

I often see growers ask for advice on whether or not to divide their plants. The short answer is, DON'T - unless you **really** need to. Larger plants grow, **and bloom**, much better than smaller plants, so the longer you can delay dividing the plant, the better your results will be.

A mature Cattleya hybrid with 15 pseudobulbs (PBs) could easily produce 4-6 new growths, while three plants with 5 PBs each, will usually produce only a single new growth each. For example:

- I have a mature, but not large, C *Caudebec* 'Linwood' (4N) AM/AOS, which was repotted about 3 years ago. As an experiment, I put it into a Vanda basket with a mix of sphagnum & bark (3:1), where the plant is doing very well - now with 2 years PBs hanging over the edge of the basket



This year the plant produced a voluntary second lead (with 2 flowers), while the full size growth from the primary lead produced a spike with 11 flowers, which is the most this clone has ever done according to Waldor.

- I have a C (*Laelia*) *purpurata* with some 20-25 PBs. Most of the leads now produce 2 new growths at the front, **plus** one from last years growth.

This plant confirms the old saying, that a *purpurata* is not mature till it is in a 10" (or larger) pot.

Obviously, if a plant has become too large to handle, or to fit on the window sill, you have to divide it, creating divisions for trade/gifts/sale. Here are some general rules for divisions (I always want my keepers to have 'a little extra', so they will grow back fast):

	<u>'Keeper' Div</u>	<u>Trade/Sale Div</u>
Bulbophyllums	6-10 PBs	4-6 PBs
Cattleyas ⁽¹⁾ :	6-10 PBs	4-6 PBs
Cymbidiums ⁽²⁾ :	3-4 PBs	2-3 PBs
Dendrobium ⁽³⁾ :		
Epis (reed stem)	3-4 stems	2-3 stems
<i>Laelia anceps</i>	4-5 PBs	3-4 PBs
Miltoniopsis	2-3 PBs	2 PBs
Oncid/Intergen.	3 PBs	2 PBs
<i>Paphiopedilum</i> ⁽⁴⁾	2-5 fans	1-5 fans
<i>Phragmipedium</i> ⁽⁵⁾	2 fans	1-2 fans
<i>Zygopetalum</i>	3 PBs	2-3 PBs

- (1) If a Cattleya gives you a single new growth each year, and you would like to create a division, you have two choices:

A. When repotting, create back-bulb divisions with min 2-3 PBs with 1 or 2 dormant 'eyes'. Most such divisions will send out new leads, but it may take 2-4 years to grow these to blooming size.

B. 6-12 months before you plan to repot, cut the rhizome with a clean razor blade. Leave at least 4 mature PBs in the lead division, and min. 3 mature PBs in the back-bulb division.

Doing this 'in pot' division without disturbing the roots will usually produce larger leads from the back-bulb division.

- (2) There are a few *Cymbidiums*, which are so vigorous, that 1-2 PB divisions are successful (likely to bloom 1st season after division).

One such is the very compact miniature *Cym Dame Catherine*, which is available from Silva Orchids.



There are also a few members of the *Cattleya* group, where 1-2 PBs are enough to start a new plant. *Guaritanthe skinneri* & *bowringiana* fall into this category.

- (3) *Dendrobium keikis* (usually single cane) can be separated as soon as they have roots growing. Otherwise:

- Aussie types: 4-6 canes/division.
- Latouria types: 4-6 canes/division
- Nobile types: 3-4 canes/division
- Phalaenopsis types: 2-3 canes/division.

- (4) *Paphiopedilum* are a special case.

- In *Maudiae* types, the fans root early, so you can make single fan divisions (though they will grow & rebloom much faster if you make 2-3 fan divisions).
- Strap leafed types (= *insigne*, etc.):
- Both species & primary hybrids root a little slower, you usually need a couple of older fans to get enough roots on each division.
- Complex hybrids ('Bulldogs') root very slowly. You usually need 3-4 fans to get enough roots on each division.
- Multiflorals (*rothschildianum*, etc.) rarely bloom on single growth plants. Aim for 2-3 fan divisions if possible.

- (5) *Phragmipediums* will often do well from a single fan, provided that they have enough roots. However, I still prefer to see 2 fan divisions, as these will grow so much faster.