

## Back Cutting Orchids



We back cut our plants so as not to waste the older part of the plant, as dormant eyes on the old canes or pseudobulbs do not generally grow unless the leading growths are cut off.

The optimum time to do this is when one of the eyes on the leading growth just starts to grow its next season's pseudobulbs. That is generally the only time of the year a dormant eye on a back growth will grow on that plant.

- Sterilise cutters to prevent spread of disease such as bacteria, fungus, or worst of the lot, virus.
- Cut the rhizome generally between the third & fourth growths.
- Check the cut is a creamy green colour. (Any black or brown mark could be disease & should be cut out now.)
- Seal the cut faces with a thick paste of Mangozeb or similar material.
- Place a small piece of brightly coloured label in the cut. Always return cutters to the sterilizing solution.
- Put the plant in a shady spot where you won't water it until it is bone dry. (About a week in summer, 2 or 3 weeks in winter.) This will seal up the cuts & prevent infection.
- **Do not water** the plant for this drying out time. Watering will wash off the fungicide & leave the plant open to infection by fungus & bacteria.
- Plants are generally not repotted at this time, unless they are making new roots.
- If the leading growths are making new roots as well as new growths, then the leading 3 or 4 growths can be cut off & repotted now.

The back cut is then treated as follows:

Remove from the old pot & cut into groups of 3 or 4 pseudobulbs. Take a cut off the back of the rhizome to check for disease. If the face of the cut is a clean creamy green colour, it is OK. If there is a brown or black mark in it, keep on cutting to eliminate. Cut all the old roots off & soak in a Mangozeb solution for 10 minutes.

After soaking, seal all cuts with a thick paste of Mangozeb, label the cuts. (tie labels low near the base of the plant.) Then stand upright in an empty terra cotta pot & place it in a fairly shady spot on the bench. The pot will absorb moisture & will create a moist micro-climate inside the pot. Soon a new growth will start from dormant eyes, & when new roots appear pot as described in the next section on repotting.

An article from the Sunshine Orchid Nursery.

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the authors. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.