

How to Choose Potting Media

The potting media you use should be based on the moisture needs of the particular orchid you are repotting. For instance Phalaenopsis orchids like a potting media which holds a bit more moisture than Cattleyas or Dendrobiums. As an example, let's look at a couple of different orchid potting mixes from Better-Gro®.

Better-Gro® Special Orchid® Mix is an airy, quick-draining mix that is ideal for those orchids that like the media to dry quickly between watering. This media is ideal for most epiphytic orchids such as Cattleyas, Dendrobiums, Oncidiums, etc.

Better-Gro® Phalaenopsis Mix is designed to drain well but holds moisture a little longer to meet the needs of Phalaenopsis orchids, which prefer a more constant level of moisture.

Many orchids can also be planted directly into a high grade sphagnum moss, such as Better-Gro® Orchid Moss.

How to Choose Pot Size

Choosing the correct pot and proper size is very important in the repotting process. Typical orchid pots have many holes to allow for improved drainage and air to reach the roots.

Repotting orchids into too large a pot is one of the most common mistakes made in this process. Most orchids like their roots in a restricted container. A pot that is too large holds too much media and therefore stays wet longer than is ideal for the plant. The pot size should be based on the following:

If the decision to repot was made because the plant is struggling (often because of compromised roots), the pot size should be matched to the size of the plant's root mass. No matter how large the foliage, the smaller the GOOD root mass, the smaller the pot. In these cases, it's common for the plant to be repotted in a container the same size or smaller than the original pot it was planted in.

If the plant is otherwise healthy, the new pot should allow for only about 1-2 years of new growth. This normally equals to a pot which is 1" to 2" larger than the current one.