a new lead and take the Lord's name in vain. Once you've made your cuts, orient the growths in their new home with no media to get an idea of whether your plan will work, whether additional surgery is necessary or whether you should break down and put those pieces into more than one pot. Once you've settled on a plan, you can start backfilling and securing the plant.

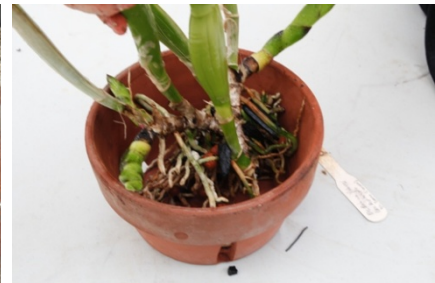
Blc. Mahina Yahiro – an Overgrown Unifoliate



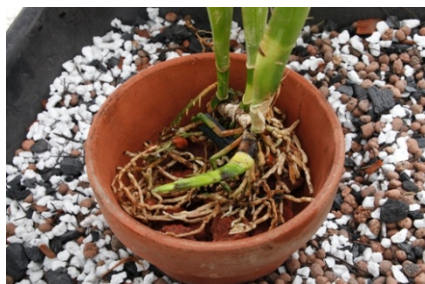
This unifoliate cattleya needs to be repotted or it will rapidly become too unstable in the pot to support its blooms.



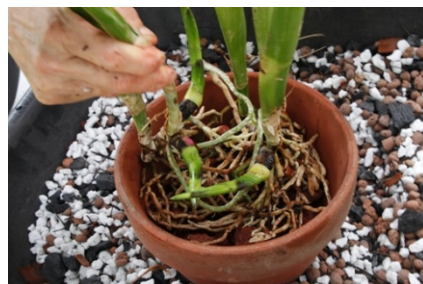
The desirable front part of the plant has three new leads growing. Pot up the back bulbs or put them on the raffle table at your club.



The front half of the plant will fit into an 8 inch pot but just barely, it will outgrow this pot in a year or two. Either divide or put it in a 10 inch pot.



The front division can be cut into two pieces and then both pieces set in the pot. The first piece is oriented in the pot.



Then situate the second piece in the pot, and while holding both pieces at the proper elevation, backfill with your mix of choice.



Sshh. Purely Organic fertilizer is the latest snake oil I am testing, spread on the media of newly potted orchids. Report to follow!.

How many times have you repotted a cattleya only to find that the leaf on the oldest pseudobulb yellows and dies within a month or two. You say to yourself if I had removed that oldest growth, I would have another inch or two in the pot for the plant to grow and added another year before it has to be repotted. When planning on how to repot a given orchid, balance the benefit of the food and water stored in that pseudobulb against the negative of how ugly that oldest growth is. Be brutal and cut away the old growths that suffer from ugly plant syndrome. If you end up with a great looking section of backbulbs with lots of live eyes, either repot it or leave it bare root on a plant tray and bring in to the



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

Repotting Hoss Cattleyas

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@hotmail.com

raffle table at your club (bring a picture of the plant for the newbies so they know what they're bidding on). But if the backbulbs are suffering from ugly plant syndrome, just kiss that part of the plant goodbye.

Several Months Later



Sometimes you'll find a cattleya that grows radially along the rhizome rather than linearly. Pot these in the center of the pot.



I didn't do too well with this one when I potted it two months ago. I'll be lucky to get a year in the pot before I have to carve it up again.



This cattleya is recovering nicely from being repotted two months ago. I'm hoping for blooms on each of the four new leads. .

The general rule is that you should try and keep at least three and preferably five pseudobulbs to make sure the plant has enough energy reserves to recover from transplant shock. But there are strong, vigorous growers that will recover well even if repotted with fewer growths. I was once given a *Schomburgkia brysiانا* with a single large pseudobulb and thought hmmm, wonder how long this'll take to grow. It had a beautiful bloom less than two years later. Each cattleya is different and not too many of them have ever read the orchid books. Learn to trust your instincts. Don't be afraid to try something different if it feels like it's the right thing to do.