

Subject: 2024 Catasetinae Plant Culture March Newsletter

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To: sbottom15@bellsouth.net



Repotting Catasetinae: February-March-May

It's time to repot your Catasetinae! Repotting is fun, laborious and, at times, nerve-wracking. It is an important step in making sure your plants are happy and healthy, and it's the best way to ensure lots of beautiful flowers.

Catasetinae have seasonal growth habits and flowering patterns. To understand how to grow and repot them, it's very useful to learn about the environmental conditions in their natural habitat, where they have adapted to survive and thrive. Catasetinae grow primarily in areas with a warm, wet summer followed by a dry, slightly cooler winter, thus these plants have evolved a very specific seasonal growth habit. In the spring, with the days lengthening and just before the onset of the rainy season, they begin growing and developing a root system. This is all done in anticipation of the summer rains when there is plentiful moisture and nutrients for the plants.

I follow this rule: "The best time to re-pot Catasetinae is with the beginning of new growth in the early spring".

Repotting with the onset of new growth ensures that the new roots, which initiate after the new growth by about 2-3 weeks, will grow directly into the new media. This eliminates the chance of damaging the new roots. This is important as Catasetinae produce just one flush of roots each season, and early damage to the new root system will severely limit the plant's ability to grow and flourish. I can't overemphasize the importance of the timing for repotting. It's like the emphasis I place on waiting to water until after the new roots are 3-6" long.

At Sunset Valley Orchids we use AAA sphagnum moss from New Zealand (offered in 3 kg bales on our website). After trying several types of media we have found that this premium-quality moss produces the best growth. First, we slightly moisten the new moss. When it's just right, it feels moist, but when you squeeze it tightly, water does not drip out. When using sphagnum moss for potting, we like to leave an air space beneath the moss and the bottom of the pot. This assures excellent drainage. It takes a little trial and error to get the air space right, but you will master it with a little practice. Styrofoam peanuts or similar inert material can also be used under the moss to provide this extra air space and drainage.

Repotting:

In the early spring, with the first signs of new growth, Catasetinae plants are still dormant and dry. Repotting should occur with the old media still dry. We use sterile clippers to cut away the old, unneeded moss. With larger plants, we usually trim away the moss farthest away from the newest growth. This trimming process cuts through the old moss and roots. We like to form a 2-3" long tapered (carrot-shaped) stump from the old moss and roots. This provides a form around which the new moss can be wrapped. It helps to hold the plant steady in its pot until new roots are produced and re-established. We orient the plant, so the new growth has room for 2 years of space for the growth. As with all orchids Catasetums don't like to be over potted either. It's better to under pot than over pot.

For plants purchased from SVO last year that are still in 3" pots, I recommend the "slip-potting" method of repotting. Just wrap new moss around the existing moss and slip into a slightly larger pot.

Dividing:

The best time to divide Catasetinae is also with the onset of new growth. They do well when divided into pieces no smaller than two or three pseudobulbs. Divisions are made by cutting with a sterile tool or by carefully pulling the pseudobulbs apart.

Watering:

Watering should begin when the new roots are 3-6" long. It will take the plants 4-6 weeks after the onset of new vegetative growth for the new roots to grow to the desired length. Waiting for the beginning of watering is not easy, but we have learned through trial and error that it is much better to wait to water than it is to start watering too soon.

For those of you wondering when the new Catasetinae list is coming out, look for it in early July. An inside tip: it's the best list we have ever offered!

Good Growing,

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We are always available to take your calls and E-mails, so please feel free to reach out if you have any questions. We love to talk Orchids.

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Your support as customers and friends is truly appreciated!

I am always available to take your calls and E-mails, so please feel free to contact me. I love to talk orchids!

And as always, Good Growing!

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