

How to Repot to Bury a Neck or to Rescue a Violet from Root Rot

The process of repotting is intimidating and often growers try to do it the "safe way" which is actually why they die. You have to be fairly aggressive in transplanting but then provide the safety net that gets them growing again.

Step 1- Remove all older leaves that are smaller than the leaves above or are faded in color or nicked and damaged. I rarely leave more than about 10 leaves total. Remove all flowers.

Step 2- Use the dull side of a knife to scrape about two inches of the stem (gently!) that is just below the bottom row of leaves. You should be scraping to smooth off the stumps of leaves just removed and to remove just the surface of any old dried tissue.

Step 3- Next amputate the top half of the plant by making a straight cut about one and a half to two inches below the bottom row of leaves. Discard the bottom section of the plant, although the pot may be saved and washed for reuse.

Step 4- While you can see the inside of the stem, look to see if there is any sign of rot. A brown pithy center or dried powdery center is a definite sign. You may also see darkened mushy plant tissue or leaves that seem to rot off at the main stem. If any symptom is present, clean your knife and cut higher on the stem until you are above the rot. As long as the center leaves are intact, the plant has a chance.

Step 5- Prepare a fresh pot, the same size as before, with a light porous potting mix. Commercial potting mixes are too heavy (even the ones labeled for violets). We recommend a homemade mix made of one part sphagnum peat moss (brown is much better than black), one part vermiculite, and one part perlite. Or, if you can find a commercial mix that has a brown color, try mixing it half and half with either vermiculite or perlite. Water the pot to moisten the soil thoroughly and drain off the excess water that runs through.

Step 6- Set the stem of the violet onto the top of the pot so that stem is in good contact with the potting medium. If that part of the stem is bent, set the stem straight down into the soil. The leaves will soon straighten out and go level. A bent stem under the soil seems to cause the plant to grow oddly for an extended time.

Step 7- Place the plant into a clear plastic bag or container and seal it tightly closed. Set it in a bright location but out of direct sunlight. In about a month, new roots will have formed and the plant will be showing new growth. You will not need to water during this time period.

Step 8- Open the bag or container gradually over a period of two days to equalize the humidity slowly and prevent shock. Then enjoy your rejuvenated plant!

Happy Growing! **Joyce Stork**

For more information about growing African violets, join the African Violet Society of America and receive the magazine six times a year. Go to www.avsa.org and click on Membership.

Looking for a good book about growing violets? *YOU CAN Grow African Violets: The Official Guide Authorized by the African Violet Society of America, Inc* written by Kent and Joyce Stork is available online at <http://www.avsa.org/Store/AVSASStore.html> .