

Controlling Root Rot

FRED BARNES

A little-known wide spectrum soil fungicide that has been used by some amateurs and commercial orchid growers for the past four years for the control of root rot in seedling flats and potted plants is known as "Shell Drench #345," made by Shell Chemical Company. When added to the normal feed solution it greatly reduces or eliminates root rot, especially of plants in plastic pots.

SD#345 can be obtained from local Agricultural Chemical supply warehouses for \$48 per gallon, or \$12.50 per quart. This seems like a lot of money for a fungicide, but when diluted as recommended for drench application, one gallon of SD#345 will make 25,500 gallons of drench, or one quart makes 6,375 gallons of drench at a cost of 1/4 cent per gallon of drench. Sometimes a few members of an orchid society will chip in to buy a gallon or a quart of SD#345, and then divide it among them in smaller bottles.

SD#345 must be handled with care as it is readily absorbed by the skin and the vapor is harmful if breathed. It should be handled in a well ventilated space only. Three or four days after it has been applied to a potted plant as a greatly diluted drench, it is safe to handle the plant in re-potting.

A research bio-chemist who has used SD#345 for several years on his orchid collection, gives the following directions for dilution to proper strength for drench application:

- (A) Make a STOCK saturated solution to be kept in a tightly stoppered one-gallon bottle: 2 1/2 fl. oz. of SD#345 per gallon of water.
- (B) Drench application: one part of STOCK solution per 500 parts water.

For small quantities:

1 1/2 teaspoons of STOCK solution per gal. of water.

For Hydromix proportioner (100:1):

6.4 fl. oz. of STOCK solution per quart Hydromix bottle.

For Hozon proportioner (16:1):

1/2 cup of STOCK solution per gallon of water.

NOTE: The author invites your questions and comments for use in his column, GREENHOUSE GADGETRY. Anyone with contributions or interesting problems please write to: Fred Barnes, 1407 DeSoto Ave., Burlingame, Calif. 94010.

Will Plastic Pots Replace Clay?

FRANK FORDYCE

Now here is a controversial subject! It is my firm conviction that in most areas of the world, in most orchid species, plastic pots will indeed replace clay.

We have been growing most types of orchids in plastic pots for approximately 4 years and have generally had good success. I said generally, for one must learn a complete new set of watering rules, depending of course upon what potting media you are using.

I hasten to add that plastic may not be practical in certain areas of the world because of its moisture retention. For example, until the correct media is found I would feel that the Hawaiian Islands might have a problem because of their abundance of rain — keeping the plants too wet if grown out-of-doors.

Some of the benefits we find plastic pots give are:

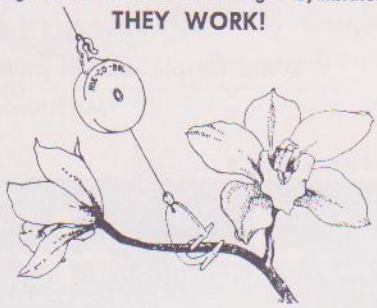
- a. Less watering because of less evaporation
- b. Less expensive than clay
- c. Lightweight
- d. No algae on outer areas of pot
- e. Easy to disinfect and clean
- f. Not as easily broken as clay
- g. Easy to slip plant from pot to observe root action as roots do not adhere to plastic easily.
- h. Attractive
- i. Easy to ship — less weight — less cost of shipment
- j. Pot clips are now being made for plastic
- k. Plastic pots are now available in all popular sizes even up to a new 14" x 10" cymbidium tub.

There are some drawbacks too, for we find that some of the bottoms of plastic pots are too small making the plant top heavy.

One of the first "cautions" I would point out to anyone progressing into plastic pots is — do not mix plastic and clay pots together on your bench. You will overwater the plastic if mixed among the clay. They take much less water.

This is fast becoming the age of plastic — if it does the job more efficiently, why fight it?

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