

## *Dividing Clivia Clumps*

Well-grown Clivia plants eventually get too large. When my plants start to crowd in a 5-gallon container, I know it is time to divide and repot. The first task will be to get the plant out of its container. In a plastic container, the simplest way is to get a stout, sharp knife and slice through the plastic, all the way from top to bottom, two or three times. Try to hold the knife as nearly parallel to the container wall as possible while cutting, to avoid damaging too many roots. Plants in clay or ceramic containers will be tougher to extract and might require the assistance of a couple of strong gardeners. I often end up simply cracking ceramic pots carefully with a hammer.

If the plant is growing in the ground, you face a much tougher job. You may want to just dig out a section of the plant, leaving the rest of it undisturbed. Dig around the outside of the clump, cutting through as few roots as possible. When the outer boundary of the section of the clump you want to dig up is exposed, you can cut very carefully through into the centre of the clump. Spare as many of the roots as possible.

Once the clump is extracted from its container or from the ground, remove as much of the soil from the roots as you can. Shake as much soil off as you can. Use your fingers to work into the spaces between the roots where soil is held and loosen it up.

Now comes the traumatic part: cutting through the rhizomes to free the various offsets. Use a long, sharp, and sturdy knife. Cut through the thick rhizome between the crowns, leaving as much of the rhizome on the freed division as possible. All I can say is, "Try to do as little damage as possible!" Take your time, be careful, and don't cut your fingers in the process.

Some points to remember:

1. Wetness encourages rot. Rot is your enemy!
2. Don't put wet paper towels, or anything else wet, on the roots or anywhere else. Those roots survive for months at a time in the wild in a very dry environment. They will do just fine, left bare-root and dry for days if not longer.
3. Do let the divisions sit in air, bare root and dry, for several days after you divide them. Keep them in the shade at all times when they are out of the ground.
4. I personally would use dilute Clorox® or hydrogen peroxide solutions only if the plant showed overt signs of rot. In any case, do not replant until all portions of the plant's below-soil surfaces are quite dry.
5. Then when you pot them up, you can cover the cut surface with medium -- just don't water for at least several more days.

I haven't tried it on Clivia, but when we divide clumps of Hemerocallis (daylilies), we powder the cut surfaces with dry fungicide. We used to use benlate (benomyl) for this, but now we use Cleary 3336® (thiophanate-methyl) wettable powder. Be sure to wear rubber gloves to protect your skin from irritation by the fungicide if you do try this.