

Most of us, whether we have the outdoor space or not, grow at least some of our plants in containers on verandas, decks, patios and balconies as well as indoors. Potted plants provide green relief from hard surfaces that reflect light and heat and play an important role in both our psychological and physiological wellbeing.



Unlike the open garden, containerised plants are not 'set and forget' – they require frequent attention in addition to regular repotting to keep them healthy and happy.

Each has a finite amount of potting mix around its roots, and also a limit to root development given the constraints of the pot. Most potting mixes are organic and their ability to support plant health diminishes over time as they break down.

As a general rule, plants living permanently in containers should be repotted at least every third year, while the top 5-10cm of the potting mix (dependent on pot size) should be removed and replaced annually.

Some tips to guide you:

- Choose a pot that is in proportion to the size of the plant and its root ball. Too small and the plant will run out of moisture too quickly. There's also insufficient space for its roots to develop. Too big and excess potting mix is likely to turn sour, inhibiting healthy root growth.
- Make sure the pot is clean! Occasionally, you may need to re-use the same container – make sure it is washed or scrubbed in warm, soapy water and rinsed well.
- Place a piece of flywire mesh cut to size over the drainage holes to prevent potting mix washing out.
- Use a quality potting mix. Look for the Standards Australia 'Five Ticks' (black for standard and red for premium quality) or the BFA/NASAA **Certified Organic logo**.
- Be aware that you only get what you pay for – with potting mixes, cheap usually means poor quality and results in poor plant growth. We recommend **Grow Better Terracotta & Tub or Premium** for best results – both contain enough slow release fertiliser to feed plants for three to six months, natural growth stimulants and water storing granules.
- There are specialised potting mixes available for plants with particular needs, such as orchids, cacti and succulents – use the recommended mix for the plants you are repotting.
- Carefully knock the plant from its old pot, taking care not to disturb the roots too much. Some plants may benefit from dividing up and repotting individual sections, like some orchids.
- Break away the upper surface of the old potting mix which may have crusted.
- Fill the fresh pot about half way with potting mix and sit plant in it to ascertain if it is at the same level as it was in the old pot (never bury plants deeper than they were previously).
- Adjust the volume of mix under the plant accordingly to establish the correct level and then fill in around sides of the root ball. Tap pot on the ground to settle the mix.
- Make sure mix is no higher than 5cm from the rim of the pot, to allow for watering without dislodging mix.
- Water in with **Plant Starter** to assist in overcoming transplant trauma and keep in a sheltered spot for a few days until plants acclimatise to their new containers.
- Apply **Sea Tea** as directed every two or three weeks to keep the potting mix in peak condition.