

How to Cut Orchids for Transplanting, Flower Vases, Corsages

Protecting Orchids As You Cut

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Learning how to cut orchids is an essential skill gardeners must learn in order to successfully uproot and replant crowding plants. Transplanting orchids from one garden to another as well as re-potting orchids requires skilled orchid cutting as well. In addition, orchid growers may want to decorate their homes with a few cut orchids; and if they so please, home gardeners can turn their beautiful orchids into corsages for formal occasions or simply sport orchid corsages because they feel like sporting them.

Know Your Orchid's Species

The thing about cutting orchids is there are numerous species of orchids and depending on the species and the type, orchid cutting procedures will vary. For this reason, growers must determine what specific kind of orchid they have and cut the plant using the best cutting procedure for that particular plant. With that said, orchid growers can use the following tips on how to cut orchids as guidelines for getting started.

Protect Orchids from Acquiring Diseases after Cutting

The very first rule gardeners should take into account when preparing to cut orchids is that orchid plants are a lot more sensitive than other types of plants in that they become susceptible to acquiring disease very quickly after they are cut. This does not mean other plants do not become susceptible

to disease after cutting. It simply means orchids are at the top of the susceptibility list.

In order to protect orchid plants from acquiring disease following cutting them, gardeners should use sharp sterile cutting shears. The best type of cuts to prevent infection for any plants are the smoothest cleanest cuts. This is because plants "heal" better when their stems and branches are not left with jagged edges. Sterilizing shears prior to cutting plants reduces chances of transferring harmful germs from shears to plants while slicing plants.

Seal Orchid Plants in Cut Areas

Orchid growers looking to cut orchids from pots or gardens because they want to adorn their home with vases of beautiful plants must take care to protect the plant from which they are cutting the stems and take care to protect the stemmed orchids they place in vases. Using sharp shears, cut stems away from orchid plants and immediately place stemmed flowers in a sink or other type basin of water. Immediately after making the cutting, help the orchid plant heal quickly and without becoming infected by placing a bit of cinnamon powder, melted candle wax, or store bought orchid sealant over the area from which the stem was cut. Do this as soon as the cut flowers are safe in a basin of water.

Preserving Vase Cuttings

Once plants have been protected with a sealant that will help them heal, get a vase (if you haven't already) and fill it half way with cool, not hot or cold, water so you are ready to set your cuttings in the vase. Add cut flower preservative to the vase of water. Alternatively, you can mix a teaspoon of sugar with a drop of chlorine bleach to preserve the stemmed orchids.

After the vase is ready, cut the stemmed orchids while they are still in the water. The reason for cutting them while they

are immersed in water is to keep air from filling in the cut stem holes. You want water to fill the holes – not air. Make the cut by using sharp shears. Cut at forty-five degree angles and then place stemmed orchids directly into awaiting vase of water.

One more thing to bear in mind when cutting stemmed orchids is that you will need to cut the stems again a few days following initial cuts. Cutting the stems again will help preserve the orchids so they will live longer in their vases of water. For this reason, during initial stem cutting, only take about an inch off the bottom of the stem if your vase is tall. For shorter vases, cut as much stem away that is necessary to allow the stemmed orchid to sit at a reasonable height in the vase. Using this technique should leave sufficient length that allows plants to remain tall and stately after future cuttings. When cutting a few days later, only remove about a quarter to a half inch of stem.

Cutting orchids for corsages requires pretty much the same technique as cutting orchids for vases. The main difference is that when cutting orchids for corsages the stems will be cut a lot shorter from the get go. Since corsages only need about three to four inches of stem in order to attach them to lapels or other garment areas, gardeners can take those dimensions into consideration when cutting orchids to wear.

Transplanting Orchids

Cutting orchids for transplanting requires gardeners to remove orchids from pots when talking about houseplants. However, actual cutting may take place while the plant is still in its pot. When cutting plants in pots, growers can separate and re-pot orchid “kies” or “canes”. When using this method of propagation growers should try to include at least three pseudobulbs for each plant they re-pot. Wait one week to water these cuts.

When transplanting outdoor plants, gardeners must work a little harder because they must dig up their orchid root balls. Either way, gardeners will have to divide the rhizome into two or more sections; or cut pseudobulbs. Again – remember that sharp sterile shears are best for orchid plant safety.

Some orchid types and transplanting periods:

Phalaenopsis – Repot or transplant Phalaenopsis at least every two years preferably during late spring. Make sure Phalaenopsis orchids have completed their flowering period prior to transplanting and cutting. When replanting Phalaenopsis it is best to use well-drained soil that also retains water. Transplanting pots should be slightly bigger than pots the root balls will be transferred to.

Doritaenopsis Orchids – Re-pot using the same procedures as Phalaenopsis. Remember to wait until you are sure blooming has ended before cutting the plant.

One more thing to remember about cutting Doritaenopsis and Phalaenopsis orchids is in regard to cutting their spikes after flowers have blossomed and died. Sometimes orchid species grow additional spikes from nodes they already have. Cutting nodes too soon will ruin chances of new growth that could spur additional flowers. For this reason, it is a good practice to leave spikes unless they turn brown until you find out what is best for your particular orchid plant. Then you will know whether to leave the spike after spent flowers fall or to cut the plant to encourage new growth.

Cattleya – Re-pot under one of two conditions only. The first condition is when cattleya orchids outgrow their pots. The second condition is if the potting soil becomes insufficient or deteriorates. Deteriorating soil drains slowly and thus may develop moldy surfaces. When soil deterioration is not problematic, repotting generally can wait from two to three

years. Use fir bark or another coarse planting soil for replanting.

Cattleyas with at least seven pseudobulbs and cattleyas that are growing over their pots can be cut through their rhizomes to make more plants. Do this by cutting three to four growths beyond the lead growth and by cutting them completely through the rhizome. Remember to use sharp, preferable sterile, cutting shears. Although cattleya cutting is pretty simple getting them to re grow anew is sometimes a bit tricky. For this reason, it is a good idea to put the cut plant parts together in the same pot until active growth begins. This can be a slow process, however, once plants begin to show life, transplant them into their new pots. Remember to use coarse planting soil.

When cutting garden orchids with rhizomes, carefully dig the root balls from the ground using a sharp spade or shovel after blooming season has ended. Cut the plant through the rhizome into as many sections as you want and replant them into their new spaces. Cover these plants with a good mulch to protect them from outside forces. Continue to care for these plants the same as you care for your other outdoor orchids.

When cutting orchids, especially when digging for dividing purposes, it is important to disturb the plants as little as possible. This can be a bit tricky, however, it helps plants recover from shock of being dug up, cut into sections, and separated. The less shock orchid plants undergo, the sooner they recover from the process.