

GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE

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No, I didn't spend the week's grocery money on an expensive orchid but there comes a time when almost every hobby orchid grower decides, "Enough is enough!" The collection has exceeded the capacity of the growing space. This often comes in late spring after the annual repotting and dividing of orchids results in a space crisis in the orchid house. It is time for a 'conscious uncoupling' as Gwyneth Paltrow said, or even, a 'rapid disassembly' as Julia Roberts called her quickie divorce. *

Here are some of my criteria for deciding what orchids must leave home.

- 1. Duplicates** This is easy. After dividing orchids, the spare/s can be sold (**S****), donated (**D**) for society raffles or gifted (**G**) to friends. I usually keep a back-up plant for rare or valuable orchids but (if space is critical) you can give a division to a trusted friend so if you lose yours you may be able to get a piece back. Make sure the divisions have re-established before you move them on.
- 2. Non-flowerers** Sometimes, no matter what you do, the orchid makes multiple growths and gets repotted every couple of years, gets moved around the growing areas, gets lots of attention (usually positive for a few years and then negative) but still never produces a flower. It may be that someone else's growing area will suit it better or it may just be a dud. Disposing of this one should come with a disclaimer citing its reluctance to flower so the buyer/recipient is aware of the problem. You could sell/donate it without but that's not a very nice or ethical thing to do to a fellow orchid hobbyist.
- 3. Space Gobblers** This is not a problem for everyone but, when you are trying to downsize, the very large plants in big pots and/or with expansive foliage must come into contention in the divorce stakes. You need to weigh up how much joy each one gives you against the bench space it occupies. I sadly parted with a lovely *Vanda Rothschildana* recently because it was so big it totally blocked access to part of the shadehouse. I've also parted with the largest divisions of some cattleyas and kept a smaller, flowering size piece for myself.
- 4. Ho-Hums** These are the orchids that don't bring an immediate, "Not that one!" response when you are casting about for some extra space. They aren't bad but they don't make your heart sing. It may be something you were interested in but now your tastes have changed. It may be that it is quite similar to another, more superior orchid, so choose to keep the better one and **S, D** or **G** the Ho-Hum.
- 5. Sicky-Poos** Sometimes an orchid goes into decline and, no matter what you try, it just clings to life and demands full time intensive care but never responds. Bin (**B**) it!
- 6. Suss plants** If it looks like it might have a virus, get it checked or **B**!
- 7. The Nameless** Unless it is an exceptional plant which I cannot live without, orchids without names are high on the list of plants to come before the divorce court. Usually the loss of a name is my fault by losing a label or allowing the writing to become illegible. If I know for certain what it is when it flowers I can make a new label but if it is a hybrid and I am not certain then **S, D** or **G** with Genera Unknown on the tag.

I'm off to Court!

* Disclaimer: I don't read celebrity magazines: I just looked for something silly on the internet.

** Commercial orchid growers have to earn a living from their orchid sales but I think society sales tables should enable members to add to their collections at 'mate's rates' so that's how Brian and I price our plants.