

Repotting episcia from Rob's Violet Barn

http://www.violetbarn.com/lessons/repotting_episcias.htm

Repotting Episcias is simple, but is a bit different from repotting African violets. First, Episcias are very vigorous, fast growers, which means that they need to be repotted more frequently than violets. Without good light and timely repotting, they can look a bit "weedy" when left unattended. Also, Episcias readily produce many "stolons" (those small plants on the end of runners). These stolons can give the plant a full appearance or, when grown as a hanging basket, a graceful, cascading, look. Left uncontrolled, however, they can easily grow out of control--a hint: you'll get more bloom by limiting the number of stolons the plant produces.

Here's how we repot our Episcias, in eight easy steps!



Here's an Episcia 'Star of Bethlehem', in a 2 1/2" pot (the size that we ship). This particular plant has been neglected for awhile and has gotten a bit tall and "weedy", so much so that we've had to use a stake to hold the plant upright.

Notice also the very long stolons--it even has stolons growing from stolons! It is blooming, and it is healthy, but it can certainly be made to look better.

We'll pot this plant into a 4" azalea pot, and lower the plant so it doesn't look so tall and spindly, and more attractively arrange the stolons.

Step 1: Fill pot with soil

We suggest a light, soilless mix easier to use. Fill the pot so that you need to leave room

Using a couple of fingers, enough to accommodate the 2 hole will hold its shape better moist.



and make hole in center.

mix that has been slightly premoistened so it's that the soil fills firm, but not packed--remember for the smaller plant.

make a deep hole in the center of the pot large 1/2" root ball of the plant you'll be repotting. The if the soil has been premoistened and is slightly



Step 2: Remove lower leaves from plant.

This will be hard to do, but it's necessary. We want a compact, attractive, plant. To achieve this, we'll have to lower the plant in its pot and bury most of its unattractive stem. This means that all of those lower leaves are now unnecessary, since they would only be buried anyways.

You'll notice that we've removed a number of leaves from this plant--the nodes are still visible along its stem. You can see how far apart the nodes are. This plant had been grown crowded in a tray with many other plants, and had gotten insufficient light and room to grow well. Episcias, especially, need good light and room to "spread out" to grow well and look attractive. If not, they'll tend to grow tall and spindly, like this one. After it's repotted and given more space, it will grow much better.

Notice, also, that we've kept the stolons on the plant (we'll use these later), and have kept only the healthiest, top two rows of leaves. We've kept the flowers too, but don't feel obligated to do so. Sometimes its necessary to remove blooms with the foliage.



Step 3: "Rolling-up" the plant.

How to get rid of that long stem? It's too long to hide by simply lowering the plant in the pot (it's more than 4" long!). Here's a "secret"....

Taking the root ball in one hand, grasp the stem of the plant with the other and carefully wind it around the root ball--just like rolling-up a ball of yarn. If the stolons are long enough, roll them up along with the plant stem. Because they are such fast growers, Episcias usually have fairly soft, flexible stems. If yours is brittle and stiff, let the plant dry a bit (don't do when very wet), to make it more pliable.



Step 4: The "rolled-up" plant.

Continue rolling-up the plant until the root ball is just at the level of the lowest remaining leaves. If you accidentally, partly "crack" the stem, don't worry, it will usually heal.

To center the plant (it's now off to one side of the root ball), you can make a "slot" in the side (nearest the stem) of the root ball and press the stem and plant towards the center.



Step 5: Potting the plant.

Gently, but firmly, push the root ball (with stem, and stolons, wound around it), into the hole that you made in your 4" pot.

It's a good habit to handle the plant by its rootball and/or stem, not by its leaves. This minimizes bruising of the plant and keeps soil off of the leaves. Work your fingers underneath the leaves, firming the soil around the plant.



Step 6: Arranging the stolons.

We've rolled-up the stolons along with the stem, but these were so long that even that they remain long even after the plant has been repotted! No problem. We'll just use them to fill in empty spaces around the plant, giving it a "fuller" look.

To do this, take each stolon and wind it around the stem of the plant, underneath its leaves, until they've been shortened enough. Then, press them down into the surface of the soil in a spot that looks bare or in need of foliage. Sometimes, we'll use "U" pins to keep them in place. These stolons will soon produce roots.



Step 7: The "finished" product.

Here's our formerly weedy Episcia, now in a 4" pot and looking much better!