



GROUND RULES
PLANTS · PURPOSE · WELLNESS

THE REPOTTING GUIDE

Knowing when — and how — to give your Pothos,
Monstera & Philodendron more room to grow

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR NEW PLANT PARENTS



When to Repot

Repotting gives roots fresh soil, better drainage, and room to keep growing. But more room isn't always better — repotting too often (or into a pot that's too big) can actually stress a plant out. Here's how to tell it's actually time.

Signs It's Time

- Roots are growing out of the drainage holes, or circling tightly at the surface.
- Water runs straight through the pot without the soil seeming to absorb it.
- The plant dries out much faster than it used to, sometimes within a day or two.
- Growth has stalled even though light and season are right for it.
- The plant looks top-heavy or the roots have pushed it up out of the soil.
- It's been 1–2 years since the last repot (even without obvious signs).

Best Time of Year

Spring and early summer are ideal — plants are actively growing and recover from the disturbance fastest. Avoid repotting in winter dormancy unless it's an emergency (like root rot).

■ **NOTE:** *A plant that's slightly root-bound is not an emergency. Pothos and philodendron especially don't mind being snug — only repot when you see real signs above, not just because it's been a while.*



What You'll Need

Gather everything before you start — repotting goes much more smoothly when you're not hunting for a trowel mid-project.

ITEM	WHY YOU NEED IT
New pot, 1–2" larger	Enough room to grow without overwhelming the roots; must have a drainage hole
Fresh potting mix	Old soil loses nutrients and structure over time
Trowel or scoop	For adding and packing soil around the roots
Gloves	Optional, but keeps hands clean and protects from any soil-borne irritants
Scissors or pruning snips	For trimming dead roots or damaged leaves
Watering can	To settle the plant in with a thorough watering after repotting
Newspaper or a tarp	Makes cleanup painless — repotting is messier than it looks

Choosing a Pot: Size & Material

MATERIAL	PROS	CONS
Terracotta	Porous — wicks away excess moisture; helps prevent overwatering	Dries out faster; heavier; can crack in cold
Plastic	Lightweight; retains moisture longer; inexpensive	Can trap water if overwatered; less breathable
Ceramic (glazed)	Decorative; sturdy; retains moisture well	Often no drainage hole — check before buying, or use as a cover pot

Rule of thumb: size up by 1–2 inches in diameter, not more. A pot that's much too big holds excess soil that stays wet long after the roots have used what they need, raising the risk of root rot.



Step-by-Step: How to Repot

1. Water the day before

A well-hydrated plant slides out of its pot more easily and experiences less shock during the move.

2. Prep the new pot

Add a shallow layer of fresh potting mix to the bottom of the new pot — enough that the plant will sit at roughly the same depth it was before.

3. Remove the plant

Turn the pot on its side and gently ease the plant out by the base of the stem, supporting the root ball. Avoid pulling from the leaves or stems.

4. Loosen and inspect the roots

Gently tease apart any tightly circling roots. Trim away roots that are mushy, black, or foul-smelling — signs of rot.

5. Set it in the new pot

Center the plant and fill in around it with fresh mix, pressing gently to remove large air pockets. Leave about half an inch of space below the rim for watering.

6. Water thoroughly

Water until it runs from the drainage holes. This helps soil settle around the roots and removes any remaining air gaps.

7. Skip fertilizer for a few weeks

Fresh potting mix usually has enough nutrients to start. Let the plant settle in before resuming a feeding schedule.

■ **PRO TIP:** *It's normal to see a leaf or two droop for a few days after repotting. As long as new growth resumes within a few weeks, the plant is adjusting well.*



Repotting Notes

Pothos, Monstera & Philodendron

General steps are the same for all three plants — here's what makes each one slightly different.

	POTHOS	MONSTERA	PHILODENDRON
Frequency	Every 1–2 years	Every 2 years	Every 1–2 years
Root style	Fine, fibrous roots	Thicker roots; may have aerial roots	Fine roots; some aerial roots
Soil mix	Standard well-draining mix	Chunky mix with bark or perlite	Standard well-draining mix
Extra step	A great time to take stem cuttings to propagate	Add or adjust a moss pole/trellis while roots are exposed	Trim leggy vines back before repotting
Watch for	Roots that smell sour — sign of rot from overwatering	Aerial roots can be tucked into soil or left exposed	Yellowing lower leaves are normal to trim off

After the Repot

Keep the plant in its usual light spot, but out of direct sun for the first week while roots recover. Water when the top inch of soil is dry, and hold off on fertilizer for about a month. A little stress right after repotting is normal — steady new growth in the following weeks is the sign that it's settled in.