

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 healthy stem will be green with a circle of dots about halfway out from the middle. If the leaves are backed in red, the outside ring may be darker than the middle or even reddish, which is normal pigment. A darkened brown center or dried powdery center is a definite sign. You may also see darkened mushy plant tissue, or note some leaves that seem to be rotting off where they join 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!

Propagation by leaf cutting

1. Choose a healthy leaf from the second or third row of your African violet plant.
2. Cut stem at 45 degree angle leaving a stem no longer than 1-1/2" and insert in damp porous potting mix. Water lightly.
3. May cut off top 1/3 of leaf. Label with name tag if available. Place inside plastic bag or clear container until ready to divide the clump of plantlets (see step 5).
4. Place pot in indirect light from a window or under florescent lights. There should be some evidence of humidity inside the bag. If so, no additional watering is needed. If not, water lightly and enclose the plant again.
5. Babies often start growing within 4-6 weeks. When babies are about 2 inches tall (about 4 months after putting the leaf down), or have at least 4 leaves per plantlet, separate and put each into individual small pot. Enclose these in plastic bag or clear container for several weeks. Then treat as mature plants.