

Plant says

Hey, Margaret! check my pot

The longer days and higher temperatures that mark the approach of spring push all plants into more active growth. And this includes house plants that have been wintering on your window sill as well as outdoor plants. This is a good time to give your house plants a checkup and repot those that need it.

If you haven't repotted your house plants in more than a year or so it would be wise to check and see if they need a larger pot. Some plants can remain in the same pot for several years, others will outgrow their pot in a year.

The best way to tell if a plant needs repotting is to check the roots. How? By looking at them. Place your hand, palm down, on the top of the pot so the plant's stem comes through the second and third fingers. Turn the pot upside down—the weight of the plant and soil will be in your palm. Now tap the pot to loosen it from the soil. It should lift off easily. If you see a mass of roots in tangles, consider repotting. If you see soil and just a few roots, let the plant stay in the same pot.

When repotting, use a pot that is just one size larger than the original.

Pot sizes are based on diameter at the top—3-inch, 4-inch, 5-inch, etc. If the original pot measures 3 inches, put the plant in a 4-inch pot.

Any good packaged potting soil can be used. Or, you can mix your own soil using equal parts good garden soil, peat moss and vermiculite or sand. Place a piece of broken clay pot or large gravel over the drainage hole in the bottom. This keeps the soil from clogging it up.

Place a little soil over the crack or gravel. Loosen some of the tangled roots and place the plant in the new pot so the soil level is about a half inch below the rim (you may need to adjust the soil in the bottom to get the correct placement). Finish the potting by adding soil around the sides, making sure it is firmed against the roots. Finally, and the most important, water the plant thoroughly. To do this, fill that half inch space you left between soil and rim with water and let it soak down through the roots.

It might also be wise to rid your house plants of any insects that may have been harboring in the soil or on the stems during winter, waiting for the nice weather to become more ac-

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