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African Violet

Magazine

November & December 2009

Volume 62

Number 6



AVSA Information

FOR CONDUCTING BUSINESS WITHIN YOUR SOCIETY

FOR ACCURATE SERVICE, SEND YOUR INQUIRIES TO THE CORRECT PERSON. ALWAYS INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS.

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AVSA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION: Dr. Elmer Godeny, 11473 Denham Rd., Gonzales, LA 70737.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES AND COMMERCIAL SALES & EXHIBITS: Lynn Lombard, 790 Ridgecrest Dr., Colfax, CA 95713. For information on convention entries or sales room, contact Lynn Lombard, *Email* <lynn_lombard@worldnet.att.net>

CONVENTION AWARDS: Jan. issue. Send suggestions or contributions for convention awards to Judy Carter, 1825 W. Lincoln St., Broken Arrow, OK 74012-8509. *Email* <AVSAawards@valomet.com>.

CONVENTION PROGRAM: Send special requests for workshop programs or interesting speakers to Kathy Lahti, Convention Director, 4157 Oliver Ave. N.W., Annandale, MN 55302. *Email* <lahti@lakedalelink.net> If interested in sponsoring a national convention in your area, contact Convention Director.

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MVL SUPPLEMENTS: Download from AVSA website, or order from AVSA office for \$1.00. Orders in writing only. Send any correction and/or description of new cultivars with hybridizer's name to: Joe Bruns, 1220 Stratford Lane, Hanover Park, IL 50130.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS: Sent to Associate Members. Renewing members receive card on white protective cover of AVM.

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SHOW SCHEDULE APPROVER: For information on Shows, AVSA Awards, and Approving Schedules write to: Meredith Hall, P. O. Box 370, Marlin, TX 76661. *E-mail* <mhall370@earthlink.net>. **Do not send Show Schedules by E-mail - this address is for information ONLY.** Please check for new prices on AVSA Show Packets.

Due to increases in shipping costs, the following rates for the SSA packet and AVSA collection rosettes are effective now: \$5.00 when requesting the SSA packet with no rosettes; \$12.50 when requesting the SSA packet and one or two rosettes; \$20.00 when requesting the SSA packet and two sets of rosettes; \$27.50 when requesting the SSA packet and three sets of rosettes.

AFRICAN VIOLET MAGAZINE INFORMATION

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ARTICLES BY MEMBERS, COLUMNISTS AND MEMORIALS: Send to Editor. **Please Note: Deadlines - Articles and Columnists:** Jan. issue - Oct. 1; Mar. issue - Dec. 1; May issue - Feb. 1; July issue - Apr 1; Sept. issue - June 1; Nov. issue - Aug. 1.

COMING EVENTS: Send to Editor.

Coming Events Deadlines: - Jan. issue - Nov. 1; Mar. issue - Jan. 1; May issue - Mar. 1; July issue - May 1; Sept. issue - July 1; Nov. issue - Sept. 1.

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Advertising rates and information: Cindi Nofziger, 1500 NE Mayview, Albany, OR 97321. *E-mail* <ccnofziger@comcast.net> (**Ad rates on web site: AVSA.org**).

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BACK ISSUES: Complete your set now. Request price list of available issues from Beaumont office. Send SASE for list.

BEST VARIETIES: HONOR ROLL COMPILER Floyd Lawson, 20719 Madrona Ave., Torrance, CA 90503.

BOOSTER FUND: Send contributions to Shirley Berger, 2822 S. Mainsail Dr., Avon Park, FL 33825-6032.

BOYCE EDENS RESEARCH FUND: Send contributions to Marlene Buck, 17235 N. 106th Ave., Sun City, AZ 85373-1958.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE FUND: Send contributions to Susan Hapner, 35 Ridge Point Dr., Chesterfield, MO 63017.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Send new address at least 30 days before it is to take effect, along with old address, to AVSA office in Beaumont.

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African Violet

MAGAZINE

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Sweet Tea

Best Standard
Chimera
AVSA 2009
National Show

Exhibited by:
Barbara Burde



Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

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Every attempt is made to keep articles technically correct. Since the growing of fine African violets can be achieved in many ways, the methods and opinions expressed by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of AVSA.

President's Message

By Ron Davidson, President

941 F. M. 2377 • Red Oak, TX 75154

Email: chiefrond@aol.com



s everyone having fun going to the Regional/State African violet conventions? I hope your African violets and designs won special awards at one of these shows. Jan and I are looking forward to exhibiting at Lone Star AVC convention and show the first weekend in November in Kerrville, Texas. We are also planning to attend The Mid-Atlantic AVS convention and show in mid-November.

Have you ordered your **2010 AVSA Calendar** from the AVSA office? The pictures in this year's calendar are fantastic. Do not throw away that old calendar, though, because the pictures can be used in your affiliate club's shows in the Educational and AVSA exhibits. Beautiful pictures draw the public to these exhibits. They can also be used for advertising your shows and sales.

Just in time for the holidays, AVSA is having a **Holiday Special** for the **2010 AVSA Calendar** with new, discounted prices:

- 1 - 5 \$10.00 plus postage
- 6 - 10 \$9.00 plus postage
- 11 up \$8.00 plus postage

NOTE: Postage for one in an envelope \$2.95. The best price on postage is the small flat rate box - \$10.95. Up to 22 calendars can be mailed in the flat rate box.

These calendars make very nice gifts for friends and family - so order some extra calendars before they are sold out. **International members:** International pricing will be different, so contact the AVSA office for more information.

The Library Committee has completed the CD's and DVD's of the AVSA 2009 Reno Convention and Show. These CD's / DVD's are a "must" for all affiliates as program material for the coming year, and as an addition to their local library. These CD's and DVD's are available now through the office. The Library Committee has also produced a 35mm slide program of the Reno Convention for rental from our office library.

I am pleased to announce that the **2011 AVSA Convention** will be at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cherry Hill, New Jersey on May 14 - 21, 2011. This is wonderful news since AVSA has not had a convention in this area for a long time. There is so much to see and do in the Philadelphia/New Jersey/Delaware area. So mark your AVSA calendar with these dates!

This will be last issue of the *African Violet Magazine* in this size. The January/February 2010 issue will be in the new smaller size. The high quality content will remain the same,



and there will be additional color pages. I am looking forward to seeing more color in our great magazine.

Another change starting with the 2010 issue of AVM will be the removal of the convention insert ("Purple Pages") which will be available on the AVSA web site on January 1, 2010. If you do not have Internet access and need the convention information, just contact the office, and they will send you the complete insert at no charge.

The change saves AVSA printing and mailing expenses in the production of the January/February issue. The convention pages that you will download or request from the AVSA office are exactly as they have appeared in the past in this publication.

The new **AVSA Entries Program - Version: 2** is now available through the office. For complete information on this new version, please read Joe Bruns' article on page 27 in this issue.

I want to thank everyone who made donations to the Booster Fund for the Website Upgrade and the purchase of the Editor's new computer. Ruth is quite happy with her new computer and had to show it off to the Executive Committee during our fall meeting at the AVSA office in Beaumont.

I would like to send congratulations to a couple of our grand members.

Barbara and Jack Elkin celebrated their 60th Anniversary on September 12.

John and Barbara Cook of *Cape Cod Violetry* celebrated their 50th Anniversary on October 10.

Congratulations to you on these special milestones!

Please notify me about special events such as these anniversaries and birthdays. I would like to honor our outstanding members when they celebrate these special events in their lives.

The Executive Committee met at the AVSA office on September 12 - 14, 2009. We officers did a lot of research in the archives, going over the old minutes and notes from past years. Our Editor, Ruth Rumsey, 3rd Vice President, Winston Goretsky, and Office Manager, Jenny Daugereau, spent several hours in Houston the following Monday, touring the printing plant and meet with the staff of the company that prints this magazine.

Happy growing, good luck, and keep smiling!

Ron Davidson
President, AVSA

Editor's Notes

By Ruth Rumsey, AVM Editor

2375 North Street • Beaumont, TX 77702

Email: rrumsey@earthlink.net



There has been much excitement at the AVSA office recently. We've been busy getting ready for the changes the New Year will bring, and for the holiday season.

In mid-September, the AVSA Executive Committee met in Beaumont, at the AVSA office for their annual Fall Meeting. It was a busy weekend for our elected officers, and Jenny and I enjoyed the time we spent with them. Our new Treasurer, **Edna Rourke**, and our new 3rd Vice President, **Winston Goretsky**, were visiting the office for the first time, and we were proud to show them around this beautiful building.

It's become a tradition through the years, that on the weekend of the fall meeting, we all go to dinner at our favorite Cajun seafood restaurant. Our 1st Vice President, formerly **Linda Golubski**, was recently married, and the new **Mrs. Linda Hall**, was surprised at dinner with a lovely miniature wedding cake.

As you must know by now, this is the last issue of the *African Violet Magazine* in this size. Beginning with the January/February 2010 issue, we are going to our new, smaller size. The page count will remain the same, as will the columns and articles you have come to expect. A positive addition will be the increase in color pages, which will allow for more photos of plants from our national show and those submitted by our membership.

If you would like to submit photos of plants in your personal collection, or from your local shows, please make sure they meet these guidelines: **SIZE - All photos submitted electronically must be at least 300dpi, or at least 1MB in size.**

Photos from developed film may also be submitted. I will scan them and reproduce them to meet the requirements for publication. Originals will not be returned.

ALL PHOTOS must be uncluttered. Please remove



all plant show name-card picks, all ribbons, other plants crowding, or in the background. Try to take a photo showing your plant in the best possible way, with a plain background.

In this issue, on page 21, you will find **AVSA's Best Variety List for 2009**, compiled by **Floyd Lawson**. These are the African violet varieties voted best by the AVSA membership. Many use this list as a tool for selecting new plants to add to their collections.

On page 16 in this issue, you'll find a review of the new book by AVM contributor and advertiser, **Ruth Coulson** from Australia. *African Violets for Everyone: A Manual for Growers*. What a great book! Ruth addresses every aspect of growing African violets, and there's a bonus, a CD of page after page of color photos of blooming plants, plant troubles, how-to information, etc.

Another Australian, and AVM contributor, **Margaret Taylor**, shares a photo of one of her new hybrids, 'Jazztime,' on page 40, and some of her African violet experiences on page 41, with "The Home Grown Efforts."

John Regan, Barrington, IL, tells how, "Successfully Promoting Your Club is Easier than You Think," on page 24. I received an email from John, thanking us for the recent AVM articles encouraging our affiliate clubs to stay active and encourage membership. He took the steps to publicize his club, Barrington Bloomers AVS, and was astounded by the results.

Perhaps your club could follow this example and see if you can grow your membership as well.

With the holiday season upon us, please have a look at page 56, and the special holiday rates AVSA is offering on the beautiful 2010 calendar. These make wonderful gifts, especially for the African violet growers in your life.

Have a wonderful holiday season!

Happy
Holidays

AVSA Executive Committee Meets in Beaumont, Texas

Our Executive Committee met on the second weekend of September, 2009 at the AVSA Office in Beaumont, TX. Although most committee members had been to the office before, our new 3rd Vice President, Winston Goretsky, and Treasurer, Edna Rourke, enjoyed their first visit to AVSA's "home."

It was a long weekend of business meetings and dis-

cussions, with time for dinner in the evenings. Our office staff also met with the committee and accompanied our 3rd VP to Houston to tour Gulfstream Graphics, the printing company that publishes the *African Violet Magazine*.

These mid-year meetings give our elected officers the opportunity to work together on the business of the society and spend time with the office staff and Editor



Immediate Past President Joyce Stork, 3rd Vice-President Winston Goretsky, Treasurer Edna Rourke, 2nd Vice-President John Carter, 1st Vice President Linda Hall, Secretary Sue Ramser, AVSA President Ron Davidson.



Treasurer, Edna Rourke, 2nd VP John Carter, Secretary Sue Ramser, working on AVSA business.



3rd VP Winston Goretsky and Hank Luehrmann of Gulfstream Graphics discussing color for the AVM.



1st VP Linda Hall, receiving congratulations on her recent marriage.



AVSA Executive Committee meeting in the sun room, in the AVSA office.



In the AVSA Reception area.

Question Box

By Sue Haffner

3015 Timmy Ave. • Clovis, CA 93612

Email: sueh@csufresno.edu

Dear Friends,



I'd like to open by sharing several responses to items that appeared in my July-August column. Patt Harris sent me this: "I was just reading your column and started laughing ... when the person asked about sticking pins in plants to encourage branching for trailers ... I, too, wondered about that (about 25 or so years ago) and decided to try it. When my husband came home from work (after I had put pins in all the plants on the upper shelf of my plant stand), he looked at my plants and with a rather loud voice said, "Since when have you started using 'voodoo' on your violets?!" I started laughing as I thought it was soooo funny! And I'm still laughing as I think about it. Anyway, it didn't work for me. Now you can laugh with me." Thanks, Patt. I enjoyed your comment.

In response to the question about how to deal with a powdered fertilizer that had turned solid, Chuck Turner suggested this technique: "The fertilizer is probably already in a jar with a tight lid (or should be). Fold a three inch square of paper toweling once horizontally and once vertically; wet it with water and press out any excess. Put the wet toweling on a small piece of plastic wrap and draw the four corners of the wrap loosely over the paper, making a sort of pouch. (Be sure there is no moisture on the outside of the plastic wrap!) Then gently place the pouch on top of the fertilizer and close the jar tightly. Within a few days ... the fertilizer should be nice and soft. And the paper and plastic can be discarded." Thanks to you, as well, Chuck.

I recently received an email from a grower who asked me what chemical should be used to combat cyclamen mites. Apparently, the grower had lost an entire violet collection to the pest, and now it appeared to have hit his plants again. I responded with my usual questions: was he absolutely sure that mites were the problem; what symptoms was he seeing; were all the plants affected, or just some; where did he get his plants (from friends, or garden shops, or mail order). The questioner hasn't gotten back to me yet, but I thought I'd comment, anyway. First, if you've lost an entire collection and now appear to be on the way to losing another, perhaps you need to focus on your basic growing procedures. It's easy to suspect mites if you notice a suspicious symptom (such as tight centers), but I think other issues need to be ruled out. Restart your collection, but do it in a small way. Don't amass more plants than you can care for properly. Check the plants every day. Be sure to quarantine new plants before adding them to your collection.



Q. What could cause yellow stippling on my violet leaves? Is it a bug?

A. This question came from a newer member of our club. She brought a leaf for us to diagnose. The surface was, yes, stippled with small yellow spots. The reverse, however, appeared perfectly healthy. She said the plant was on a windowsill in the bathroom and that only the outer ring of leaves showed this damage. My first thought was that, because of the small size and uniformity of the spots, they had been produced by a spray of some sort. It couldn't be hairspray, she said, as she doesn't use it anymore. I do believe some spray was involved: a cleaning product, or perfume, or a bug spray that drifted in through the window. We advised her to repot the plant, removing the damaged leaves, and hope this was a one-time occurrence.

Q. It drives me crazy that when I buy perlite in those opaque bags, a lot of times what's in there is mostly powder. You can't really tell by lifting and pressing the bag just what condition the perlite is in. Any suggestions? Oh, and for how long have they been adding fertilizer to perlite?

A. There is one distributor here in the west that packages perlite in clear plastic 12-quart bags. I had to go to a local independent hardware store to find it, however, as the "big box" garden centers only seem to be handling the product you mention. A lot of growers complain that bags of perlite contain a large quantity of powder (or "fines"). One person actually sifted enough powder out of one large bag to fill several gallon jugs. If there is a distributor of agricultural supplies in your areas, you might call and see if they handle perlite. If they do, it will probably be in the large paper bags (1 cubic ft.) - opaque, but they might have a sample for you to look at. If you belong to a plant club, your group might approach a local hardware store, garden shop, or nursery and ask if they can special order perlite for you. Our club did that once, when we found an agreeable nursery manager at a local store. Of course, we had to agree to buy a whole pallet-load (15 1 cubic ft. bags), but that wasn't a problem, as we had members of another garden club who joined us in this effort. Fertilizer: yes, I just recently noticed that a name-brand perlite has been "improved" by added fertilizer. I don't know to what extent using this would throw off your usual fertilizing regimen. I guess you would just have to use it and see if it makes a difference in your plants. I've probably written this before, but we should be alert to the content information on the products we buy. Even familiar brand names have been reformulated and repackaged in recent years.

Q. Can you tell me what the difference is between blood meal and dried blood?

A. Well, the blood meal that is sold in the nurseries is dried blood. It's a byproduct of the meat packing industry – animal blood that is dried, powdered, and sold as a high-nitrogen fertilizer. You can find it on the shelf with bone meal, fish meal, and other fertilizers and soil additives. Blood meal contains 15% nitrogen and 1.3% phosphorus; dried blood is similar. I would be reluctant to use it on indoor plants and only sparingly on garden plants because of the nitrogen content. I understand that it can be useful in getting bacterial action started in a compost pile.

Q. I have a Chirita growing on the windowsill. It seems to do okay, but I was really thrilled awhile back to see that it was putting up a bloom stalk. Then the stalk stopped growing and is just sitting there. Is it really going to bloom, or what? What can I do about it?

A. Apparently, chiritas do this when they go into dormancy in the midst of the bloom cycle. I'm not sure what might trigger the dormancy: perhaps dryness, temperature, day length, or some other factor. Once the plant resumes growth, the flower stalk will continue to develop and bloom. This might be a reproductive strategy that evolved to ensure survival during unfavorable environmental conditions. What can you do about it? Well, I suppose changing conditions for the plant – the light, the moisture – might bring it out of dormancy. I can't pretend to be a chirita expert because some of mine have gone into permanent dormancy! A member of our club, though, grows gorgeous, huge chiritas that are planted outside in a protected flowerbed. They've been in this location for at least four years: filtered sunlight, watered with a hose, not fertilized. Our winter temperatures get down to freezing at least several times during the season, but this flowerbed is protected by a garage wall on one side and fences on two other sides, redwood lath overhead. Our rain occurs mainly in winter and spring. The chiritas seem to find the conditions favorable, as they are starting to outgrow their location!

Q. What can you tell me about tissue culture? I've heard that it can be a useful technique for propagating plants that are otherwise difficult to multiply, such as chimeras. Is it possible to do this outside of a laboratory?

A. Interesting question. Many years ago, I saw an ad in a violet or houseplant magazine for a home tissue culture kit. It sounded intriguing, so I sent for it, having always been interested in plant propagation methods. What with one thing or another, I didn't get around to doing anything with it; it sat on a shelf for a long time; now I have no idea where it is. Then, this spring I had the occasion to participate in a tissue culture workshop and had my interest re-kindled. The technique has long been used in commercial horticultural

culture, of course, especially for growing orchids from seed or for mass propagation of other slow growing genera. What I learned in the workshop is that it is certainly possible to do tissue culture at home. You need a clean, dust-free work area, a microwave oven, glass baby food jars, household bleach, spray bottle of rubbing alcohol, and a few small tools. You also need agar powder and a couple of inexpensive chemicals. In the workshop, I selected to propagate a violet from a small piece of a leaf. Sealed in a sterilized jar of agar solution, the leaf fragment did nothing for several weeks; then it began to produce tiny plantlets along all its cut edges. You can use any piece of a plant – leaf, petiole, root – in the procedure. I know tissue culture isn't for everyone, but if you are interested in further information, there is a hobby group: www.hometissueculture.org, with an informative website.

Q. Whenever I repot violet plantlets, I find that, before I know it, some of the little leaves are lying on the soil surface and starting to rot. Maybe it's because the pots are too big, even though they're the smallest pots I have. Any tips about this?

A. I know exactly what you mean. I can't count how many times I've potted up violet babies only to have them look sort of "lost" in even the smallest pots. I use plastic plant labels laid across the pot rims to help support the little leaves and keep them up off the soil surface until the plant is sturdy enough to stand on its own. As for small pots, sometimes you can find the tiny "thumb pots" for sale, or you can cut down the tops of Solo cups halfway to make a more shallow pot. Some years back, someone gave me a bunch of little medicine cups for use with plantlets. I was delighted to have them – until I discovered that it was hard for me to control the conditions in such small containers. They either dried out in a day or else got swamped by my watering methods. So they didn't work for me, but I imagine they would for a better, more attentive grower.

Q. How can I tell if my windowsill location really provides enough light for my violets? The window faces the west but doesn't get any direct sun. There's a roof overhang plus a big tree outside. I wish I had a better place, but I don't. The plants are in the self-watering pots, as they do best for me that way.

A. Well, first note how well your plants are doing. Is the foliage sturdy and green? Are the leaves reaching for the light? Are the plants blooming? When you place your hand between the plants and the light source, does it cast a shadow? (Generally, you should be able to see at least a dim shadow.) If your plants are from the local garden shop, they are probably those produced to do well in low-light situations. I am always surprised how well some of these violets perform in, say, office situations where they get only indirect light. Anyway, be sure to turn your windowsill plants a quarter turn

every day, always in the same direction, for most symmetrical growth. Also, the intensity of the light will vary during the year, so continue monitoring your plants, noting any changes in blooming or condition of the foliage. If the self-watering pots do well for you, by all means continue to keep on doing what you're doing.

Q. If I want to take a bug specimen to the county extension office for identification, what's the best way

to do it?

A. I would be sure to include an example of a damaged leaf, one that you suspect the insect is responsible for. Make sure it and any insect specimens are placed in escape-proof containers. A recent study has shown that, rather than using the standard 'killing jars' for the bugs, the commonly found hand sanitizers work well for preserving insect specimens. Just pump some of the sanitizer fluid into a jar and drop in the bug.

"And the winners are ..."

By Mary J. Corondan

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ALTIMORE AVC, MD – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Sizzlin' Romance, Sweet Tea, Optical Illusion; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Scrumptious, Winter Love, Rob's Berry Shake; Best in Show/Best Standard: Sizzlin' Romance; Best Miniature: Shirl's Hawaiian Lei; Best Design; Horticulture Sweepstakes; Design Sweepstakes, **Marie Burns**. Best Semiminiature: Emerald Pink, **Brian Connor**. Best Species: *Saintpaulia Clone pendula* var. *kizarre*, **Shirley Huffman**. Best Gesneriad: *Chirita 'Hisako'*, **Carol Hamelink**.



Irish Flirt; Best Standard: Franz Fantasy; Best Miniature: Orchard's Bumble Magnet; Best Design; Design Sweepstakes, **Fran Russom**. 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Ma's Neon Lights, Sugarplum Dream, Tiger; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Dust Storm, Tiny Dancer, Rob's Combustible Pigeon; Best in Show/Best Semiminiature: Rob's Dust Storm; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Susan Hapner**. Best Trailer: Pixie Blue, **Carolyn Burr**. Best Gesneriad: *Chirita 'Hotei'*, **Gary Dunlap**.

FOX VALLEY AVS, IL – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Favorite Child, Rodeo Country, EK-Goluboglozzaia Rossiia; Best Standard: Rodeo Country, **Sue Schinckel**. 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Sugar Plum Dream, Dixie's Angel Kisses, Ma's Winter Moon; Best Miniature: Petite Blarney; Best Species: *Saintpaulia* clone *diplotricha Punter #0*; *Aeschynanthus Speciosa*; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Judi DuPont**. Best in Show/Best Semiminiature: Rob's Fuddy Duddy; Best Design, **Andrea Worrell**. Best Trailer: Rob's Lilli Pilli, **Tom Greisenauer**. Design Sweepstakes (tie): **Mike England and Jan Poole**.

METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS AV COUNCIL – Winners: Rhapsodie Clementine, Frosty Spring, Skeeter; 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Tiny Dancer, Snuggles Little Dreamer,

OSHKOSH VS, WI – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Grandmother's Halo, Kev's Heavenly Star, Tomahawk; Best in Show/Best Standard: Grandmother's Halo; Best Miniature: Jolly Victory; Best Gesneriad: *Chirita sinensis 'Hisako'*; Best Design, **Kevin Degner**. 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Kev's Heavenly Star, Red October, Ness' Midnight Fantasy; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Antique Rose, Optimara Little Ottawa, Rob's Whodunit; Best Semiminiature: Rob's Whodunit, **Betsy Fox**. Best Species Collection: *Saintpaulia velutina* Amazon, *Saintpaulia grandifolia #299*, *Saintpaulia Clone* House of Amani; Best Species: *Saintpaulia velutina* Amazon; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Bill Greider**. 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Boo Man, Aunt Georgia, Ness' Crinkle Blue, **Marty Anderson**. Best Trailer: Rob's Galiwinku, **Cathy Heider**. Design Sweepstakes, **Ruth Mengsol**.

Correction: An incorrect club listing was sent in for the Chattanooga AVS found in the Sept/Oct issue. It should have been listed for the Dixie AVS as follows:

DIXIE AVS, TN – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Optimara EverGrace, EK-Goluboglazaia Rossiia, Buckeye Cranberry Sparkler; 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Outer Orbit, Rob's Zoot Suit, Ness' Cranberry Swirl; Best in Show/Best Standard: Optimara EverGrace, **Tom Greer**. 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: *Saintpaulia* clone *difficilis*, *Saintpaulia* clone *confusa*, *Saintpaulia ionantha* subspecies *ionantha* var. *ionantha*; Best Species Collection: *Saintpaulia* clone *difficilis*, *Saintpaulia* clone *confusa*, *Saintpaulia ionantha* subspecies *ionantha* var. *ionantha*; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection; Rob's Outer Orbit, Thunder Surprise, Shirl's Happy Tears; Best Semiminiature: Shirl's Happy Tears; Best Miniature: Jolly Orchid; Best Species: *Saintpaulia* clone *confusa*; Horticulture Sweepstakes; Design Sweepstakes, **Danny Tidwell**. Best Trailer: Rob's Gundaroo, **Christel Collier**. Best Gesneriad: *Aeschynanthus hildebrandii*, **Ramona Hodges**. Best Design, **Bob Green**.



Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

Shirl's Cranberry Smoothie

Exhibited by: Anne Nicholas

Hybridized by: S. Sanders

Semiminiature

AVSA BOOSTER FUND

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Small Talk

By Laurel D. Goretsky

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In the April 2009 African Violet Magazine, I shared two trouble violets with you that I felt were worth saving. I would like to give you an update on those violets and share the next step in my care (or in some cases, lack thereof!) of the same two violets.

The first plant I told you about was "Rob's Humpty Doo". I will do a quick refresh on this delightful semiminature trailer just in case you don't have your April AVM copy on hand. "Rob's Humpty Doo" is a beautiful trailer, when grown properly, with white stickite pansy blossoms with a wide bright blue edge. The one I shared with you had no blossoms to be seen and was growing out of its 2 1/2 inch pot. I removed many dead and damaged leaves and potted it up into a 4 inch pot. I am much more delighted with how it looks at the present time. Now, it has lots of bloom, and it is fairly symmetrical (figure 1). It is in need of some grooming, and I am also going to



Bill managed to win Best in Show with "Broadway Star Trail" and Best Standard Trailer with "Tinari's Royal Blue Trailer" (just to name a couple), I feel confident in trying this type of pot for my "Rob's Humpty Doo". Maybe in a few months or more, this plant (figure 3) will be ready for a show!



Figure 3

The other plant I shared with you was "Persian Prince". This is a semiminature with double white frilled pansy blossoms with pale blue-blushed lower petals and light blue veined top petals. The leaves are dark green. My plant in the April AVM looked more like a trailer than a single crown semiminature. It had no blossoms and badly needed some help. I took two of the healthier looking crowns and potted them in 2 1/2 pots.

Unfortunately, I didn't do too much with my two new "Persian Lace" plants besides keep them covered and give them water once and awhile. I am embarrassed to show you



Figure 1

disbud it so that I can show you what I am going to do with it next.

After I have removed all of the blossoms and dead or damaged foliage, I am going to pot it up into a larger pot. At the convention in Reno, Dr. Bill Price gave a wonderful talk on trailers. He mentioned in his talk using 7" pan pots for his trailers. He alters the pot slightly by cutting off the top ring of the pot (figure 2). This makes the pot shallower which trailers seem to like. Since



Figure 2



Figure 4

what they look like now, but I will go ahead and do it anyway (figure 4). Both plants have many suckers, yet, they are trying to bloom! African violets are truly amazing and forgiving plants aren't they?

I am going to fix up and repot just two plants again and try to do better with caring for them this time. Hopefully, I can show you at least one beautiful, blooming "Persian Lace" in the future.

Until next time, stay happy and healthy and keep on smiling!

How To Hybridize African Violets

By Sue Gardner • Australia

It is not difficult to produce new hybrids of African violets. Just use pollen from one flower and place it on the stigma from another flower! Of course, you must use viable pollen and a receptive stigma. Take some care in selecting suitable parent plants and follow the practical steps outlined below.

Selecting a suitable stigma

The stigma is ready when it is sticky so that the pollen will adhere. When the second flower on a peduncle opens, the first flower usually has a suitable stigma for pollinating. Use a magnifying glass to check that the stigma is sticky. It sometimes spreads at the tip. If you wish, remove stamens to avoid self-pollination. Do not spill pollen when doing so. Some may land on the stigma.



Selecting suitable pollen

Pollen is best when the flowers have just opened and the anthers are swollen. The pollen should be dry and powdery when you cut the pollen sacs open. If the flowers have been open for some time, the anthers are dried out and unsuitable.

Removing pollen

Snip stamens from the pollen parent; then cut open with a razor blade or small scissors. Let pollen fall onto your thumbnail, or remove on a camel hair's brush.

Pollinating

Using the blade, your fingernail, or a small brush, collect pollen and place it onto the sticky stigma. It should stay there. Pollinate several suitable flowers to ensure fertilization in at least one. Tie a piece of colored wool around the peduncle to avoid accidentally removing fading flowers at a later date.



How we know that our pollination was successful

The ovary of the fertilized flower should swell within two weeks and become prominent as the flower petals die off. This becomes the seedpod. It will stay green for a while and then gradually turn brown and dry. It should swell to full size in about four weeks. The pedicel remains sturdy if pollination is successful. If it weakens and droops, you know that the seedpod will not develop. A seedpod will stay green for a while and then gradually turn brown and dry. Progress of a typical seedpod is shown below.



A seedpod takes from 4-6 months to be fully mature. If it dries before 4 months, it usually is infertile. Wait until the seedpod is dry and brown before harvesting. Don't leave the seedpod on the plant when it has dried out, as it may split and seed may spill. The seed is very tiny, as shown in the picture (less than 1mm).

When the pod is brown and the pedicel (flower stalk) is thin and completely dried, the pod can be removed. Place it in an envelope marked with the parent plant names and the date. The seed can be sown immediately or saved for later use. Seed will often germinate more quickly if fresh.

Seed sowing and germinating

Place a piece of white paper on a bench away from drafts. Cut open the seedpod and tap to remove seed which is black and minute. Don't sneeze, or the seed will blow away! Carefully fold the paper so that all the seed is in a crease line down the middle of the paper. This allows you to sow the seed evenly. Tilt the paper and allow the seed to fall onto the surface of your favorite seed raising mix. I use a compressed peat pot expanded with boiling water in a polystyrene cup. Don't sow too much, or your seedlings will be a big tangle. Keep excess seed for future use. Cover cup with plastic wrap and place in a warm brightly lit position.

The seed will germinate either in a few days or over a period of weeks, or months.



Seedlings grow quite quickly and should be transplanted when the foliage is a few centimetres high.

When transplanted, they seem to thrive and grow quite rapidly. The following semi-miniatures flowered within 3 months.



Selecting seedlings to keep

Allow seedlings to grow until flowers form. Decide if the flowers are different and attractive, but if not, discard the plants. We are often so pleased to have produced new plants that we want to keep them all. After a while, we become more discerning and only grow plants that are suitable to be named. Consult an experienced grower if you are undecided. Grow the plant to 3 generations by leaf cuttings to be sure it will be stable.

AVSA SOCIETY AWARDS NOMINEES NEEDED

By Marge Savage

Delivering the citations for our Society Awards at the Reno Convention last spring was such a pleasure. We have so many deserving, dedicated volunteers worldwide whom we would like to see nominated. The Hudson Memorial Award for Affiliate Leadership is a case in point. As the generous qualities of Jim Toms were read aloud, I know there were persons attending the banquet who could have each named club members deserving of our thanks and this fine award. I can name five people in my own state. I'll bet you can, too! Please contact me about your nominee or print off the nomination form found on the website.

We count on you, our members, to mail or e-mail names and lists of accomplishments of **possible** recipients for these AVSA Society Awards. These need to be sent to me by **December 1, 2009** for the upcoming Convention in Raleigh, NC. The Executive Committee and the Society Awards Committee will determine the recipients of these awards, with the exception of the Hall of Fame Award. A brief list with descriptions follows:

Hall of Fame Award: awarded to individuals who have made unique and long-standing impact on the history

of the Society (recently awarded to Hortense Pittman).

Bronze Medal for Horticultural Achievement: awarded for scientific and horticultural contributions.

Distinguished Service Certificate: awarded as the highest service award that the Society may bestow.

Continuing Service Award: awarded for continued service to the Society.

Hudson Memorial Award: affiliate (club) secretaries shall submit names for outstanding leadership activities within an affiliated chapter (club).

Honorary One-Year Memberships: awarded for outstanding contributions to the Society.

Meritorious Service Award: awarded to thank individuals for special service to the Society.

Previous recipients of these Society Awards may be found on the website **AVSA.org** under **Library**, along with the complete listing of criteria

Marge Savage

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Conditioning Cut Flowers and Leaves for a Show Design

Excerpted from the *AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges*

Conditioning African violet blossoms and foliage can add to the length of time they keep their beauty. Water plants thoroughly the day before cutting the blossoms so that the stalks are turgid. Cut blossoms and leaf stalks carefully so as not to bruise them.

Conditioning African violet blossoms: Some varieties stay fresh longer than others. Double blossoms last longer than single. Blossoms with thick stems usually hold up best.

After removing blossoms from the plant, re-cut the stem under water (at an angle) and place in at least one inch of tepid water. Re-cutting the stem under water will keep air (which can block the taking up of water) from getting in the stem.

Use water picks, test tubes, small bottles, or 35 millimeter film canisters to hold the flower stems. Put soft plastic or tissue around the edge of the container to support the blossoms until they are conditioned. To avoid marring or crushing, keep the blossoms from touching each other. Enclose blossoms and container in a plastic bag to provide a humid atmosphere.

Blossoms should stand at least two hours or preferably overnight. After this, the stalk can be re-cut straight across if it is to be used in a needle holder, or shortened for use in a water pick or for wiring. If a blossom wilts in a cluster, it can be cut out. Buds will continue to open. These blossoms are usually smaller and lighter in color, which is often desirable in an arrangement. Keep containers and needle holders clean. If possible, change the water daily. If using small container in an arrangement, it will be necessary to add water daily.

Conditioning African violet foliage: Condition African violet foliage in the same way as blossoms. Wash the leaves carefully so they are bright and clean. Foliage can also be hardened by submerging leaves completely in water for up to one hour. After conditioning, foliage can be kept in plastic bags until needed for an arrangement.

Conditioning other cut fresh plant material: All other cut, fresh plant material used in arrangements should be conditioned in the same manner as the African violet blossoms and foliage. Before using other plant material in a show, experiment: see how it holds up.

To All AVSA Members: Exciting Changes are Coming in 2010!

By Ruth Rumsey, *AVM Editor*

Your *African Violet Magazine* will soon have a new look. The AVSA Board of Directors has decided to reduce the width and height of the magazine by a small amount, **while doubling the amount of color pages.**

The amount of pages will stay the same, as will the font size - so the text will remain at the current, easily-read size. What we will be losing is the need for fillers, when an article may not fill an entire page. We will have so many more color pages that we'll have room for many more color photos: those of show-winning plants, as well as more articles with color illustrations.

The first issue in this reduced size will be the January/February 2010 AVM. The ensuing months are needed to work out the changes to the production process. Also, your Board of Directors felt that it would be best for a change to come

at the beginning of a new year, especially for our members who save their magazines, keeping them in a collection.

Change can be difficult. But this change will:

- save this organization thousands of dollars annually
- reduce the cost of postage
- keep the AVM intact
- keep our dues at the current rate
- double the amount of color pages in each issue.

Fortunately, we have a leadership and Board of Directors dedicated to keeping AVSA strong and dedicated to keeping the *African Violet Magazine* a high quality, informative publication.

Please contact me if you have questions or suggestions. As I have stated often - this is YOUR magazine. I value your input very much.



Annual Repotting

By Joyce Stork

Repotting should be done at least once a year. The process of repotting is intimidating, and often growers try to do it the "safe way" which is actually why they die. You have to be fairly aggressive in transplanting but then provide the safety net that gets them growing again.

Step 1: Remove all older leaves that are smaller than the leaves above, or are faded in color, nicked, or damaged. I rarely leave more than about ten leaves total. Remove all flowers.

Step 2: Use the dull side of a knife to scrape about two inches of the stem (gently!) that is just below the bottom row of leaves. You should be scraping to smooth off the stumps of leaves just removed and to remove just the surface of any old dried tissue.

Step 3: Amputate the top half of the plant by making a straight cut about one and a half to two inches below the bottom row of leaves. Discard the bottom section of the plant, although the pot may be saved and washed for reuse.

Step 4: While you can see the inside of the stem, look to see if there is any sign of rot. A brown pithy center or dried powdery center is a definite sign. If this is present, clean your knife and cut higher on the stem until you are above the rot. As long as the center leaves are intact, the plant has a chance.

Step 5: Prepare a fresh pot, the same size as before, with a light porous potting mix. Commercial potting mixes

are too heavy (even the ones labeled for violets). We recommend a homemade mix of one part sphagnum peat moss (brown is much better than black), one part vermiculite, and one part perlite. Or, if you can find a commercial mix that has a brown color, try mixing it half and half with either vermiculite or perlite. Water the pot to moisten the soil thoroughly and drain off the excess water that runs through.

Step 6: Set the stem of the violet onto the top of the pot so that the stem is in good contact with the potting medium. If that part of the stem is bent, set the stem straight down into the soil. The leaves will soon straighten out and go level. A bent stem under the soil seems to cause the plant to grow oddly for an extended time.

Step 7: Place the plant into a clear plastic bag or container and seal it tightly closed. Set it in a bright location but out of direct sunlight. In about a month, new roots will have formed, and the plant will be showing new growth. You will not need to water during this time period.

Step 8: Open the bag or container gradually over a period of two days to equalize the humidity slowly and prevent shock. Then enjoy your rejuvenated plant!

From the FAQ Section of the
AVSA Web Site <www.avsa.org>

African Violets for Everyone: A Manual for Growers

A Review

African Violets for Everyone: a Manual for Growers is just that, a book for everyone who grows African violets, whether novice, show-winner, or anyone wanting to learn how to grow successfully.

Author Ruth Coulson, from Australia, a frequent contributor to the African Violet Society of America's publication, the *African Violet Magazine*, dispels the myth that growing African violets is complicated. As she says, these wonderful plants are, "Perfectly willing to grow and flower." The suggestions for growing are those she believes to be, "The easiest, most successful, and ultimately the most rewarding for home conditions."

While going into detail on the basics – light, water, and using the right soil, she also gives more attention to grooming, nutrition, cloning, pots, and what to do should problems arise. There are also descriptions of the various blossom and leaf shapes and a precise description of the *Saintpaulia* species – including the new classifications.

There are many pages of lovely color photographs of African violets, other Gesneriads, and others showing problem conditions, from fungus to pests. There are also photographs of the proper way to propagate and rejuvenate

African violets.

There is one feature in *African Violets for Everyone* that sets this publication apart from others. The book also has, neatly tucked inside the back cover, a wonderful CD – "*African Violets for Everyone: An Illustrated Guide.*"

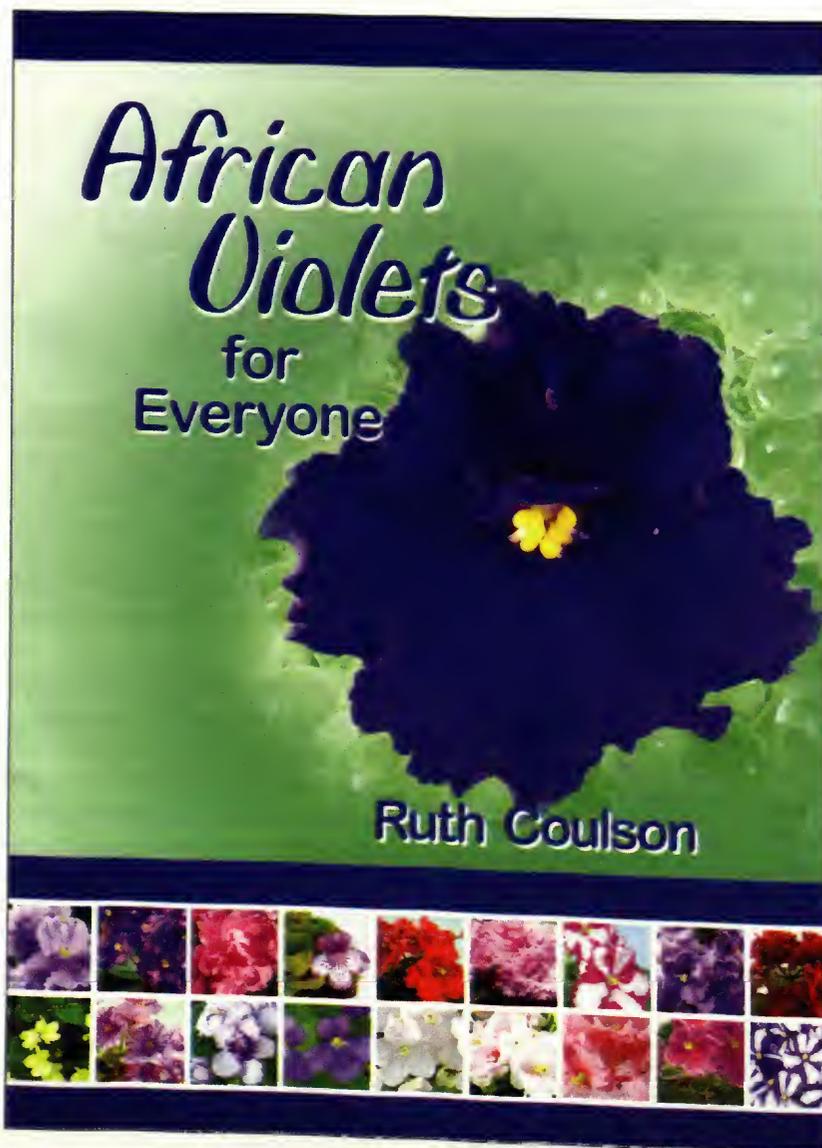
The color photographs from the book are also on the CD, but there are so many more, including other beautifully-grown

cultivars and many covering detailed aspects of growing, that it would have been difficult to include in the book. In all, there are over 170 vivid color slides. Flower shapes, edged flowers, fantasies, chimeras, thumbprints, etc., are all illustrated in full color, with many different blossoms photographed for each category.

Other photographs show actual plants that have fallen victim to over-watering and "death by dryness," while others demonstrate precise procedures for wick-watering, repotting, propagation, and rejuvenating both rosette and trailing African violet plants. There are also photos to illustrate pest damage, hybridization, and grooming.

A highly respected grower, Ruth Coulson has produced

a wonderful manual and CD to help others enjoy their venture into the world of African violets.



Vintage Violets

By Barbara Elkin, *Chairman*

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The Vintage Violet Committee was started in 1994. I was on the AVSA Future Directions panel, appointed to see where things needed to be changed or altered to make AVSA better. At those meetings, we decided we needed to save our African violet heritage. I have located over ninety-eight computer pages of Vintage Violets. However, there are many more out there that members are looking for. Here is where the AVSA Most Wanted list comes in; it is a list of those plants that people are seeking for their own collections. In the past few years, the entire AVSA Most Wanted was listed in the November or January AVMs.

As most of you know, beginning with the January/February 2010 issue of this magazine, the size, in



height and width, will be reduced. The amount of pages will remain the same, and the bonus is that we will have twice as many color pages.

While these cost-cutting measures are understandable, due to the smaller size, some of the larger listings and inserts will now be available on the AVSA web site and through the AVSA Office. So, the entire AVSA Most Wanted List will be easily available for all of you with computers, and our members without computer access can either ask a club member to print it out for them, or can contact the AVSA Office and a copy will be mailed to them. Along with the AVSA Most Wanted list, the Convention Pages ("Purple Pages"), and the Annual Index will also be available on the web site and through the office.

AVSA Most Wanted:

Big Daddy	Jeremy (Reinhardt)	Mister Bill (A. Black)	Ruth Doxsee
Blanca	Estella	Neon Halo	Sandra (Utz)
Blue Chips	Electric Ma Chine	Nortex's Moonlit Haven	Seacoast Fantasea
Black Magic	Fantasy Frills	Peggy (P. Kreska/Lyon)	Seacoast Paisley
Bounty Harvest	Grape Showers	Peggy's Diane (Kreska/Lyon)	Sonoma Lickety Split
Bowl of Cherries	Halo Bonnie Blue	Rosemary (Fisher)	Star Eclipse
Bryan	Irish Cricket	Pat's Pet	Strawberry Shortcake
(Volkmann)	Irish Kiss	Pen & Ink	Suzy's Jerry (S. Johnson)
Bryte Bubbles	Julie Kay	Pink Crystal	Sweet Mary (Lorenzen)
Delft Imperial	Jee Pee	Ponca Firebird	Tigeris
Donna (Utz)	Lavender Fantasy	Rob's Bed Bug	Wrangler's Savage Love
Donna Lynn	Lucky Lady	Reinhardt's Frilly Pink	
Electric Dream	Magic Blue	Richter's Wedgewood	
Emma Lahr	Mary's Love (M. Mahon)	Rose's Eddie Boy (Rose)	

Pink Leaves?

By Joyce Stork

Leaves of an African violet plant turning pink could be the result of a condition we call "bleaching" in which the chlorophyll in the leaves is depleted. Usually, when leaves begin looking pink, it is because the red underside cells of the leaf are visible through the upper cells. This is because the chlorophyll in the leaf (the green pigment) is being used up (by photosynthesis) faster than the plant can replace it.

There are two ways to attack the problem: 1) You may reduce the amount of light that the plant receives. African violets need twelve-hours of relatively bright light each day, with twelve-hours of darkness. When grown in windows, they should be within a few inches of the glass where they receive bright filtered light, but little to no direct light. Be

careful though, since reduced light often translates to more open growth and fewer flowers.

2) A second approach is to increase the amount of chlorophyll by fertilizing on a regular (weekly) basis. Use with a balanced African violet fertilizer, since nitrogen is needed to produce chlorophyll. In some cases, low pH or cool temperatures may also affect how the nitrogen is absorbed. If you haven't repotted your violets for more than a year, it would be a good idea to do so, since that is the easiest way to correct pH problems.

From the AVSA Web Site FAQ Section
www.avsa.org

FOLIAGE

By Sheila Walton

If the leaves of our plants are not healthy and at their best, they will not show off the flowers to good advantage. So how do we look after leaves? Obviously, they will need to be healthy, no diseases, and no rotting or dying off. Old leaves need to be removed. Leaves that have past their best are not going to become rejuvenated and will be taking food from the plant, which would be better served going into new growth. Old leaves do not look good, and if they start to rot could cause disease.

Baby leaves also need to be removed. They have outgrown their use and spoil the symmetry of the plant, and are also using up nutrients that would benefit the new growth. The sooner the old, baby, or damaged leaves are removed, the sooner the symmetry of the plant will improve, and if necessary, the better leaves can be trained to fill any gaps caused by the removal of the unwanted leaves.

Side-shoots are leaves, too. If they are allowed to remain, they will distort the shape of the plant. Remove them as soon as you see them. At our club meeting, plants were shown that had misshapen leaves, baby leaves, and side shoots. These were passed around for members to study. Much the same conditions apply to growing foliage as to growing flowers.

These included light, warmth, moisture, good open potting mix, and the right fertilizer. If you are specifically growing a plant for show, you may wish to have a higher concentrate of nitrogen for the growth of the leaves, and then change to a higher phosphorous fertilizer for the formation of the flowers.

Leaves need to be kept clean so they can absorb light. Regular brushing with a soft brush is beneficial. Some growers also like to wash their leaves with warm water. Leaves will need to be completely dry before replacing under lights, or marks will occur. Also be very careful not to leave any moisture in the crown of the plant, or this could cause it to rot. Leaves may need training to grow in the right direction. Because our ideal plant needs to be symmetrical, it is sometimes necessary to guide the petioles so that the leaves form an even pattern and do not leave gaps. Leaves can be trained using mini stakes, pegs on the edge of the pot, or maybe a coin to level a leaf that is tipping sideways. Collars can be very useful training leaves too. A paper plate or a circle cut from styrofoam sheet with a hole for the pot (or a styrofoam plate), can make a foundation for your leaves.

A circular collar will enable you to see very clearly if the plant is in the center of the pot or if a leaf is sticking out too far compared with the rest. It will also support the leaves, encouraging them to grow outwards, rather than hugging the pot. If growing mini or semi-miniature plants, the collar size can be the 6" or 8" which is the maximum diameter these plants should be allowed to grow.

Variiegated leaves have an appeal of their own, regardless of the flowers they produce. There are different types of variegation; some will grow perfectly well with the same conditions as the standard leaves; others can benefit from slightly less nitrogen in the fertilizer and a slightly lower temperature. For this reason, growers with light stands will often have the variegated plants on the bottom shelf where it is a little cooler. Perhaps one of the problems with variegated plants is that they are much more sensitive and will show

signs of "bruising" by turning brown where they have been touched. The lighter the leaf, the more this will happen. If your variegated plant has solid green leaves, it could be that it is growing in too warm an area or has been having too much nitrogen. The leaves will not change back to variegated, but if growing conditions are changed, the new leaves may return to

As with a lot of growing habits, it is necessary for each individual grower to observe what works best for them in their particular situation. Growing areas vary widely from house to house, so what works well for one may not necessarily be the ideal for another grower.

their intended type. As with a lot of growing habits, it is necessary for each individual grower to observe what works best for them in their particular situation. Growing areas vary widely from house to house, so what works well for one may not necessarily be the ideal for another grower.

Now we have looked at all the things needed to grow good foliage. How do we choose which plant is best? Even if you do not have plans (at present) to enter the show and win a major prize, you may be interested enough to have joined a group and hopefully, you are learning. While you are looking after your African violets, it is really not going to take you much longer to grow a "good" plant than a "bad plant." Your sense of achievement at the success of producing a healthy violet with good leaves and flowers is something to be proud of. There is nothing like seeing and doing, to learn. Look at all the plants at club meetings, on sales tables, and at shows. Look for plants that grow flat and symmetrical. You can also read in newsletters and magazines which hybrids have won prizes at a show. Some plants continually achieve winning results.

These would then seem to be relatively easy to grow and produce consistently good results. Only experience will prove which is right for your conditions. Having chosen a plant or plants, you will need to know its correct name so you can determine that it is growing true to the hybridizer's description.

A plant was shown at a meeting that had grown variegated leaves instead of plain green. This plant cannot be called by its name, as it is not true to the description, so if this happened to be your chosen hybrid, you would need to look for another plant of that type.

This is not the end of the choice. You may purchase a plant or grow from a leaf, but you will need to select the best looking baby for your ideal plant. Some of the smaller babies may never develop into a really strong plant. Look for a strong baby with good symmetry and healthy leaves. Be proud of your achievements and successes, and learn from your mistakes and failures. Share your joy of our hobby with other members of your club, as well as your friends.

From the *Newsletter* of the
Early Morn AV Group, Inc., Australia



Anne & Frank Tinari Endowment Fund

Janet Riemer • 256 Pennington-Harbourton Rd. • Pennington, NJ 08534

June 10 – August 31, 2009



Geneva

New York State African Violet Society
Fox Valley African Violet Society



Multicolor

Sweetwater AVS (NY)
In memory of Louise Titus and Lillian Simone
New Jersey Council of African Violet Judges
Tidewater AVS (VA)



Two-tone

Armand Arata
In memory of Gladys J.M. Smith



Thumbprint

Joshua McKinney
Glenn Hodges
Susan J. Fraley
LuAnn Christenson
Hilda W. Prince
Doreen Cesari
David B. Tooker

Total this period - \$ 476.00

Boyce Edens Research Fund

Marlene J. Buck

17235 N. 106th Avenue

Sun City, AZ 85373-1958

Donations received from June 1, 2009 - July 31, 2009 • Total = \$83.00



Thumbprint

Debra C. Black, Lake Helen, FL
Desert Sun African Violet & Gesneriad Society, Phoenix, AZ

Susan J. Farley, Albany NY
First AVS of Spartanburg, Spartanburg, SC
Marvin K. Nester, Lakeland, FL
Kathleen V. Popowski, Sequim, WA
Harold W. Thompson, Saginaw, MI

STATE and REGIONAL SHOWS and SALES

Lynne Wilson
AVSA Affiliate Chairman

When I first attended a local show and then joined my local affiliate, I thought I'd seen it all. Could the African violet world have more to offer? My first meeting was just a taste of the wonderful world of growers, exhibitors, hybridizers, and sellers, and it opened my eyes to the extended reach of the African violet. Now I know AVSA offers the experience worldwide to everyone interested in the African violet.

What can a state show offer? A state show offers the chance to share and learn by talking with Affiliate members over your entire state. What programs are other clubs offering? What events? How are they attracting new members? How are they retaining the membership they have? Often, plant varieties differ from one club to another. The sales tables offer plants and supplies not available locally. Designers may use different techniques and are often available and willing to teach to those interested in design. Exhibitors may have different methods of culture, and they are usually willing to share their knowledge. The lasting friendships developed from our state shows are worth the experience. The travel to different areas in your state also increases your appreciation of your specific state.

What can a regional show offer? AVSA has many regional affiliates. I belong to the Dixie African Violet Society, which encompasses thirteen states from Maryland to Texas. We have our own list of registered varieties. Travel to different states is included in the highlights of membership as well as the friendships we experience. The sharing is a big part of the experience of attending a regional convention and show.

Again, with any particular interest you have, there is certainly someone with that interest in attendance. Just ask. Maybe your interest is in parliamentary procedure or *Saintpaulia* species; someone will either share your interest or be able to direct you to another member who does. The show room for the regional show is always beautiful to the members and the general public. In my regional show, the collections include AVSA collections and Dixie Collections. The sales room has even more to offer. Who can resist taking a few new varieties home? Our regional conventions include programs of interest to everyone and tours too. The more involved you become, the more you learn. Having something in the show increases the experience.

Vacation time is a great time to attend a meeting in the area you choose to visit. It might be just the thing to give you fresh ideas to take home to your local club. Check out the AVSA website for events: <<http://www.avsa.org/Events.asp>>. This site posts events, judging schools, shows, sales, displays, etc. Why limit yourself? Just go and enjoy the almost limitless opportunities to immerse yourself in the total *Saintpaulia* experience. Check with the affiliate contact of each group you would like to attend. Schedules change for one reason or another, and you don't want to be disappointed.

You can also make arrangements to visit AVSA vendors. The AVSA website lists many at <<http://www.avsa.org/Vendors.asp>>. Please call first to schedule a visit and be sure to let the vendor know if your plans have changed and you need to cancel or reschedule.



Convention Attendees! AVSA 2010 Raleigh, NC, Convention Information Available 1/1/10

The COMPLETE Convention Information pages with convention and show schedules, design division convention and hotel registration information, etc., will be available for download online at www.avsa.org on January 1, 2010. Please make copies for those in your local club without Internet access.

The Convention Information pages will also be available at no charge through the AVSA office:
Phone: (409) 839-4725
Email: avsa@earthlink.net

AVSA's BEST VARIETY LIST FOR 2009

Floyd Lawson
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FloydLL@earthlink.net

Welcome to AVSA's 2009 Best Variety List. Thank you to all who participated by regular mail and e-mail. The response was exceptionally strong this year and again spanned the world. Even though I cannot answer each one, your comments and support are deeply appreciated. I recognize the time and effort each of you give to this list.

Again this year we list each of the top Twenty-five favorites with their descriptions from AVSA's First Class computer data base. Also included are the 15 top vote getters after the Best 25. Many have asked about species and the List. Yes, species are counted. The top species this year were variations of *S. ionantha*. Now to YOUR choices for the past year! Read the list, read the descriptions and choose your new favorite for your collection.

Ness' Crinkle Blue (8136) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Double dark blue star/thin white edge. Dark green, quilted, serrated/red back. Semiminiature

Irish Flirt (7577) 11/07/1991 (S. Sorano) Double bright green and white frilled star. Medium green, wavy. Semiminiature

Rainbow's Quiet Riot (R. Wasmund) Semidouble blue-purple large star/white fantasy. Dark green, round, scalloped. Standard

Picasso (6924) 10/04/1988 (M. Tremblay) Double light blue and white/variable white fantasy. Variegated medium green, plain/silver-green back. Large

Frozen in Time (9167) 02/03/2003 (Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses/Sorano) Single-semidouble white star/variable lavender tinge; green edge. Variegated light green and ivory, quilted. Standard

Harbor Blue (6174) 02/24/1986 (T. Weber) Single light blue/darker eye. Dark green, plain/red back. Large

Frosted Whisper (7198) 10/07/1989 (R. Scott) Single white sticktite star/white sparkle overlay. Variegated medium green, quilted, frilled. Large (TX Hyb)

Aca's Red Ember (8732) 06/29/1998 (J. Brownlie) Single-semidouble red sticktite pansy. Variegated medium green and white, plain. Standard

Rebel's Splatter Kake (8695) 01/31/1998 (R. Bann) Single-semidouble pink large fluted star/darker eye, purple fantasy, white-green edge. Medium green, spooned, quilted, glossy, serrated/red back. Large

Blue Dragon (9516) 12/17/2005 (Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses/P. Sorano) Double light blue large frilled star/raspberry edge. Dark green, plain/red back. Large

The Alps (7813) 10/03/1992 (K. Horikoshi/H. Sawara) Single-semidouble chimera white pansy/light blue stripe. Medium green, plain, quilted. Standard

Bob Serbin (8292) 09/21/1995 (J. Brownlie)

Semidouble red sticktite pansy/thin white edge. Dark green, quilted, serrated/red back. Standard

Smooch Me (8776) 11/14/1998 (K. Stork) Single-semidouble rose-pink pansy/variable red eye. Dark green, quilted, glossy, serrated. Standard

Ness' Candy Pink (8133) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Semidouble hot pink ruffled star. Variegated dark green, pink and cream, quilted, serrated/red back. Standard

Aca's Pink Pet (8471) 07/05/1996 (J. Brownlie) Semidouble pink two-tone pansy. Medium green, pointed, glossy, hairy. Miniature

Milky Way Trail (7169) 08/01/1989 (J. Stahl) Single-semidouble white pansy. Medium green, heart-shaped, quilted. Semiminiature trailer

Ness' Satin Rose (8144) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Double rose-mauve two-tone star. Dark green, quilted, scalloped/red back. Semiminiature

Plumberry Glow (9187) 02/03/2003 (Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses/Sorano) Single white sticktite pansy/plum patches. Variegated medium green and cream, heart-shaped. Semiminiature

Pink Dove (8267) 07/28/1995 (S. Sorano) Semidouble pink pansy. Variegated dark green, white and pink, plain, pointed/red back. Miniature

Ode to Beauty (7677) 02/28/1992 (G. Cox/B. Johnson) Semidouble medium coral star/thin raspberry band, white edge. Dark green, plain, quilted. Large

Orchard's Bumble Magnet (8479) 08/21/1996 (R. Wilson) Double pink star. Medium green, plain, pointed. Miniature

Ness' Cranberry Swirl (8135) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Double white star/variable fuchsia edge. Variegated green and cream, plain, pointed; sucker propagation. Semiminiature

Guelph's Christmas (9120) 04/20/2002 (J. Brownlie/Guelph University) Semidouble-double fuchsia large frilled star/thin white-green edge. Medium green, quilted, glossy, wavy, serrated/red back. Large

Optimara Ontario (6588) 05/25/1987 (Holtkamp) Single white. Medium green, plain, glossy. Standard

Rob's Combustible Pigeon (9462) 07/30/2005 (R. Robinson) Semidouble pink pansy/blue fantasy, white edge. Crown variegated medium green, yellow and white, plain, serrated. Semiminiature

Runners-up: AKA's Raspberry Rapture; Nortex's Snowkist Haven, Rob's Chilly Willy, Heritage Frolic, Lakeshore Silver, Melodie Kimi, Playful Spectrum, Rhapsodie Cora, Tomahawk, Funable, Ness' Dream Maker, Northern Seduction, Optimara Rose Quartz, Therese, Cirelda.

Identifying African Violet "NOIDS"

By Frank G. Schlicht, PhD
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Member of Violet Reflections
<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/VioletReflections/>

Let me preface this tome with how I am going to use the term "NOID" in this article, which probably differs from the way many of the the African violet community use it. I use it as I do in an attempt to stress a point, so please bear with me. I am using it to mean **ANY AND ALL African violets that have no names**, which includes unnamed varieties from a cross (which I characterize, for the purpose of this article, to be a NOID because they don't have a name yet. They didn't sprout complete with name tags, dog tags, a drivers license or state issued ID card, or other forms of identification; so, they have **no identification**), as well as sports (mutations), in addition to the traditional use, where NOID means a plant for which the name of a once-named variety has been lost. I expand the definition to demonstrate that the process of identifying a NOID in the common sense of the word **is exactly** the same as the naming of sports or new varieties from a cross.

Is there one among you who has never bought a really nice African violet at a Big Box store, the supermarket, at a flea market, etc., that had no label or name tag on it? I bet that every one of you who has gone home with one of these "orphans" longed to learn its name but didn't really know how to go about it or what you needed to be able to do in order to be successful.

My purpose is to try to show you how to do it because yes, it can be done. But first, we must arm ourselves with some basic tools, among which are: good written descriptions, good color photos, copies of registration and/or Patent documents. Another tool is what we biologists know as a **Dichotomous Key**. It simply means something that enables us to reduce a multitude of things into groups by dividing each group by two. Unfortunately, there are no known dichotomous keys to the African violet varieties.

I hope the process of how to try to find a name will become clear in my example below. Trying to identify something is like starting out on a journey, and like any journey, there are a few things that one must understand or know.

The first thing that one must understand is that there may be no existing descriptions for some varieties. This may be because the description has been lost, was so poorly written as to be incomprehensible, or it may be inaccessible. Absent an accessible, well-written description of a variety, it cannot be identified, in all likelihood.

The second is that there is no single repository of written

descriptions. Many descriptions may be filed away by the hybridizer, who may be more than willing to make a copy of the descriptions available. Many are to be found in the AVSA FC2 program, the AVSA Master List, and the US Patent office, which will have a description of all the varieties holding US Patents. The Patent Office descriptions are probably the best of all.

The third is that good quality photos are simply one of the many tools to be used; not the only thing that needs to be used. Many hybridizers, such as the Holtkamps (Optimara), the Harsters (Anthoflores), and Lyndon Lyon, maintain excellent web sites that have excellent photos of their varieties, and some even have very good descriptions of their varieties in conjunction with their photos

Finally, one should have a good grasp and understanding of all of the anatomical parts of African violets and their types; especially the various basic leaf and flower types. For example, there are at least twelve different bloom types and twenty-three different leaf types based on shape. Among the bloom types, there are at least three bi-color bloom types, and we have not even taken color into account yet, nor have we added such factors as leaf color (plain or variegated) or whether or not they are red-backed. There are excellent diagrams of the various flower and leaf types on the VioletReflections web site <http://photos.groups.yahoo.com/group/violetreflections/vwp?.dir=/AV+--+Leaf+Types&.dn>. The Lakes Area Violet Growers (http://www.rosebudm.com/lavg/lavg-blossom_leaf_identification.htm) also has a description of both the flower and leaf types, complete with color photos. The AVSA Judges' Handbook also has good descriptions of the various bloom and leaf types.

We can further compound this by now adding the five basic growth categories: trailers, large, standard, semi-mini, and mini. Mind boggling isn't it? In addition to the twelve bloom types, we can now add all of the various bloom colors and color combinations. Need I go on?

Yes, identifying a NOID can be a daunting task, **but NOT IMPOSSIBLE!** It can be impossible on a case-by-case basis, though. Therefore, do not assume by this article that all NOIDs can, in fact, be identified. **Some cannot be identified.**

For the naysayers, let me pose this question for you to ponder before we start walking through the process. If the hybridizers can't "identify" a seedling when it blooms (a NOID), because, for our purposes here, that is what all

A DICHOTOMOUS KEY TO SELECT AFRICAN VIOLET VARIETIES

- A. Plant has a single crown, blooms more or less encircle the crown B
- B. Leaf surface multicolored "X"
Leaf surface green C
- C. Mature plant in 4-inch pot D
Mature plant in 6-inch pot "X"
- D. Leaves medium green with red back "X"
Leaves medium green on both surfaces E
- E. Leaves serrated "X"
Leaf margin plain (smooth) F
- F. Blooms single G
Blooms double "X"
- G. Blooms bi-color "H"
Blooms solid color "X"
- H. Blooms frilled, red & white. **ANIKA**
Blooms plain, pink & white **RITA**

The above example should clearly show how easy it is to reduce a number, even a very large number, down to a number that can easily be worked with; making the comment that: "NOIDs can't be identified because there are 20,000 named varieties" a lot of poppycock.

As you can see, I started by eliminating plants by their growth habit, starting with the trailers. I next eliminated all of those with variegated leaves; then plant size and leaf color, followed by leaf margin, and ending up with bloom type and color.

If what you have is a supermarket plant that has an Optimara label on it, you can go directly to their web site and, if it is in bloom, begin to separate by flower type and colors. **(You need to be very, very careful with the photos on this site, as occasionally it appears that they have exactly the same photo for more than one variety, and the site may have not been updated in quite sometime.)** You will find, if you thoroughly peruse their site, that every variety has a brief description that includes leaf shape, plant size, leaf color, and colors if it is variegated. They also note whether or not the leaf is red-backed. The final step would be to compare it with a known plant, or, preferably plants, of the suspected variety. If they are identical, then you have arrived at your destination with a nameable variety in hand.

On a final note, **The AVSA Show Rules** clearly suggest that NOIDs **can** be visually identified and indirectly require both judges and the classification committee personnel to have the capacity to do this. Otherwise, how would these, or any other, individuals be able to recognize a mislabeled show entry? (I have been told that the AVSA First Class program is what the Entries and Classification folks at an AVSA show use to verify the identity of the plants being entered. Is this not the same as identifying a NOID?)

I hope this makes sense and helps de-myth some of the mythology around naming African violet NOIDs. Just

seedlings are, a NOID from a cross, how are they going to be able to name it, register it, and even patent it? They made the initial cross specifically to get NOIDS. In this case, the hybridizer **is not** saying that it **is like** a previously named variety; they are saying that it **is different** from all previously named varieties and hope they don't find one that is identical that has been previously named, which **is precisely** the same as identifying that NOID you got at a Box Store, with one exception; you hope to finally find one previously-named variety that your NOID **is identical to**. If the hybridizers can compare their new crop of NOIDS to determine if, in fact, they do have a new variety, why can't the same thing be done to determine what named variety a NOID is?

In summary, a hybridizer is confronted with precisely the same task as one who is trying to identify that Box Store darling, and must use precisely the same tactics to arrive at the naming of a new variety for registration and or patenting. **It is a process of elimination until only one is left standing.**

The standard estimate is that there are 20,000 (16,000? 40,000?) named varieties. My response is: "So what"? There are an estimated 1,800,000 (1.8 million) named species of plants and animals in the world today, a much bigger pond to swim in than a mere 20,000, and every single one can be identified based solely on a written description. Drawings or photos may be included with a description for clarity but are not mandatory. The fact is that the individual is dealing with a single plant at that precise moment, and that a single plant **cannot and does not** possess all of the various characteristics found within the group (our group consists of all named varieties, i.e., 20,000 varieties). Therefore, it **should not** be inferred that it does. In other words; clearly, not all 16,000-20,000 are trailers, nor are they all minis, etc. Unfortunately, this is what is unknowingly being said when it is stated that NOIDs can't be identified because of the total number registered.

Before we embark, there are a couple of "rules of the road" that need to be mentioned. In the biological sciences, we use what is known as a **dichotomous or taxonomic** key, which is really nothing more than a type of road map that consists of a series of doublets (**it is vs it is not**), based on the physical characteristics of each of the various individuals in the group. You will occasionally take a wrong turn. Just back up and start over. Also, you may ultimately come to a dead end, and if in spite of numerous back-ups and re-starts, you keep arriving at the same point, it is highly unlikely that the plant can be identified.

To make this exercise as simple as I can, and to give you a "heads-up," I have chosen two Optimara varieties that are very similar for my example of a dichotomous, or taxonomic, key. We are going to work our way through **ALL** 20,000 varieties and arrive at names for the two I have chosen.

We have two plants before us that have no names, and we are going to find names for them.

remember, most do have a name and description somewhere, but like any other treasure, sometimes finding it requires a lot of determination and work. If you give this process a try, you just might come up with the name of that Box Store prize.

Please do not hold me responsible for any dead-ends, wrong turns, failures to yield right-of-way, or the running of

stop signs. Drive carefully and enjoy the scenery!

"In a "complete" dichotomous key, each of these letters would, in fact, take one to other doublets and characteristics. However, for clarity and brevity, and since we didn't need them, I opted to simplify as much as possible. Believe me when I say that some dichotomous keys are real nightmares to try to navigate.

Successfully Promoting Your Club is Easier than You Think!

By John Regan, (john@barringtonviolets.org)
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Barrington, IL
www.barringtonviolets.org

I've noticed several articles in recent issues of the *African Violet Magazine*, encouraging affiliate clubs to update their contact and meeting information on the AVSA site. I knew ours had been outdated for the past few years, but never took the time to contact AVSA and correct it. Like so many clubs across the country, our membership roster had dwindled down to a few core members, and sadly it seemed like the end was getting near.

Realizing how much I utilize the Internet as both a research and shopping tool for my African violet plants and supplies (read obsession!), I sat down one evening in early September and found a web-hosting and marketing site that provides a wide variety of website templates and custom printed material for a very reasonable cost. It walked me through the process of searching for and establishing a web domain that seemed logical for our club.

Within an hour, sitting on the couch with the laptop balanced on one knee and the dog's head on the other, I had built an attractive and informative website! Be assured that this is NOT something I have experience doing previously. The site was expandable so pages could continue to be added and had email addresses connected so new club mail wouldn't get lost in the flood of email I get at home already. For a very low cost, I also ordered business cards, note cards, heavy-duty vinyl meeting

sign, and a few magnetic car signs that matched the website for our members to further promote our society.

The site went live that evening (Sept. 9, 2009) with a press of a button on my PC. I emailed Lynne Wilson @ AVSA with the new information for the Affiliate link. She had it on their site by the next morning. At this point, I went back to tending to my plants and figured that we might get ten visitors in a month.

Was I wrong about that! As of today (October 6, 2009), our site has had 663 visitors! It reports that we've had folks checking in from fourteen states within the USA, as well as visitors from Canada, Russia, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Czech Republic, Germany, Singapore, and India!

The swell of activity has encouraged me to keep the site active with photos, maps to our meeting locations, member bio's, post videos, and even start a blog with near daily entries. We've heard from some folks that hope to join us at our

upcoming meetings. We've got plenty of room, and the door is always open.

Check out our site, www.barringtonviolets.org, and see what we're up to in northwest Chicagoland. It seems we won't have the Olympics here any time soon, but maybe we can coax Oprah, Michael Jordan, President and Michelle Obama, and the other local celeb's to rally behind promoting VIOLETS!

Thanks for the push to keep growing!





Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

Rob's Match Point

Exhibited by: Andrea Worrell

Hybridized by: R. Robinson

Semiminiature

In Search of New Violets

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his column may not appear to be special, but it does mark a landmark for the *African Violet Magazine*. This

column is the 100th written for "In Search of New Violets". Over the 16+ years of this column, hundreds of different questions have been raised (and hopefully answered) regarding the inheritance of traits in African violets. Vintage violets have been analyzed, new traits have been discovered and documented, and ideas and suggestions have been made on how to create new violets. Hybridizers may come and go, but the love and interest in creating wonderful violets with new and interesting characteristics will hopefully keep this column going for many years to come. Thanks to everyone who has ever written, called, or e-mailed with questions. It would not have been possible to reach this milestone without your support and assistance.



Q: If I self-pollinate a species plant, will the offspring all look exactly like the parent and like each other?

A: You can usually expect the offspring from a self-pollinated species plant to look very similar to the parent plant and to each other. However, the species plants can carry hidden recessive traits, and these can be expected to sort themselves into new combinations in the offspring. The number and kind of recessive traits will vary depending on the species and specific clone in question. Some will give more variation than will others. If you want to reproduce the species and keep them true to type, please use leaf cuttings or stem tip cuttings rather than reproducing them from seed. If you do produce plants from seed, please note on their labels that they are seedlings of a species and do not release them as being the same as vegetatively reproduced plants of a species. The difference may seem artificial and subtle, but seedlings are NOT the same as plants produced from leaf cuttings, and the labels should reflect this distinction.

Q: Some variegated plants are called "leaf chimeras". What is a leaf chimera, and how is it different from regular chimeras?

A: A leaf chimera is a plant that has been characterized or labeled by the way it is necessary to reproduce it true to type. It is a variegated plant that will not reproduce true from traditional leaf cuttings. It can only be reproduced by suckers or stem tip cuttings, the same methods used with the chimera plants with striped flowers. Because the method of reproduction is the same as the chimera plants, the term "leaf chimera" has often been applied to them.

Some examples of leaf chimeras are 'Rob's Lucky Ducky' and 'Rob's Lucky Penny'. The descriptions of these plants in *First Class* do not describe them as "leaf chimeras", but they do note that the plant must be reproduced by suckers. This limitation in reproduction is also the reason why leaf chimera plants are more expensive than regular African violets. You cannot reproduce them except by suckers, and this limits the number of plants that can be reproduced by a grower driving up their price.

As far as I know, you cannot breed for leaf chimeras any more than you can for flower chimeras. They show up from time to time as a happy accident of nature. Using leaf chimeras as parents will not produce leaf chimera offspring.

Q: Do leaf chimeras also have the striped flowers of a regular chimera?

A: No, leaf chimeras do not have to have striped flowers. Their flowers are usually solid color. While it would be possible to combine a flower chimera on leaf chimera foliage, I am not aware that this has been accomplished.

Q: How should the seedling from a cross between two species clones be labeled?

A: I would suggest that the label show the name of the seed parent followed by the name of the pollen parent. You can put an "x" between the names to show that the plant is a cross or hybrid between these two plants. For example, a cross between the former species *Saintpaulia magungensis* with the former species *Saintpaulia velutina* could be written using the new species numbering system as "S. 5b cl. *magungensis* x S. 5h cl. *velutina*". I know this looks a bit cumbersome, but it does show clearly that the plant in question is a hybrid between these two species clones.

Please note that hybrids between the species are NOT eligible to be shown in the species class of AVSA shows. Only the true species and their clones can be shown here. Hybrids between species should be first shown in the new hybrid class. Afterwards, they should be named and shown in the regular cultivar class that matches their description.

Q: One of my plants is not blooming true to its description in *First Class*. What happened?

A: There are at least three possible explanations for why your plant is not longer blooming true. These are:

1. Mistaken Identity – the plant was not correctly identified or labeled when it was given to you. When labels are copied and plants or leaves are shared between growers, it is very easy for mistakes to occur. Most of these are purely accidents. You might

check with the source of the plant to see if your plant matches something else in their collection.

2. Sports or Mutations – the plant has changed in its DNA and is no longer the same plant as the original. African violets are well known to sport or mutate very frequently, and this is a fairly common occurrence especially with bicolor and fantasy flowered plants.
3. Cultural changes – African violets are very plastic in their

response to the growing environment. Characteristics such as leaf variegation, flower color shade and intensity and flower patterns can change because of differences in the temperature and fertilizer. These changes are most often noted when plants are stressed such as during unusually cold or hot temperatures. Often a return to more normal growing conditions will return the plant true to its description.



AVSA Show Entries Program Version 2 Now Available

The computer program, AVSA Show Entries, has been used by clubs for years to assist in entries and classification at AVSA judged shows. It simplifies a process that usually takes a lot of time when done without the aid of a computer. Many members have suggested features that they would like to see added to the program, and as a result version 2 of the program has been developed.

Here are some of the features of the program:

- Creates a show information file that customizes the program for each show, including the sections, classes, and special awards.
- At show time, information is entered with a minimum of keystrokes, which will help to speed up the entries process.
- Looks up names and descriptions of African violets using the First Class database.
- Prints entry tags. A detachable card is printed with the cultivar name in a selectable font, to be used as a plant name tag.
- Handles the sale of show plants, optionally printing the price on the plant name tag.
- Prints various forms and reports, including AVSA collection score sheets, clerk's sheets, the AVSA Standard Show Award (SSA) Point Score Sheet (filled in with ribbon counts, etc.), award winners, and exhibitors' award sheets. Also prints report of show plant sales for each exhibitor, and summary sheet for the treasurer.

For those who have used version 1, here are some of the improvements:

- You no longer need to switch back and forth between the entries program and First Class. The program uses the First Class database, but all searches are done within the entries program. The names of "other" gesneriads are merged with the First Class list.
- The program allows 'a' and 'b' (etc.) classes (e.g. Class 1a and Class 1b). You can "split" classes even after entries are completed (e.g. split Class 28 into Class 28a and Class 28b).
- You can use two printers – one for entry tags and one for 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Choice of printer is automatic, so you don't need to switch between paper and entry tags.
- The former Show Plant Sales program has been incorporated into AVSA Show Entries.
- You can download an updated list of "other" gesneriads with one click. Also, you can download the latest version of AVSA Show Entries with one click.
- You can export a show file to a thumb drive, or to a file that you can send by e-mail.
- Many shortcuts have been added, to make it easier to perform tasks, which speeds up the entries process.

For more information about the program, go to www.entries2.com. The program can be ordered from AVSA at their Store on the AVSA website (www.avsa.org). The cost of the program remains at \$27.50 for a CD, or \$20.00 if you download it. Special upgrade prices for registered owners of version 1 are \$15.00 for a CD, or \$10.00 for the download.

A Club Learns to "Grow for Show"

By Pat Hancock

Almost every violet club grows a "project plant". It is a custom built into violet clubs. I have often wondered what the purpose really was when all was said and done. Everyone takes a plant home that usually costs a nominal fee, and then they do their best to grow it into a show plant. At the end of the allotted time, they are to bring them back and explain how they grew it. Comparing each person's experience is supposed to help each one improve their growing ability. The problem lies in the fact that most often they go home, and the plants are quickly forgotten. Then, when it is time to bring them back, only a few show up, and not very much is learned from the experience.

The Cincinnati African Violet Society decided that they would take "project plants" a step further with a plan to actually use them as a teaching tool. The Cincinnati African Violet Society (CAVS) has our annual show in the spring, usually the first week-end in May. Each year, we lose most of our points on "condition," the most egregious fault being small leaves under

large leaves that should have been removed as the plant was growing.

We decided to really oversee the growing of our project plants so that each member could see first hand the difference it makes when a plant is grown correctly. Each member who wanted to participate was given a small starter plant of

'Buckeye Smarty Jones' in June of 2008. The rules were that the plant had to be brought back to the club meeting every other month. The only thing we were supposed to do at home was to keep the plant disbudded and keep it on a wick with fertilizer water. In September, most of the plants were large enough to be repotted into 3 1/2 inch pots. We used the club soil mix, and we removed the three smallest leaves on the outside edge of the plant. Members were encouraged to look for the triangular leaf pattern and to figure out which were the three leaves that needed to be removed.



*CAVS with project plants
'Buckeye Smarty Jones.'*



*Looking for the triangular
leaf pattern.*



*After the three leaves
were removed.*

There were always some members who were reluctant to remove any leaves from a plant, but we learned that the new leaves would grow larger if the small ones were removed, so that the strength of the plant was going to the proper place. In November, the plants were growing very well, and once again we practiced finding the right three leaves and removing them.

By January, the plants needed to be potted up for the last time into 4 or 4 1/2 inch pots, and again, we removed the three smallest leaves. The plants were now beginning to look like real show plants and were losing the triangular shape.

About the first week-end in May, we were given a disbudding and fertilizing schedule designed for our plants to look their best. Some members whose plants were growing a bit too "open" were instructed to move them closer to the lights.



Removing the smaller leaves.



Karen Malott



Pat helping Sandy McIntosh

In March, the plants were looking great but lacking bloom. We discussed washing the leaves, removing spent blossoms, and other minor grooming techniques. As you can see from the pictures, most of the members who started the project were successful.



Sandy McIntosh

A couple of members did have some issues. One member had several cats who liked to turn over pots, and another member who travels a lot had a problem with her plant drying out, but overall, it was a very good learning experience.

Some of the things we learned are:

1. Small leaves need to be removed in groups of three about every two months.
2. Variegated plants grown too cool may develop leaves that



Final preparation before the show.

lack chlorophyll and are too white. We used "Cal-Mag" and "fish-stick fertilizer" to correct this and green them up a bit.

3. The distance plants are grown from the lights will definitely affect their growth pattern - too tight or too loose.
4. Forgetting or neglecting the fertilizer for a month or so will result in a row of smaller leaves.

Our club has now voted to try again with a little less help and a different plant. At our show in May, all of our plants received a blue ribbon. One of our members,



'Buckeye Smarty Jones at the show.

who told me that she was putting into practice at home what we were doing at the meetings, received 13 blue ribbons in Horticulture and five Best in Class. She also entered a blue ribbon collection.

I believe this is what "project plants" were really meant to accomplish, and they really can be a tool for learning.

*AVSA Office Hours
Monday - Thursday
9:00 am - 4:00 pm*

Registration Report

By Joe Bruns

1220 Stratford Lane • Hanover Park, IL 60133

Email: jbruns@qwip.net



name reservation costs \$1.00 (\$5.00 for non-members) for each plant, and is valid for two years, after which time it may be extended two years for an additional \$1.00 (\$5.00 for non-members). Registration of the plant is \$5.00 (\$25.00 for non-members) unless completed within the reservation period, in which case the balance is \$4.00 (\$20.00 for non-members).



Evgenii Arkhipov – Moscow, Russia

'Amerikanskaia Zvezda' (10042) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single lavender-pink large star/blue fantasy. Light green, pointed, wavy. **Standard**

'Amur' (10043) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble white frilled/pink patches, blue fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Amour Elite' (10044) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Semidouble white frilled/pink patches, blue fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Armageddon' (10045) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Semidouble-double red-purple/near black shading, pink fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Bliznetsy' (10046) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble dark violet star/coral-red fantasy. Dark green, plain. **Standard**

'Cosmic Girl' (10047) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble lilac-violet star/coral-pink fantasy. Light green, plain. **Standard**

'Cosmic Jaguar' (10048) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Semidouble-double violet-purple wavy star/coral-red fantasy. Medium green, pointed. **Standard**

'Den' za Dnem' (10049) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single blue large star/white eye. Light green, plain, ovate. **Standard**

'Galactic Cats' (10050) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble lilac star/dark purple eye, pink-white fantasy, variable dark lilac fantasy. Light green, plain, pointed. **Standard**

'Hello America!' (10051) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single white large star/lavender-purple splashes. Medium green, ovate, wavy. **Standard**

'Kozerog' (10052) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Semidouble-double lilac-blue star/coral-red fantasy. Medium green, ovate. **Standard**

'Lesnaia Fantaziia' (10053) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Semidouble bright pink frilled/blue fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Lucifer' (10054) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single fuchsia-lilac star/red eye, pink fantasy. Medium green,

pointed. **Standard**

'Mirazh' (10055) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Semidouble-double red large/thin white edge. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Modern Talking Gold' (10056) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single white pansy/pink patches, blue fantasy. Light green, plain. **Standard**

'Ocharovatel'naia' (10057) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble bright plum large star. Dark green, plain. **Standard**

'Ogon' Predkov' (10058) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Double large wine-red/black tips, white edge. Light green, plain. **Standard**

'Osennii Dozhd' (10059) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single white pansy/pink patches, purple fantasy on lower petals. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Ptitsa Schast'ia' (10060) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Semidouble pink frilled/lavender fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Rouge et Noire' (10061) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Double white frilled/lavender patches, blue fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Rozenkreitzer' (10062) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble white large star/orchid splashes. Light green, plain. **Standard**

'Rozovyi Dozhd' (10063) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single white pansy/pink fantasy on lower petals. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Sharlene' (10064) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble lilac star/blue fantasy, white edge. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Sharlene Elite' (10065) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Double light lilac star/white eye, blue fantasy, white edge. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Snezhnyi Edelveis' (10066) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble white pansy/pink patches, blue fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Starik i Chaika' (10067) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single white large star/lavender-orchid fantasy. Light green, plain, ovate. **Standard**

'Starik i Nebo' (10068) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble white star/light blue patches, dark blue fantasy. Light green, plain. **Standard**

'Strelets' (10069) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Double violet-purple/coral-pink fantasy. Dark green, plain. **Standard**

'Strelets Elite' (10070) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Double violet-purple large/coral-pink fantasy. Medium green, plain. **Standard**

'Supernature' (10071) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-

semidouble white large star/dark purple patches. Medium green, heart-shaped, wavy. **Standard**

'**Win the Race**' (10072) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Double rust-red large. Light green, plain. **Standard**

'**Zebra**' (10073) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble pink star/bright blue fantasy. Dark green, plain. **Standard**

'**Zvezdnaia Estafeta**' (10074) 06/03/2009 (E. Arkhipov) Single-semidouble bright violet-blue large star/pink fantasy. Dark green, plain. **Standard**

Dolores Harrington – Fridley, MN

'**Brooke Lynn**' (10075) 07/30/2009 (D. Harrington) Double lavender and purple/white-green edge. Light green, heart-shaped, quilted, pebbled, serrated. **Semiminiature**

'**Dolores' Dazzler**' (10076) 07/30/2009 (D. Harrington) Single-semidouble red two-tone frilled pansy/white edge.

Medium green, heart-shaped, quilted, pebbled, hairy, serrated/red back. **Semiminiature**

'**Dolores' Jack Frost**' (10077) 07/30/2009 (D. Harrington) Semidouble-double purple pansy/lavender edge. Medium green, heart-shaped, quilted, pebbled, serrated/red back. **Semiminiature**

'**Kezia June**' (10078) 07/30/2009 (D. Harrington) Double purple ruffled pansy/white-green edge. Light green, heart-shaped, quilted, serrated/red back. **Semiminiature**

NAME RESERVATIONS

Karen Panek – Hamilton, New Zealand

* A Fine Romance * Becky's Candyland * Butterfly Shimmer * Caitlin's Fancy Pants * Frodo * Grasshopper * Hamilton Honey * Irish Kiwi * Nickelodeon * Pink Pavlova * Princess Xena * Sweet Petite * The Hobbit * Waikato Surprise *

Candy Templeton – Hammond, IN

* Candy's Little Jasper *

AVSA Building Maintenance Fund

Susan Hapner - *Chairman*

35 Ridge Point Dr.

Chesterfield, MO 63017

1 June 2009 to 30 September 2009



Thumbprint

AV Club of Burlington County

In lieu of judging fees from Diane Tooker

AVC of Greater Kansas City

First AVS of Spartanburg/SC

Luis Pineda

Pamela Lund

Janice Sorensen

Janice Murray

Susan J. Fraley

Marvin Nester

Desert Sun AVS/AZ

Corky Reichmann

Mid-America AVS/MO

Mike Dellarco

Katherine Varnes

Doreen Cesari

Caroline Storey

Ralph Anastasio

Donna Gendusa

Jean Corkill

Jacques Bourassa

Ken Allen

Kathy Lucier



Two-tone

Tustana AVS/CA

*In loving memory of Bernice Matsukane,
long time member*

South Strand Garden Club

Nutmeg State AVS/CT

Central Texas Judge's Council

In memory of Newman Gibbs

Mary Schremser

African Violet Council/Southern CA

In memory of Bernice Matsukane

Corpus Christi AV/Texas

Armand Arata

In memory of Gerald McCann

Tidewater AVS/VA

In memory of Robert Flora



Multicolored

Jeri Anderson



Geneva

Bella Vista AVS/Arkansas

TOTALS \$362.00

Lyon's June Bug

3rd Best African Violet in Show

Best Seminiature

2009 AVSA National Show

*Exhibited by: **Lorna Russell***

*Hybridized by: **S. Sorano/Lyon Greenhouses***



Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

Champagne Pink

*Exhibited by: **Beverly Powers***

*Hybridized by: **S. Sorano/Lyon Greenhouses***

Semiminiature

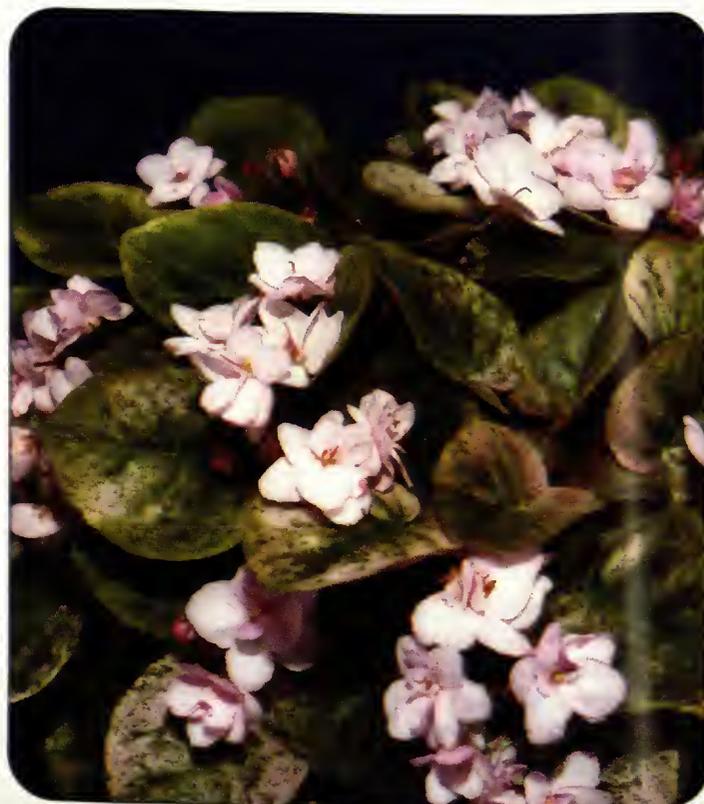


Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky



Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

Yesterday's Evidence

Exhibited by: Bill Price

Hybridized by: J. Smith

Standard Trailer

Everyone's Mix is Different!

By Bob Clark

There are many different components that can be used in making our potting mix. Most African violet growers use a soil-less mix with main ingredients that are peat, perlite, and vermiculite.

There are many other ingredients that may be added, such as horticultural charcoal, dolomite lime, minerals, etc. I prefer a light mix, as I wick-water my African violets.

Here are recipes from other African violet growers. Remember that what works well for someone else, may not work for you. **Do not re-pot all of your collection into a new mix before trying it on just a few plants!**

Jean Ness' Mix

2 parts Metro Mix [good all purpose potting soil]
2 parts Jiffy Mix [seed starting mix]
4 parts perlite
1 part vermiculite
3 teaspoons of dolomite lime

Jude Neumann's Leaf Starter Mix

4 parts vermiculite
2 parts milled sphagnum moss
1 part perlite
1/2 part horticultural charcoal

Kathy Lahti's Favorite Potting Medium

3 parts Premier Pro-Mix "BX"
2 parts perlite
1 part vermiculite

Dick & Marty Anderson's Mix

7 cups Sunshine LC-1 mix
8 cups coarse perlite
1/2 cup Canadian peat
1/2 cup vermiculite

Pauline Bartholomew's Mix from *Growing To Show*

5 quarts dry peat moss [fluffed]
4 quarts #2 perlite
5 quarts vermiculite
1 cup charcoal [optional]
1 tablespoon Super phosphate 0-20-0
Dolomite lime

Hortense Pittman's "Texas" Formula

5 gallons sterilized fine peat moss
5 gallons coarse horticultural grade vermiculite
2 1/2 gallons coarse horticultural grade perlite
1 cup crushed horticultural grade charcoal
5 quarts of water
1 cup of pulverized dolomite lime
1 teaspoon frittered trace elements

Marie Burns' "Show" Mix

5 gallons Baccto African violet soil
3 gallons coarse horticultural grade perlite
2 gallons coarse horticultural grade vermiculite
1 gallon fine peat moss
6 cups horticultural grade charcoal
1 cup dehydrated cow manure
10 tablespoons of dolomite lime
2 tablespoons Ferbam

Fisher's Soil Formula from Canada

8 quarts sphagnum peat moss [screened to remove sticks or buy fine screened]
2 quarts sterilized clay loam [garden loam or top soil]
2 quarts perlite
2 quarts medium or coarse vermiculite
2 quarts fine chip horticultural charcoal
Mix separately the following: 1 cup bone meal
1 cup calcium carbonate or powdered dolomite lime
1 tablespoon Fermate or Ferbam
Combine all together with about half a gallon of water.

As you can see, there are many different recipes for potting mix. I think it is fun to experiment to see if someone else's mix or elements from their mix might work for my plants. After all, if it works for them, perhaps it would work for me as well.



From *Ye Bay Stater*,
publication of the Bay State AVS

AVSA LIBRARY ORDERS

All AVSA Library requests must be made in writing. After you have emailed <avsa@earthlink.net>, faxed (409) 839-4329, or sent your request by postal service (AVSA, 2375 North St., Beaumont, TX 77702), you will receive a confirmation from the AVSA Office. If you do not receive a confirmation within THREE WEEKS, it is YOUR responsibility to check with the office and make sure that your request has been received.



The Once and Future Violet Vacation

By Tom Glembocki

April is a lovely time of the year to visit the 64th Annual AVSA Convention and Show in Raleigh, NC. The Convention will be April 11-18, 2010, but if you add a few days onto either end of the week, you can turn the time into a wonderful vacation opportunity. Here are a few surrounding cities that you won't want to miss when in North Carolina.

Pinehurst

Just thirty miles south of Raleigh are Pinehurst and Southern Pines. Low taxes, affordable living, great weather, and an abundance of cultural activities have made the Carolinas the new, hot retirement destination. You may want to find out what's available in the year round golf paradise of Pinehurst and Southern Pines, or maybe just come down a few days early and play a few rounds on Pinehurst Number 2. For non-golfers: Pinehurst is a luxury resort that contains 8 golf courses. Pinehurst #2 is the most famous of these since it is the home course of the US Open. Golf aficionado or not, the Southern Pines area is a beautiful destination to spend some time and enjoy the blooming dogwoods and azaleas of April.

Asheville

Once primarily a tourist town, Asheville is now another one of those retirement destinations with a difference. With a vibrant downtown area along with condos and apartments, many people are finding they can enjoy living downtown without ever having to get into a car. Recently, the CBS News Magazine "Sunday Morning" with Charles Osgood, featured a story titled "Not Your Grandfather's Retirement" about people who have retired to Asheville for the high quality "walk to everything" living. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, this town would make a great stop for a day or two on your way to the convention. The tourist activities such as the Biltmore House and Grounds are still a big draw, as are the excellent

shopping and dining in the downtown area. Asheville is often listed as one of the top ten places to retire in the US. Under construction in Asheville is the first golf course in the U.S. designed by Tiger Woods.

Wilmington

A decade ago, a trip to the NC Coast from Raleigh was a half day journey, but with the completion of I-40, the drive from Raleigh to the coast is now two hours. As it will be off-season at the coast, you can find economical hotels in the Wilmington area. Enjoy salt water surf-fishing from the sand or drop a line into the Atlantic Ocean from one of the piers on Wrightsville Beach. Fishing in April for Blues and Spanish mackerel is very popular, with an occasional flounder testing the strength of your line. Wrightsville Beach at Wilmington has ocean-front hotels and great seafood dining for a perfect beach trip.

Cape Hatteras

This is the furthest destination from Raleigh but well worth spending a few extra days. The Cape Hatteras National seashore is a National Park with blowing sand dunes, sea oats, and wild ponies. Protected by its status as a National Park, this strip of land along the Atlantic Ocean is undeveloped. The little town of Nags Head, just before the National Seashore, is where you can spend a few days and see Kitty Hawk, where the Wright Brothers first flew their planes. At the south end of the National Seashore, take the free ferry out to Ocracoke Island. There are a few motels on Ocracoke and many good seafood restaurants. The quaint little island is like a step back in time.

So there you have it - a few more good reasons to come to the AVSA Raleigh Convention and turn it into "The Once and Future Violet Vacation."



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Gesneriads in Design

By John Beaulieu

Photos by author

The artistic design classes are a fun part of any African violet or gesneriad show. It is interesting to see how the exhibitors interpret the various themes for the artistic classes. This year's Toronto Gesneriad Society show had themes such as Whales and Squids, Bridges, Sports, and Volcanoes, which certainly provided a challenge for those entering designs. The different gesneriads provide a lot of varied shapes, structures, and color not found when using African violets alone. Some of the most eye-catching designs can be quite simple, and others can be extremely elaborate. I hope you enjoy this selection of my favorites from the show as much as I did.



Judy Zinni's 'Bridges' was Best in Section



With a theme like 'Bridges', episcias are a natural to link with each other as in this by Marina DeSouza



Marina DeSouza's 'Sports' did not need much in the way of accessories to make an attractive display



Julie Thompson won second place in 'Volcanoes'



'Volcanoes' by Judy Zinni won Best in Artistic and Best in Section



'Whales and Squids' may be a challenging theme for the underwater designs, but Goldfish plant (Columnea) flowers seem very appropriate for this arrangement by Marina DeSouza.

Phytophthora Crown Rot

Text and Photos by Janet Stromborg

Like many other African violet growers, I've had plants die of crown rot occasionally. Because I've seen this disease before, I didn't dwell on the death of a plant early this summer when it went from perfectly healthy and blooming to wilted just three days later. In two more days, this plant had turned to mush. It was a sad ending, but one I expected; these things happen. Shortly after that, another perfectly healthy blooming plant had also turned to mush. By the end of the week, the body count was up to six plants, randomly sticken down from several shelves of blooming violets. I was really beginning to worry and wonder what was going on. I took two infected plants to my county extension agent, and his report came back a week later: high levels of *Phytophthora* were found in the samples. By the time the report came back, four more plants had died. The body count was now up to 11 plants.

The first photo shows the early symptoms of *Phytophthora* crown rot. The leaves have gone limp, and even at this early stage there is no saving the plant. The second photo shows a plant that has completely collapsed. The plant has turned to mush, and its leaves are already beginning to desiccate.



Phytophthora stage one



Phytophthora stage two

After doing some research, I found out that the word *Phytophthora* comes from the Greek words *phytón*, meaning "plant" and *phthorá*, meaning "destruction". In other words, this was the "plant-destroyer". It certainly was destroying my violets, randomly hitting a plant here and another one there with no particular pattern, and killing them with alarming speed. More research taught me that *Phytophthora* is a genus of *Oomycetes*, pathogens that need water to complete their life cycles. They resemble fungi but are more closely related to aquatic organisms. *Phytophthora infestans* was responsible for the great potato blight which caused a devastating famine in Ireland in the mid 1840s. The same species threatened tomato crops in the northeastern states this summer. However, the species attacking my violets was *Phytophthora nicotianae*, a species responsible for causing problems among ornamental plants in greenhouses and nurseries. A great

deal more about the life cycle and economic impact of this genus can be found at the Oregon State University website, <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/dce/phytophthora/module1.html>.

My extension agent told me that this pathogen is in the soil everywhere, including the soil of all of our houseplants. It's there all the time, but it's only when it reaches critical levels that it becomes lethal. Once a plant is attacked, there is no way to save it. He said by keeping the soil drier I could keep this problem to a manageable level. With that in mind and being opposed to using chemicals unless absolutely necessary, I decided to change my watering routine to see if that would help. I had been bottom watering cafeteria trays full of violets by flooding the trays and dumping out the excess water once the plants had soaked up all they could. Then I'd let the plants dry out completely for a week or 10 days before repeating the process. I used this system for over 30 years with no problems. It was quick, it was easy, it was thorough..... and it provided just the interstate highway system that the *Phytophthora* needed to spread from one plant to another. I top watered very sparingly for the next two weeks, keeping the plants so dry that they were on the verge of wilting all the time. This slowed down the carnage but did not stop it. The body count mounted to 30.

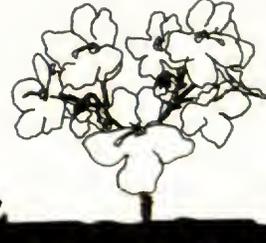
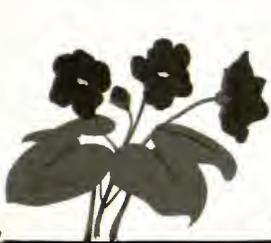
By the end of the third week of this ordeal, I was losing plants from several different growing areas that were not anywhere near each other. I was washing my hands thoroughly after handling plants from one growing area and before going on to another so I doubted that I was spreading the disease. That made me wonder if there was some other common denominator among the diseased plants. There was. All the diseased plants had been repotted in the same batch of potting medium last winter. Plants that weren't repotted last winter were fine. The potting medium had been sitting outside in the rain at my local greenhouse, and even though it was pretty wet when I bought it, I figured I could dry it out before use and it would be fine. I'm guessing it was not fine and may have been the source of my newly discovered plague.

When it became obvious that my change in cultural conditions was not helping much, I spent the next week searching for chemicals that were registered for use on African violets and that would kill *Phytophthora* specifically. After numerous dead-end leads and much frustration, eventually I found a company in Milwaukee that would sell me a quart of Truban 25 EC (active ingredient: Etridiazole), an emulsifiable concentrate that would make up enough solution to treat many thousands of violets. By then the body count was up to 60 plants, randomly killed from three out of my four growing areas. I called and ordered the Truban and waited anxiously for its arrival. It came a week later; body count: 78 plants.

Following the manufacturer's instructions, I made up my solution using 1.2 ml. (a scant 1/4 teaspoon) Truban to one gallon of water and thoroughly drenched all the plants that were in one afflicted growing area. After a week, there were no new *Phytophthora* casualties and no adverse side effects in the violets that had been treated, but there were more diseased plants among the ones that hadn't yet been treated. I went on to drench the remaining violets in my collection, one area at a time, including the area that hadn't harbored any diseased

plants. The last 500 or so plants have now been drenched, and I've seen no signs of disease among any of them, in any of the growing areas. The total body count during my education on *Phytophthora*: 86 plants.

I've seen many diseases and pests of African violets, but the one thing that strikes me hardest about *Phytophthora* crown rot is that it takes a perfect healthy blooming plant and causes it to utterly collapse in a matter of a few days. That kind of drama I don't need!



LET'S GET YOUNG PEOPLE GROWING AFRICAN VIOLETS

By Kathy Bell • *Membership and Promotion Committee Chairman*

Wouldn't it be great to have young people in our clubs, and be able to pass on our collective knowledge to the younger generations? How can we get young people interested in growing African violets? African violets were once an old ladies' hobby – but not anymore!

If every club worked with school children, we could reach a lot of young potential growers. How? Contact your local schools and see if you can work with a teacher, or teachers, with projects for growing African violets in the classroom. It is a great school project. Your club members can work with the teachers to develop a project plan and growing schedule that works for them. They can spend time in the classrooms with hands-on demonstrations, provide the students with leaves, supplies, and growing information, and follow up at each stage of the plant's development, from putting down a leaf, to grooming the final potted plant to take home.

One of the members in my club is a teacher and has his students grow violets, starting from a leaf. They continue to monitor their leaf and pot up the babies. The students then write a paper on the process. They enjoy this project, and these are teenagers who have been in trouble and go to a special school to get them back on track.

Someone suggested contacting 4th grade

teachers and up, but that's up to you.

Your club could incorporate the student's plants into your show or have a show at the school, and give ribbons or prizes to the young growers.

And don't forget home-schooled children. Growing African violets is a project their parents may enjoy as well.

Colleges with Agriculture departments are always looking for guest speakers. This is something that our committee member, Leonard Re does, and he highly recommends we all give it a try. One guest speaker from your club might generate new members.

You might ask how this is going to help AVSA and its affiliates. Encouraging the love of plants in children could not only get them involved, but their parents, too. If they join your club, they may also join AVSA! And, when these children become adults and have time for a hobby, they may remember what fun they had growing African violets at school, or with their parents, or at their local club.

If we can get our youth involved, they may be the future of our local clubs, and AVSA. None of this can be done without YOUR help. Please! Get involved with your club and try some of these ideas now!



Photo Credit: Margaret Taylor

Jazztime

Hybridized and grown by: Margaret Taylor

THE HOME GROWN EFFORTS

By Margaret Taylor • Australia

My first introduction to the Early Morn AV Group and its members was in 1980 when my husband and I visited, as people helping to start up the first group in New South Wales, Australia. We were newly-retired and had absolutely no idea where this would lead us. What a learning curve it was! We gleaned as much as we could from new friends at the Early Morn AV Group, and later hosted two of them as judges at our second show in New South Wales.

It is hard to believe that one tatty little plant given to me could open up such avenues. I had no idea how to care for it and made every mistake in the book. BUT IT DID NOT DIE!!

You all know how one plant leads to another, then another, ad infinitum. It was not long until my husband knew he had to move out of his workshop under the house and set up numerous light gardens. He was however, as hooked as me by then, so it was a combined operation. Plants still crept into the house and there more light stands cropped up.

When my husband died suddenly, I returned to work which made it hard to attend meetings, but I kept up with the plants as off-duty therapy. When retirement came around for the second time, in 1997, it was now possible to go to meetings.

One day at lunch with Dorothy Townsend and Helen White, it was decided that all three of us could go to the AVSA Convention in Houston, Texas, in 1999. Dorothy had an import license and was bent on purchasing a lot of plants to bring back to Australia. It was good to meet some of the people that had previously been only names to me. Staggering back with huge suitcases and boxes took about all our strength! On arrival back home I was exhausted, as we had incorporated a three-week holiday into the package. Disneyland and The Grand Canyon had become realities.

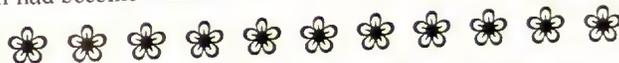
It was not long after this holiday that it was becoming apparent that the days of the usual violet people journeying over to America would soon be coming to a halt or maybe even an end. That meant in effect that new varieties would not be coming in as they had been. Costs and losses in quarantine were really bad, and I am sure it was all done for love, certainly not money. It occurred to me that some of us had enough know-how to give this hybridizing lark a try, and gradually some Australia growers were turning out some worthwhile cultivars.

I would like to say here that one does not have to be an expert. I believe that there are two main types of hybridizers. One is the "Scientific" who likes to go heavily into the academics, and the other is the "Instinctive" who uses Intuition as a tool. I am the latter, because I think that whichever method is used, like Forest Gump and his box of chocolates, "You never know what you are gonna' get!" As we had to use US

Varieties as a starting point, it was not possible to know the background of our efforts anyway, and ten years down the track I still often wondered how such and such a color cropped up.

I am grateful that the groups in Australia have been so encouraging with feedback and to see that some of my "home grows" have reached the show benches and in many cases done well. It was a good choice to start out on another unknown journey, as it has turned out to be very fulfilling. In addition, there have been forged friendships over a long period. What more could one ask?

This article first appeared in the
Early Morn AV Group Newsletter, Australia



Tracking My African Violet Inventory

By John Regan (john@barringtonviolets.org)

Barrington Bloomers AVS

Barrington, IL • www.barringtonviolets.org

Perhaps I'm the only one out there that's interested, but I would love to see some discussion in AVM on how folks keep track of their violet inventory, especially digitally. I mentioned to Joe Bruns in an email a while back that I wish FC2 was also available as an application for the iPhone. I have FC2 on my laptop, but that doesn't help me know what I already have or want when I'm at a show, sale, or greenhouse.

I've adapted a different iPhone application called Bento to track my collection. It allows me to track the obvious info like variety, seller, and date purchased, cost, classification of violet

(i.e. standard, semi, trailer, etc), AVSA registration #, location of the plant in the house, etc. It also lets me take a picture of my plant and add it to the individual file.

Although my system isn't perfect, having a digital inventory system on my phone is a huge advantage for me because I always have it with me. I would enjoy hearing from others on how they meet the challenge of keeping track (not just digitally), of all the details of growing and collecting African violets.

Happy growing!

Mistakes We Make

How can we quickly we learn our lessons?



rowing African violets is a very rewarding hobby. It's great to see baby plantlets emerge from a leaf, blooming plants started from those babies, and older plants that keep on producing through the years. What's not to love about our favorite plant? Yet, there are times when growing can be frustrating. It's those little mistakes we make that can have a major impact on the health of our plants and rattle our confidence as growers. Of course, we are resourceful people and find ways to recover after making a blunder or two. But why jump through hoops to fix a problem when "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure?" Excellent advice, don't you think? Thanks for pointing that out, Ben Franklin.

I thought I'd share a few of my own *Woe is Me* stories. Maybe you'll recognize yourself in one or two of my little tragedies. If so, let's hope you've shared your stories with fellow growers so we all learn from our mistakes.

Mistake #1. Adding a Newly Acquired Plant to the Growing Area

Whether you are growing one African violet or dozens, bringing home a new variety is exciting – especially if it has a big head of bloom. What you may not see immediately are problems the plant may be bringing along with it. Typical issues are pests – thrips are the first that come to mind, but beware of mites and mealy bugs too. Often, these pests are not easy to spot, but they can multiply quickly and spread to others nearby just as fast.

Lesson Learned: Isolate new plants for 90 days in a location that is away from your regular growing area. I add a granular systemic to the top of the soil of every new plant. Wash your hands and your tools after working with any isolated plants. Isolation was very difficult for me when I first started doing it. I complained that conditions weren't right in other areas of the house, or I'd forget to water. Believe me, your tune changes when you discover a new member has developed a problem. If the new plant is among other healthy violets, odds have it the neighbors have developed the same issue. When it comes to pests, they like to spread themselves around. Restoring my collection back to health after a pest infestation took much longer than 90 days, and I lost some lovely plants along the way. As my mother always said, "better be safe than sorry."



Lesson Learned: Remove the flowers from all new arrivals. No matter the source of the plant – club member or local nursery – you need to take every precaution you can to prevent freeloaders (a.k.a. pests) from coming into your home. Disbud that beautiful head of bloom and dispose of it before it ever reaches your front door. This is one of the toughest practices to get used to – it breaks your heart. However, you should take comfort in knowing you're saving precious time and effort in treating potential problems before they occur.

Mistake #2. Applying the Cold Water Treatment

When I began growing indoor plants, I didn't think much about water temperature. I figured water was water. Ouch – that should've been obvious. Plants, just like many people, don't like cold feet. Little did I realize that the cool/cold water was causing spots on my leaves and slowing down normal growth. It wasn't as if I deliberately turned on the cold water tap. Not me, I turned on the warm tap. Where I failed was in making sure the water was actually warm to the touch before it was used.

Lesson Learned: African violets like temperatures close to 70 degrees. When the growing area remains at a comfortable, consistent temperature, applying cold water is a shock. The plants either shut-down or display some cultural signals over time. Why take a risk? Instead, I fill my containers with warm water and let them sit overnight. This practice allows the chlorine to escape and enables the water to settle at room temperature. During the cooler months, I leave the watering containers under the lights on my stand so they remain as close as possible to the growing temperature. In retrospect, it's funny how I react as badly to a blast of cold water as my plants.

Mistake #3. Frying or Freezing

Window growing is how I started growing, and I don't plan to give it up. Seeing African violets blooming in the window adds so much pleasure when I'm about the house. My favorite window is in the kitchen, but why limit myself when other rooms offer stronger light conditions? Here's the rub – as seasons change, so do conditions around the house. At certain times of the year, sun patterns change dramatically. Outdoor temperature shifts make a difference too. The

seasons have an important effect on the plants sitting in the window. While my plants have suffered from the effects of sizzling heat and frosty temperatures, it's often been because I've waited too long to adjust to the seasonal changes.

Lesson Learned: The sun provides a wide range of light intensity as seasons change. When the sun gets high in the sky, its rays become very strong. Filtering the light with a sheer curtain can make a big difference in avoiding sunburn – nasty brown spots on leaves. During the summer months, I move plants across the room to be away from the heat and harshest sun. During fall and spring, the plants are moved closer to the light source because it is less intense. My best windows for growing are east and northwest facing situations.

Lesson Learned: As mentioned in Mistake #2, cold conditions really slow down plant growth. African violets need protection from cold drafts coming in from windows. I've done a few things to warm things up for them. Plants are moved away from the window – always keeping the foliage from touching the glass. My plants seem to perform better when a mat or quilted material is placed under the pots to eliminate the impact of sitting on a cold surface. Adding a sand snake on the sill really helps curtail the draft. Just to be sure the plants don't catch the flu, I regularly feel the pot to see if they are cold to the touch.

Mistake #4. Extending Too Much Love

My first African violet was a gift. Actually, my mom couldn't get hers to bloom so she gave it to me to try. Success came quickly, so I decided to buy a few more. By chance, I saw an ad for a local African violet show and decided to have a look. You can imagine what happened next. I was hooked, and that was when the first signs of trouble began. Armed with a bit more information and growing advice, I began to pay too much attention to my plants.

Lesson Learned: Too much of anything is bad for people AND plants. Too much picking up the plants led to broken leaves; too much water led to crown rot and mushy foliage; too much fertilizer gave the plants tight centers and so did too much light. It took me a while to let the plants grow at their

pace and not mine. Patience was called for, and I had to learn that the extra fussing did not yield any benefits. Now I find it relaxing to go into my growing area to look at the plants and watch their development. I have learned to follow a watering and care routine that allows both the plants and me to get along better together. Consistent care versus constant care made all the difference.

Mistake #5. Using a New Growing Technique

We all do our best to improve our growing practices. Trying something new may prove to be the missing link to better bloom, bigger plants, or shinier foliage. We often forget that things that work tremendously well for some people do not work at all for others. Remember, every home is different. It's hard to believe our conditions may be unique. Growers in the same town have the same light conditions and water, don't they? Well, no. That's why testing a new idea on a few plants can be very fruitful. However, when applied to all plants at the same time, what appears to be an improvement may yield quite the opposite result.

Lesson Learned: I believe you have to make mistakes to truly learn not to repeat them. This one is a bit more difficult because each "new technique" is always something different. It may be a new soil recipe, changing a watering process, using a new tool, introducing foliar feeding, or pest or disease prevention techniques. Introducing good ideas and practices is important for all of us to become better growers. How many times have we heard the words, "Try this on a few plants, not your entire collection?" The lesson should be clear. Make sure an improvement stands the test of time before exposing all your plants to it.

I'm sure there are many more mistakes I could divulge to you. All these lessons learned were more than likely shared with me before I committed each dreaded act. Clearly, life's pressures catch up with all of us and mistakes can happen. Instead, try to take a few moments to think, slow down, and relax with your African violets. Those little beauties must know we're all running a million miles a minute. If not, how could they survive our blunders?

Grow Smart. Grow Well.

Reclassification of the Species

We are in the process of revising the section of the Handbook that covers *Saintpaulia* species. When our revisions are complete, Paul Kroll will submit the revision to be published in the *African Violet Magazine*.

Until this project is completed, please refer to First Class for information on the reclassification of the species.

Bill Foster, Shows & Judges' Chairman

In Memory



EILEEN LOTT

Eileen Lott, 88, of Akron, OH, died on July 16, 2009. She grew fabulous African violets and other gesneriads. She was active in the Canton, OH club for many years. Her handsome plant of Fredette's 'Tiger' was the first Best-of-Show plant my eyes had ever seen.

She was an AVSA judge for many years and was always asked to judge the gesneriad classes because of her extensive knowledge.

EDNA and CLARENCE McCAWLEY

The African Violet Society of Greater Tulsa was saddened to lose two of its long-time members, Edna and Clarence McCawley of Tulsa. Edna, 84, passed away on August 25, 2009 and her husband, Clarence, 94, followed her two days later. They were both members of the Society since the 1980's and participated in both plant sales and shows, winning many awards for Edna's violets and other Gesneriads. Edna was also a violet hybridizer; some of her hybrids were 'Dear Tricia,' 'My Mac,' 'Happy Harriet,' and 'Brooke.' Clarence will be remembered for his many years helping with the sales and shows setups. They were always helpful where needed, and they will be missed by all.

Remembering AGATHA GARRISON

By Margaret Schmierer

Agatha M. Garrison was born in Putnam County, West Virginia, in 1918. She passed away in Albuquerque, NM, in December 2008. Agatha was proud of her service as an aircraft mechanic for the Air Force during World War II. She moved to Torrance County, New Mexico, in 1981 and will long be remembered for her good humor and love of music. Raising African violets was one of Agatha's interests. She was a member of the Albuquerque African Violet Club for over twenty years, holding the positions of judge, vice-president, secretary, historian, and publicity chairman. She won blue ribbons for plant and design entries in the club's spring shows.

Agatha became computer literate long before many of the younger club members, so she was a terrific publicity chairman. At our meetings she always promoted the AVSA magazine by pointing out some of the interesting articles. Her outgoing personality was a big help when she talked to people about our club and growing African violets. Several members joined the club because of her enthusiasm.

Attending AVSA National Conventions was one of Agatha's true pleasures. She made many friends with growers, national officers, commercial growers, and other attendees. In 2004, at the convention in Tucson, she was awarded the AVSA Hudson Memorial Award for Affiliate Leadership. It truly was a pleasure to hear interesting stories from her youth as she told them in her special way, using those delightful Southern expressions.

Agatha's love of music was evident with her membership in a local group who enjoyed playing together. She sang and played the guitar, and their group often played for special occasions locally. Just to show how she kept alert at her advanced age, a few years ago she started taking lessons to play the dulcimer!

The Albuquerque African Violet Club misses Agatha very much. Her colloquialisms from West Virginia where she grew up kept us laughing and well-entertained. She grew many lovely African violets for our shows, before her ability to walk easily caused her to give most of them up. All of us who knew her will keep many fond memories in our hearts.

Editor's Note:

Agatha Garrison was a special, very supportive friend to all of us in the AVSA office. During conventions, she often helped out at the AVSA Sales Table and Convention Registration. Agatha was a very devoted member of the society, promoting AVSA at every opportunity. She always asked what she could do to help the society grow, and was devoted to her club. I miss hearing from her, and her ideas and suggestions to help increase AVSA membership.

Coming Events Deadlines

January Issue - November 1

March Issue - January 1

May Issue - March 1

July Issue - May 1

September Issue - July 1

November Issue - September 1

Planting by Moon Signs

All tables use Eastern Time. Please calculate the difference between your time zone and Eastern.

Moon in Aries

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds, pests, etc., and for cultivating.

Moon in Taurus

Productive and moist, earthy and feminine. Used for planting many crops, particularly potatoes and root crops, and when hardiness is important. Also used for lettuce, cabbage, and similar leafy vegetables.

Moon in Gemini

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds and pests, and for cultivation.

Moon in Cancer

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. This is the most productive sign; used extensively for planting and irrigation.

Moon in Leo

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. This is the most barren sign, used only for killing weeds and for cultivation.

Moon in Virgo

Barren and moist, earthy and feminine. Good for cultivation and destroying weeds and pests.

Moon in Libra

Semi-fruitful and moist, airy and masculine. Used for planting many crops and producing good pulp growth and roots. A very good sign for flowers and vines. Also used for seeding hay, corn fodder, etc.

Moon in Scorpio

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Nearly as productive as Cancer; used for the same purposes. Especially good for vine growth and sturdiness.

Moon in Sagittarius

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for planting onions, seeding hay, and for cultivation.

Moon in Capricorn

Productive and dry, earthy and feminine. Used for planting potatoes, tubers, etc.

Moon in Aquarius

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for cultivation and destroying noxious growths, weeds, and pests.

Moon in Pisces

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Used along with Cancer and Scorpio, especially good for root growth.

November Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase
1 Sun 7:44 pm	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
2 Mon	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	3rd 2:14 pm
3 Tue	Gemini	Air	Barren	3rd
4 Wed 11:53 pm	Gemini	Air	Barren	3rd
5 Thu	Gemini	Air	Barren	3rd
6 Fri 2:42 am	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
7 Sat	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
8 Sun 5:23 am	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd
9 Mon	Leo	Fire	Barren	4th 10:56 am
10 Tue 8:30 am	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th
11 Wed	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th
12 Thu 12:22 pm	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th
13 Fri	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th
14 Sat 5:24 pm	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
15 Sun	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
16 Mon	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	1st 2:14 pm
17 Tue 12:22 am	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	1st
18 Wed	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	1st
19 Thu 10:00 am	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
20 Fri	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
21 Sat 10:11 pm	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
22 Sun	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
23 Mon	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
24 Tue 11:07 am	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	2nd 4:39 pm
25 Wed	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	2nd
26 Thu 10:10 pm	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
27 Fri	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
28 Sat	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
29 Sun 5:54 am	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
30 Mon	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd

December Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase
1 Tue 9:23 am	Gemini	Air	Barren	2nd
2 Wed	Gemini	Air	Barren	3rd 2:50 am
3 Thu 11:00 am	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
4 Fri	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
5 Sat 12:07 pm	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd
6 Sun	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd
7 Mon 2:05 pm	Virgo	Earth	Barren	3rd
8 Tue	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th 7:15 pm
9 Wed 5:47 pm	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th
10 Thu	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th
11 Fri 11:31 pm	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
12 Sat	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
13 Sun	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
14 Mon 7:25 am	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	4th
15 Tue	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	4th
16 Wed 5:52 pm	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st 7:02 am
17 Thu	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
18 Fri	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
19 Sat 5:38 am	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
20 Sun	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
21 Mon 6:42 pm	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	1st
22 Tue	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	1st
23 Wed	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	1st
24 Thu 6:59 am	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd 12:36 pm
25 Fri	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
26 Sat 3:26 pm	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
27 Sun	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
28 Mon 8:13 pm	Gemini	Air	Barren	2nd
29 Tue	Gemini	Air	Barren	2nd
30 Wed 9:45 pm	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	2nd
31 Thu	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd 2:13 pm

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Germination of African Violet Seeds: Influence of the Germination Mix

Ronn Nadeau • Nadeau African Violet Seeds

Abstract

African violet (AV) seeds were sown on ten different commercially available germination mixes (GMs) to determine which of them were more effective for percent germination and time to onset of germination. Two of the GMs, Fafard Seed Starter Potting Mix and Premier Pro-Mix Ultimate Seeding Mix, were much more effective than the others. Five were poor for germinating AV seeds and three were intermediate. The GMs that gave highest percent germination also germinated seeds more quickly.

History and Objectives

We first reported on AV seed germination in this Magazine more than thirty years ago (Nadeau, AVM, 1978 and 1982), and we discussed the effects of light intensity on germination in the Sept-Oct, 2009 issue of AVM. In this article, we present results from experiments aimed at finding the best GM on which to sow AV seeds. All of our experiments with AV seeds are aimed at finding conditions that maximize the success rate for AV growers when they attempt to grow violets from seeds.

Materials

The seeds used in this study were taken from the "Trailer batch 7" seeds at our company, Nadeau African Violet Seeds. This batch was prepared by combining seeds from twenty-five sub-batches that came from crossing trailer parent plants. See the Results and Discussion section for more about the origin and nature of these seeds.

The ten tested GMs, except for the Fafard Horticultural Vermiculite and the Mosser Lee No-Damp-Off Milled Sphagnum Moss, contained limestone for pH adjustment and a wetting agent, according to their bag labels. The main ingredients were:

- (1) Fafard Horticultural Vermiculite.
- (2) Fafard Seed Starter Potting Mix: 50-60% Sphagnum Peat Moss (SPM), 40-50% horticultural vermiculite (HV).
- (3) Fafard Super Fine Germinating Mix: 55% Canadian SPM, plus HV and horticultural perlite (HP).
- (4) Ferry-Morse Organic Seed Starting Mix: 78-82% SPM, 18-22% HP.
- (5) Jiffy Organic Seed Starting Mix: 50% SPM, 50% HV.
- (6) Miracle-Gro Seed Starting Potting Mix: 90-95% SPM, 5-10% HP.
- (7) Mosser Lee No-Damp-Off Milled Sphagnum Moss.
- (8) Premier Pro-Mix Potting and Seeding Mix: 75-85% Canadian SPM, 15-25% HP.

(9) Premier Pro-Mix Ultimate Seeding Mix: 65-75% Canadian SPM, 25-35% HP, plus endomycorrhizien inoculant (Mycorize).

(10) Sun Gro Redi-earth Plug & Seeding Mix: 55-65% Canadian SPM, 35-45% HV.

In the first column of Table 1 the GMs listed 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 6th were purchased at Home Depot or Lowes, and the others at Hummert International, a horticultural supply store in Earth City, MO (www.hummert.com). The pots and fluorescent lighting equipment are described in our article in the Sept-Oct, 2009 AVM. Lights were operated on a cycle of 14 hours on, 10 hours off.

Methods

Each part of the experiment was replicated (-A and -B pots). Each GM was combined with tap water in a 3:1 ratio (GM:water, volume:volume). No further water was applied for the duration of the experiment. Moistened GM was put in 3 1/2 inch pots to within 1/2 inch of the top of the pot. The surface of the GM in each pot was lightly tamped down with a spoon to smooth the surface onto which the seeds would be sown. The "Trailer batch 7" seeds (100 for each pot) were counted out ahead of time and placed in small packets. After all the pots were properly labeled (GM, date, -A or -B) and ready for sowing, the 100-seed samples were sprinkled onto the GM surfaces, and the pots were enclosed in plastic sandwich bags with the flaps folded under the pots. The pots were placed directly beneath a 4-foot fluorescent light fixture such that the tops of the pots were 10 inches from the fluorescent tubes, which provided a light intensity of 11.0 EV, as measured with an incident light meter. See our Sept-Oct, 2009 article about measuring light intensities and EV values. To determine percent germination, counting of germinated seedlings began on the 14th day after sowing and was repeated on the 16th, 18th, and 24th day after sowing.

Results and Discussion

The "Trailer batch 7" seeds used in this study was prepared from twenty-five sub-batches of trailer seeds, including some that were seven years old and stored under refrigeration in sealed glass vials. This age, and the fact that we have seldom seen even fresh AV seeds germinate at a rate approaching 70%, makes it unsurprising that the best germination rate we have found in any test of "Trailer batch 7" seeds is approximately 50%. We could have used seeds that were much fresher, but used "Trailer batch 7" because that is a large batch and one from which we are selling our

Trailer Selection seeds. For our seed sales, the number of seeds/packet takes into account the batches %-germination rate. Thus, if the test germination rate is 50% and we advertise 50 seeds/packet, the packets will actually contain at least 100 seeds. In Table 1, the "Corrected %-germ'n at 24th Day" column shows what we think the germination rate on the corresponding GM would be if 100% of the seeds were viable.

Table 1 shows percent germination values and time to onset of germination data. The "Average of replicates" column shows percent germination numbers at 24 days after sowing. The data indicate that Fafard Seed Starter was the most effective GM for germination, with an average of 43% at 24 days after sowing, and Premier Pro-Mix Ultimate Seeding Mix, with an average of 39% germination, was close behind. Ferry-Morse Organic Seed Starting Mix was good for early germination but not as good as the two above mentioned GMs for percent germination by the 24th day.

Percent germination numbers for the other GMs tested were significantly lower, ranging from 11-32%. Mosser Lee No-Damp-Off Milled Sphagnum Moss (11%) and Fafard Horticultural Vermiculite (19%) had the lowest germination values by the end of the test, and the seedlings were small and stunted.

Table 1. Percent Germination and Time to Onset of Germination of "Trailer batch 7" AV Seeds as a Function of the Germination Mix.

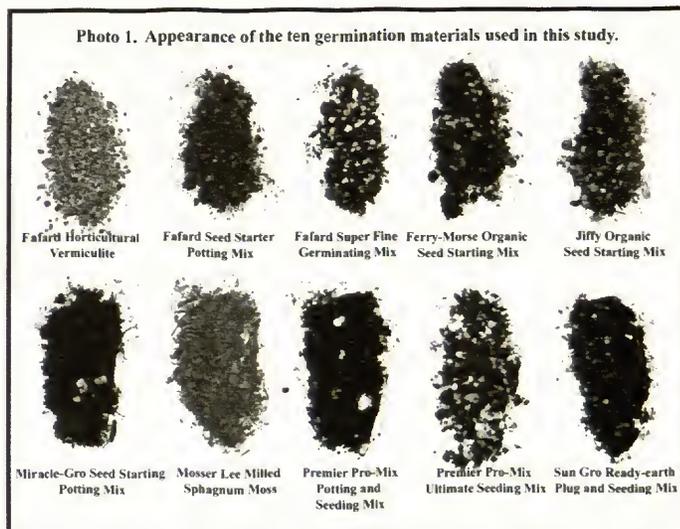
Germination Mix ¹	Replicate	Days After Sowing				Average of replicates	Corrected %-germ'n at 24th Day ²
		14	16	18	24		
Fafard Horticultural Vermiculite	A	0	0	3	18	19	38
	B	0	2	10	20		
Fafard Seed Starter Potting Mix	A	2	8	20	42	43	86
	B	2	9	20	44		
Fafard Super Fine Germinating Mix	A	0	3	4	22	24	48
	B	0	1	5	26		
Ferry-Morse Organic Seed Starting Mix	A	3	9	20	31	30	60
	B	8	12	19	29		
Jiffy Organic Seed Starting Mix	A	8	13	19	24	21	42
	B	1	5	15	19		
Miracle-Gro Seed Starting Potting Mix	A	2	10	15	21	21	42
	B	0	8	15	20		
Mosser Lee No-Damp-Off Milled Sphagnum Moss	A	0	0	1	11	11	22
	B	0	0	3	11		
Premier Pro-Mix Potting and Seeding Mix	A	0	2	18	31	32	64
	B	3	6	9	32		
Premier Pro-Mix Ultimate Seeding Mix	A	6	22	32	44	39	78
	B	0	5	11	33		
Sun Gro Redi-earth Plug & Seeding Mix	A	0	2	4	19	15	30
	B	0	1	1	10		

1 See the Materials section for data on the composition of the germination mixes.

2 Assumes that only 50% of the seeds are viable. See Results and Discussion section.

The ten GMs in this study had mostly fine particles (Photo 1). Of the ten, eight were soilless mixes containing sphagnum peat moss (SPM) plus horticultural vermiculite (HV) and/or horticultural perlite (HP), in varying proportions as detailed in the Materials section. All eight of the soilless mixes also contained a wetting agent, but the wetting agents were not identified on the bag labels. Also, each of the soilless mixes was adjusted to pH 6 by addition of limestone, and we confirmed that they all did have pH's close to 6.0. Even though the soilless mix GMs had similar gross compositions

and looked similar, they varied significantly in their effectiveness as media on which to germinate AV seeds. For example, two of them gave rates of 43 and 39% while five gave rates of 24% or lower.



We do not know why the GMs vary so much in their power to germinate AVs seeds. Might it be that the wetting agents added to the mixes at time of manufacture are somewhat toxic to germination? Or do some of the GMs contain added fertilizers that are not specified on their labels? In our 1982 AVM article we reported that when "Nadeau Mix", a mix we sold for growing AV plants, was moistened with water containing Rapid-Gro at concentrations of 0, 1/4, 1, and 3 teaspoons per gallon, germination proceeded satisfactorily at each concentration except 3 teaspoons per gallon, which completely shut off germination. We hope to solve the GM puzzle with further experiments.

Finally, we would like to add an observation that is off the main subject, but might help AV seed growers. During the germination period and during several weeks after germination, it is best to maintain temperatures no higher than 85 degrees F because tiny AV seedlings do not grow well at those higher temperatures. After this time, or when the seedling leaves reach about 1/4 inch in diameter, higher temperatures permit good growth.

We welcome comments, suggestions and questions about our seeds and experiments. Just e-mail us at Ronn@NadeauAfricanVioletSeeds.com. Happy growing!

References

1. Nadeau, Ronn. "Growing African Violets From Seed." African Violet Magazine January 1978: 7.
2. Nadeau, Ronn. "Shedding Light on the Secrets of Saintpaulia Seed Germination." African Violet Magazine March 1982: 36.
3. Nadeau, Ronn. "Effects of Varying Light Intensities on Germination of African Violet Seeds." African Violet Magazine Sept - October 2009: 10.

My Experience With Powdery Mildew

By Janet Osborne

In July, I discovered powdery mildew on twelve of my African violets. I currently have about eighty plants. At the time, I was keeping the night-time temperature in my plant room at 66 °F (-14 °C). The room was cool. Due to the weather, the humidity in the plant room was almost 70°F (21° C) degrees. Cool weather plus high humidity is a good prescription for powdery mildew.

On the first of June, I used a mixture of 1/4 teaspoon of concentrated Lysol in a gallon of water for watering my plants. At that time, I was using Lysol once every three months. I thought I was safe, but now in mid July I had some powdery mildew.

I washed the leaves of the affected plants with a mild

soap, rinsed them, and blotted them dry with a paper towel. I raised the temperature to 72° F (22° C), set up a second fan in the room, and gave the plants another Lysol treatment. About a week later, four plants had just a bit of mildew. Another wash, rinse, and dry treatment. In about a week, one plant had just a bit of mildew: another wash, rinse and dry.

A little over a week has passed, and I haven't seen any more mildew. Now, my plants get a Lysol treatment once a month. When the weather is better, I will go back to cooler nights in the plant room. I may remove the second fan. With due diligence, I hope I can keep powdery mildew at bay.

From *Ye Bay Stater*, Publication of the Bay State AVS

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2375 North Street, Beaumont, TX 77702

www.avsa.org

Date _____

Membership runs one year from date paid and includes 6 issues of the AFRICAN VIOLET Magazine.

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Convention Attendees! AVSA 2010 Raleigh, NC Convention Information Available 1/1/10

The COMPLETE Convention Information pages with convention and show schedules, design division, convention, and hotel registration information, etc., will be available for download online at www.avsa.org on January 1, 2010. Please make copies for those in your local club without Internet access.

The Convention Information pages will also be available at no charge through the AVSA office:
Phone: (409) 839-4725 • Email: avsa@earthlink.net

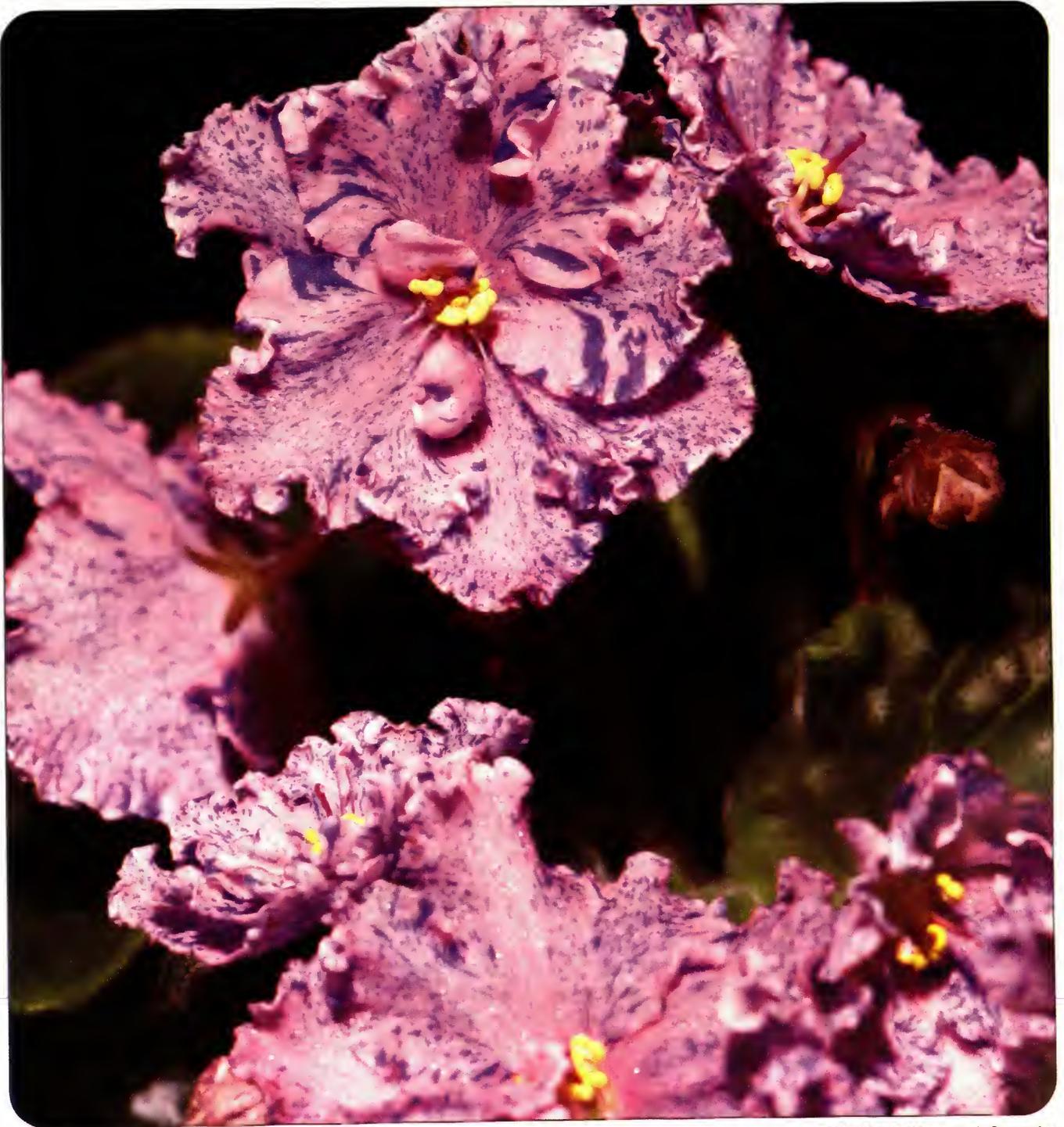


Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

Fantasy Maker

Exhibited by: Barbara Burde

Hybridized by: S. Sorano/Lyon Greenhouses

Standard

Designing in a Musical Mood

By Barbara Vericker

This is not a 'how-to' article, but rather a few personal comments which I hope will encourage members to overcome their reluctance to enter a design in our show. I know from my early experience in Bay State that, at first glance, the show schedule can look confusing and then either overwhelming, impossible, or just crazy. What could they possibly mean by a "kinetic" design? Underwater? But for me, this has become the fun part of an African violet show - the much less serious side of growing and showing African violets.

Design categories are chosen to reflect the theme of the show - this year, 2007, it's "Violets in a Musical Mood." So, to express this concept, each design type was given a song title as a starting point for a design idea. But before getting creative, you will need to review the "rules" - not of design principles, but of how not to violate the show requirements.

There are two main sources of written information for African violet designs. First, is the AVSA publication, the *AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges*. The second is the show schedule itself, which will tell you about any additional, particular rules for the show.

There aren't many rules, but not following them may get your entry disqualified. The biggest disappointment at a show is having carried out a fine artistic arrangement only to find out that you broke a rule and the entry won't even be judged. That happened to me once, and it was the best design I ever did!

Here are a few examples of **don'ts**.

You may not use American flags in any design. This year, in the kinetic design section, the theme song is "Stars and Stripes Forever." So to express this design you can't suspend little flags from a mobile. However, you could use red, white, and blue ribbons separately to "imply" a flag.

Another rule is that you cannot use artificial plant materials. The 18-inch category this year is "Rhapsody in Blue." You cannot use blue plastic berries to simulate musical notes. But you can use real dried berries or leaves and spray paint them blue.

No dart frogs or crickets in the terrarium - live creatures are banned. No single-string mobiles, as these are required to

be "asymmetrical." Your "under"-water design can't float on the top of the water.

After you have a handle on the "don'ts," the rest is personal creativity, mechanics, scavenging, and practice. Yes, scavenging and practice. Anyone who does floral design or any other craft has shelves and boxes and drawers full of findings: containers, beads, feathers, dried grass, leaves, ribbons, floral wire, glues, glitter, and so on. Whenever I walk my dog, I'm on the lookout for interesting fallen branches and seed pods. Sometimes I come home with my pockets full. Most of this stuff never gets used, but I collect it "just in case."

I also make a number of trips to the craft store for more stuff (styrofoam or fabric glue...whatever). So it helps to be a pack rat.

For cut-flower designs, practice for me means setting up some trial runs. My television sits on a wide table. After the schedule comes out, I dig out of storage a 6-inch square cardboard box and two cardboard "niches" (a 12-inch and a 24-inch) that I scotch-taped together. I set them up beside the TV and "practice."

I put little vases or other objects in the box to see if they look too big or too small. I see what flops or droops. In other words, I "play" until I feel I have an idea that will work, and one that I can carry out. So for weeks, my TV room is strewn with assorted "stuff" (much to the delight of my cats).

Think of 6-inch and 12-inch designs as miniature flower arrangements! A container or vase, some filler, maybe a backdrop, and a gorgeous African violet flower or two. Just like at the regular flower shows, only much, much smaller. Think of kinetic designs as moving arrangements with little flower holders attached.

With design, I have learned that we each have our own way of getting there; mine's a little messy, but I enjoy the process. Read the schedule carefully and consult the Judges' Handbook. If you do not own one, they are available through the AVSA office. I hope new members will get involved in the artistic side of African violet growing and showing.

From *Ye Bay Stater*,
publication of the Bay State AVS



Urea-Based Fertilizers

By Joyce Stork

Very often there are articles that simply condemn urea-based fertilizers, but I think they do so because it is the safest course of action. In reality, there are times and cases where urea has been blamed for a problem, but there are very special conditions associated with those cases.

Urea has long been recognized as a good source of nitrogen. However, urea must be processed by beneficial bacteria in the soil into the usable form of nitrate, which the roots are able to absorb. In true organic dirt, there is plenty of this beneficial bacteria, but in the soilless mixes that violet growers use, there may be very little or it may be inactive.

How can you tell if you have any beneficial bacteria? Occasionally the bacteria blooms out on the surface of the soil as a white fuzz (which often frightens growers into thinking they have a disease!). To simplify growing, some people recommend using only a nitrate-based fertilizer that doesn't depend on the presence of soil bacteria.

Most of the time, there is some beneficial bacteria present even in soilless mixes. But the bacteria needs two conditions to thrive and actively do its work: 1) the soil temper-

ature needs to be above 65° F (18 °C), and 2) the pH needs to be near 6.8. Cool soil temperatures and acid conditions inhibit the activity of the bacteria and as a result, ammonium toxicity develops, often causing violet leaves to develop yellow spots around the leaf margins.

So, you may use a fertilizer that contains urea and be safe, providing that your conditions are not cold or acid. If you begin to see yellow spotting on your leaves, you often can solve the problem by leaching the soil more often or by repotting into fresh potting medium.

Why not just search out a nitrate-based fertilizer? Often the nitrate-based fertilizers are harder to find in the formulation that violet growers prefer, and they tend to be more expensive. Nitrate-fertilizers are regulated closely because of their explosive tendency, which is useful to terrorists making home-made bombs. Urea-based fertilizers have worked well for many growers for many years, and tend to be much easier to find. With a little understanding, growers should have good success with urea-based fertilizers.

From the FAQ Section of the AVSA Web Site

Coming Events



Nov 5 - 7 - TEXAS

Lone Star Council State Convention and Judged Show
Inn of the Hills Resort & Conference Center
101 Junction Hwy
Kerrville, TX
Info: Irene Harney (512) 684 - 3598
Email: viharney@sbcglobal.net

Nov 6 & 7 - FLORIDA

Upper Pinellas AVS Fall Sale
2751 Sunset Point Rd.
Clearwater, FL
Both Days: 10am - 4:30pm
Info: Phyllis King
(727) 398-7450
Email: rphyllis@verizon.net

Nov 7 & 8 - MISSOURI

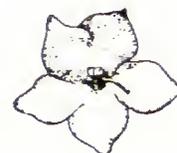
Mid America African Violet Society
30th Annual Show and Sale
Loose Park Garden Center
51st Street and Wornall
Kansas City, MO
Nov 7 - 9am - 5pm
Nov 8 - 10am - 5pm
Info: Fred & Pat Inbody
(816) 373-6915
Email: kskd1@juno.com

Nov 7 & 8 - NEW JERSEY

Tri-State
AV Council Judged Show/Sale
Frelinghuysen Arboretum
53 East Hanover Ave.
Morristown, NJ
Nov 7 - 1:30pm - 4:30pm
Nov 8 - 11am - 3:30pm
Info: Jill Fischer (908) 464-4417
Email: HFJG.Fischer@comcast.net

November 12 - 14 - VIRGINIA

Mid-Atlantic AVS Show/Sale
Williamsburg Woodlands Hotel & Suites
105 Visitor Center Drive
Williamsburg, VA
November 12 & 13 - 9am- 5pm
November 14 - 9am - 5pm
Info: Rich Follett (540) 465 - 2976
Email: richfollett@yahoo.com



Designs



Place Your Bets
Heather Morgan
Best Design in Show

The Carson Mint
Paul Kroll



Air Races
Susan Anderson

from Reno

Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky



The Great Reno Balloon Races
Susan Anderson

Hot August Nights
B. J. Ohme



The Steamer Tahoe
Olive Ma Robinson



My Favorite Gesneriad - *Columnea*

By Mel Grice

My favorite genus of gesneriads is *Columnea* (ko LUM nee a). This New World genus of the Gesneriad family comes to us from a variety of habitats in Central and South America and the West Indies. They are analogous in many ways to the Old World genus *Aeschynanthus* (es kin ANTH us) found in southern Asia and western Pacific islands. Both these tropical herbs are usually trailing epiphytes. The dictionary defines an epiphyte as, "a plant that grows on another plant but is not parasitic, such as the numerous ferns, bromeliads, air plants, and orchids growing on tree trunks in tropical rain forests."

In the past, some botanists have divided this large genus, forming four additional genera: *Bucinellina*, *Dalbergaria*, *Pentadenia*, and *Trichantha*. Now they are all said to be members of the genus *Columnea*. If you purchase or receive plants with one of the old genera on the label, you should change it to *Columnea*. Most columneas have a characteristic "hooded" flower, held horizontally with the upper two petals forming a "hood," two petals spreading to the sides, and the lower petal hanging down as a "tongue." Described below are several different growth habits within the genus. Some of the species columneas grow as miniature shrubs. *Columnea linearis* (and the popular cultivar *C. 'Mary Ann'*) is a tiny shrub with small, straight leaves and lots of pink flowers. *Columnea erythrophaea* (large red flowers) and *Columnea schiedeana* (yellow flowers striped with red) have a spreading growth habit.

Other species columneas have large, soft green leaves on arching, semi-upright stems. They are well-adapted to lower light levels than other species. Some have beautiful red patterns on the leaf backs that are attractive to pollinators when viewed from below. Plants in this group usually have small, tubular yellow flowers, rather than those in the hooded form. *Columnea purpurea* and *Columnea sanguinea* are good examples.

There are also several species with distinctly upright growth. *Columnea raymondii* can become three feet tall if not pruned. It is an excellent bloomer with large chartreuse and translucent-red flowers.

Several other species have exotic flowers covered with spiky growths and hairs, usually in shades of purple and yellow. *Columnea minor* is an example of this trait.

Some columneas have very small leaves on stems that hang straight down. Examples include *Columnea microphylla*, *Columnea gloriosa*, and the cultivar *Columnea 'Broget Stavanger'*. Many of these come from higher altitude cloud forest and prefer cool conditions to flower (unlike most of the rest of the species *Columnea*). Olive Ma Robinson exhibited an absolutely superb *Columnea 'Broget Stavanger'* at the Gesneriad Society Convention this year. It hung on a six-foot

high clothes rack, and the stems hung down to the floor. Every leaf from top to bottom showed a beautiful combination of green, pink, and cream variegation grown to perfection.

Most columneas prefer warmth (70-80° F/21 – 26°C) and high humidity as they come from tropical rain forests. Depending on their growth habit, they can be grown in a hanging pot or grown upright on a fluorescent light stand or windowsill. Most prefer a well-drained potting mix that is allowed to dry out slightly between waterings. I have sent many columneas to the compost heap by overwatering. They do not grow in pots of sterilized soil in nature. You may have noticed that roots extend from each leaf node if there is sufficient humidity. These roots attach themselves to trees and boulders as the plant vines grow. They receive frequent rain showers that quickly run off the roots. Most nutrients that they receive come from the water running off the trees or rocks to which the plants have attached themselves. THEY DO NOT GROW IN A SWAMP.

I make a potting soil mixture that I call my "epiphyte" mix, for lack of a better name. I use equal parts peat, perlite, and vermiculite. I add horticultural charcoal, small piece orchid bark, and some long fiber sphagnum moss that I shred into smaller pieces before adding to the mixture. Since the roots of epiphytic plants are not growing in much soil (if any) in nature, they do not require the lime that African violet growers usually add to African violet soil mixes so leave out the lime. I used to try to grow all Gesneriads in my basic African violet soil mix but now have different recipes that try to mimic the natural growing conditions. Truly, one size does not fit all.

Propagation of columneas is by tip cuttings. Fill a pot with the above soil mixture and place as many cuttings as you may, evenly spaced around the soil surface. Place each cutting of two to four leaves so that the bottom pair of leaves is making contact with the soil, as the new roots will come from the leaf nodes. Place the pot in a plastic bag or under a dome, where it will receive light, but not direct sunlight, and you will soon have a nice pot of columneas. Most *Columnea* leaves are fairly succulent, and you can put down a single leaf to root as with an African violet, but this seems to take a lot longer to produce a new plant. (I only try this when I have a cutting that is new to me, and I want to insure that something survives if the tip cutting does not.)

Some popular hybrids are *C. 'Early Bird,'* a free-blooming plant with yellow/orange flowers, *C. 'Orange Sherbert,'* with orange/yellow flowers, and *C. 'Julia,'* with brick-red flowers.

From *The Violet Connection*,
publication of the Ohio State AVS

Why Won't My African Violet Bloom?

By Joyce Stork

Most African violets should be blooming regularly throughout the year. Some varieties will always have one or two flowers open. Some varieties burst into heavier bloom and then rest briefly before bursting into bloom again. A few varieties are more reluctant to bloom except in really excellent light, but even these should be blooming once or twice a year.

If violets do not bloom, there is usually a problem with the growing conditions. The likely culprit is light. Violets need bright light to bloom well. If they are window grown, violets should be set within twelve-inches of the glass; the window should be fairly large to allow generous light; there should be some light filtering, such as sheer drapes or trees outside. Do be careful of heat, however, since some window areas get quite warm. Temperatures should stay near 72° F (22° C). Violets that are not getting enough light will seem to reach upward. Leaves will not lay flat in a perfect circle around the pot. Whenever a grower sees this, efforts should be taken to increase the amount of light the plant receives. Violets can be given artificial light when no good windows are available, using any kind of fluorescent tubes. Violets should be placed so that the light is just twelve-inches above the foliage, and the lights should be turned on for about twelve hours a day. Again, choose a growing area that is about 72 degrees most of the time.

Is It Hunger for Fertilizer?

Often, a lack of bloom can be blamed on inadequate fertilizer. Violets need to be fertilized weekly with a good quality fertilizer designed for them. There are many good products on the market. Most growers prefer to use a formula that is mixed in the water and used every time violets are watered. If you choose to use a fertilizer that recommends monthly fertilizing, you can dilute it to use weekly. If directions call for one teaspoon to a gallon of water monthly, simply change it to 1/4 teaspoon to a gallon. Fertilizer is quite stable when mixed up and can be saved from week to week if it is not all used at once.

Potting Soil Can Prevent Blooms

Blossoms form when roots are healthy and well-developed. Violet roots are very fine and hair-like. If violets are potted in heavy or packed soils, the roots will not develop, and flowering will be sparse. It is hard to purchase good quality pre-mixed violet soil. Most products labeled for violets are using sedge peat which is black and smeary when rubbed between the fingers. Rarely do these commercial potting mixes have enough lighteners such as perlite or vermiculite

for violets to thrive. For many growers, the only solution is to mix it themselves. One commonly used recipe is: 1 part milled sphagnum peat moss, 1 part vermiculite, and 1 part perlite with a bit of charcoal tossed in. The texture is most important. This mix will not pack down even when wet, leaving lots of air passages for roots to grow into. When repotting violets, be especially careful not to press down on the soil or pack it around the roots.

A Few Other Possibilities

Along with preferring the soil to be loose and airy, violets like to be in small pots. Generally, the pots should be four inches deep (or less) and only one-third the size of the leaf span. If your violet is twelve-inches across, it should be growing in a pot that is four inches in diameter and four inches deep. When well-developed roots find the walls of their pot, they will often begin heavy flowering. Dry air can cause violet buds to dry off before ever becoming visible to the naked eye. Be sure that there is some humidity around the plant, and avoid drafts from heating or air conditioning. Humidity can be provided with a small open dish of water placed next to the pot. Uneven watering can also cause buds to dry off prematurely. Try to keep soil evenly moist all of the time. Avoid allowing your violet to become so dry that leaves wilt, but also avoid allowing your plant to stand in water for more than one-half hour (to avert crown rot problems). Be sure that there is only one crown of leaves growing in the pot. Sometimes violets will form suckers, resulting in multiple crowns or centers of growth. These suckers should be removed into their own pot or destroyed, so that a single crown is left. Most violets do not bloom well when crowded in a pot.

A Silly Tip

Occasionally, a grower is doing everything well, and a violet will still stubbornly remain out of bloom while developing beautiful leaves. Botanists would say that it is in a vegetative mode. In order to switch it to a fruiting (flowering) mode, the plant needs a gentle threat that will trigger a "survival of the species" response. Squeezing the sides of the pot or gently thumping the pot on the table surface will disturb roots enough to trigger a panic response, often causing the violet to begin setting flowers. It sounds silly, but there is good science to support this action.

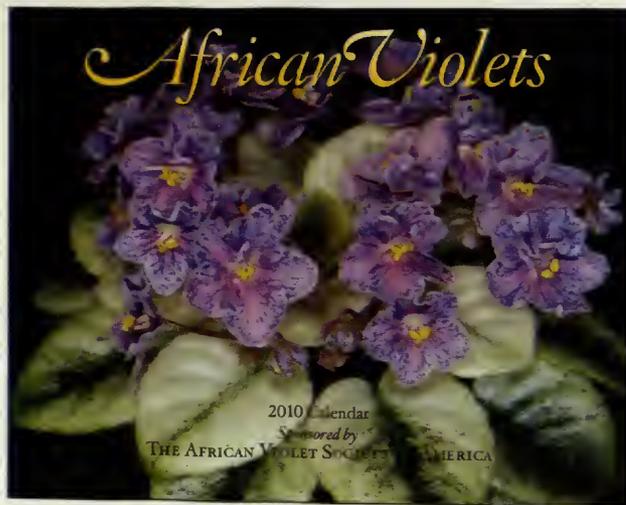
From the AVSA Web Site's FAQ Section
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UNDERWATER DISPLAYS

Definition: An underwater flower arrangement is a floral design that is submerged under water in a transparent container, with the arrangement anchored so it does not float.

The information below outlines some major pointers for putting together an underwater design. It was kindly shared with us by the author, **Vivianne Kay**, who hails from the African Violet Society of Queensland, Australia.

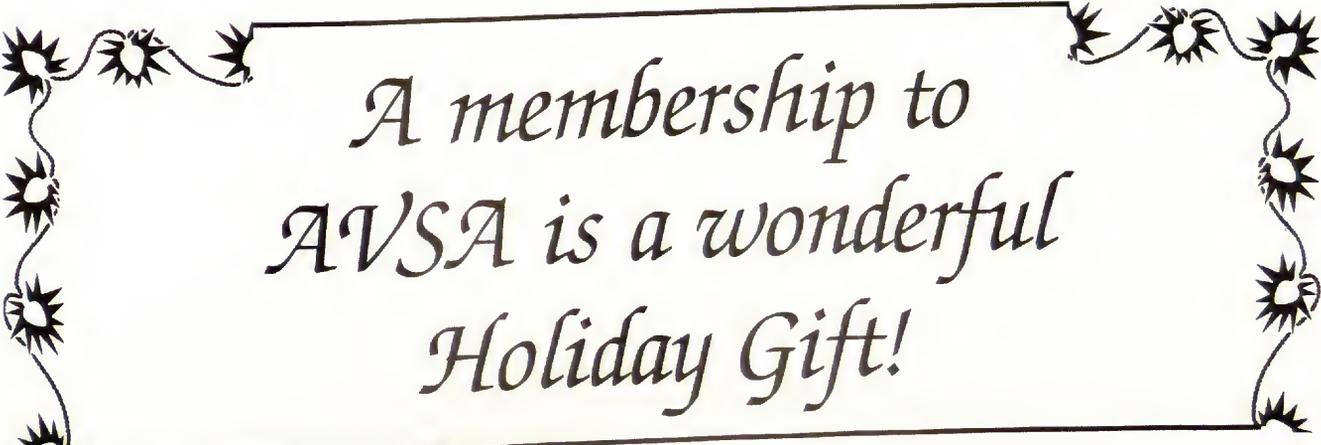
- To anchor flowers and foliage to base of bowl use florist's clay - available from floral supply places. Florist's clay is oil-based and water proof.
- Any clear glass bowl can be used, but match the size of the display to the bowl - small display in a small container and a larger display in a big container.
- To cover the clay use small pebbles, small shells, glass marbles, etc., your base.
- Cool, boiled water is best to use as it usually has less bubbles when poured.
- Darker flowers look best underwater, as pale ones can go transparent.
- Tight doubles also look best, rather than loose singles, but all can be used.
- Use a knitting needle to arrange base cover and to adjust the display once in bowl.
- When pouring water into bowl - gently pour over your hand so as to not damage the display, and fill the bowl almost to the top.
- Make the display out of the bowl - make a mound of floral clay and poke holes for the flowers/foilage with the knitting needle. Make sure everything is well anchored in clay so as to not float away.
- Have a small piece of clay flattened in the bowl to anchor the display to the bottom.
- Once the display is finished on your bench, use knitting needle to pick up display and place in bottom of bowl -

cover with base material, pebbles, etc., and then cover your display with water.

- Display should be done as close to time of taking to show as possible. Bring enough water with you to fill when it is on the display bench and do not move after that.
- Ferns are always a good foliage to use - you need fine foliage so you don't overpower the delicate flowers of the African violet. Foliage is for balancing the display.
- Water should always cover the whole display. Nothing should be poking out of the water or the bowl. Nothing should touch the sides of the bowl either.
- Use a contrasting color of base material to give effect - white pebbles for a base using deep purple flowers, and a dark base for paler flowers.
- Pet shops are a good supplier for small pebbles and colored stones, as those used in fish tanks.
 - If you get bubbles on your display, use a knitting needle to tap the bubble to release it from the display or a straw - putting your finger over the opening at the top, and the bottom over the bubble, then releasing your finger and the bubble should go up the straw.
 - Points are not deducted for air bubbles in an underwater arrangement and might, at times, enhance the design. The choice is up to the exhibitor.

From *Ye Bay Stater*,
publication of the Bay State AVS

If you would like to see pictures from the 2008 show album of the African Violet Society of Queensland (AVSQ), be sure to visit the following website:
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PROBLEMS WITH SEEDLINGS

By Ron Armstrong • Sydney, Australia

This autumn, I planted a lot of *Streptocarpus* crosses. I consider this the best time of year for germinating seed for a number of reasons. The best one being you get to see flowers on the potted seedlings in early spring, their optimum time. Theoretically, you get to see them at their best and can make a better decision on whether to keep them to grow on or to discard them.

It gives me a flying start at thinning out the *Strep* seedlings by selecting for best flowers, before they start to compete for the restricted space available. It seems that there is never enough space, as I always seem to grow on too many.

The seedlings must be kept warm throughout the winter months to promote growth, and simply nurturing them under lights in my African violet room works well.

This year, when the time came and the tiny seedlings reached sufficient size in my containers, I pricked them out into seedling trays - about 80 to each tray, with eight different crosses on average for insurance. I water them by standing the trays in 1/2 inch of lukewarm water, drain them, and cover each tray in cling wrap to keep in the humidity. I have plants in five trays out so far, all the same way, and all the trays are kept in the same room.

When the first tray of seedlings were large enough, I removed the shrink film to harden them off before potting on, and they seemed to go dormant. They went from a nice green color, to yellow with abscission lines appearing and the tiny leaves dying back behind the lines. I also have another tray that I did not remove the film on, going dormant and yellow, but there are no abscission lines yet. The other three trays are going great. Already I have started

thinning the plantlets out into 50mm (2") pots with no discernable adverse effects.

Obviously, the affected trays felt the cold and were forced into action (hence the abscission lines), but what caused it to happen? Maybe I over-watered them both at some stage; I just don't know. I keep them a lot warmer now to avoid any further problems.

I am a member of an internet chat group called African Violet International, and there is a section there for *Streptocarpus* called the Strep Lovers, in which people from around the world discuss all problems associated

with *Streptocarpus*, including hybridizing. I asked for their help and I wrote, "Any ideas out there group? Dale, Lee someone please?" and emailed the above.

The next day I received a few answers back, read them, and selected the two most relevant to my particular problem. Here they are:

The first email was from Mrs. Dale Martens from Texas who is arguably the most knowledgeable *Strep* grower and hybridizer in the world. Dale wrote:

Ron, "I know your reputation as an excellent grower, so I sympathize with your disappointment with what happened. Growing areas do have hot/cold spots and my plant room which is rather large, definitely has some colder areas.

"I've had similar experiences to yours before, and they were caused by two different reasons. One time I had added coconut coir to my regular soil, and it turns out I didn't know I was supposed to leach out the salts of the coir before adding it to soil. As soon as I transplanted them to a different soil, they grew just fine. Another time this happened, I found out that the recipe for the purchased soil I'd always

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gotten had changed (the source added redwood shavings and other things), and the pH was much too acidic. Again, transplanting into different soil saved them. Unfortunately, most of my gesneriad club suffered losses, too, since many of us used this soil.

"Finally, one time I just plain goofed and didn't shake the gallon jug in which I'd added fertilizer. I was watering along and then when the jug was nearing empty, noticed I was pouring more milky looking water on my seedlings. At that time I was using a fertilizer that was a powdery white color, like crushed aspirin. I tried leaching the soil, once it dawned on me what I had done, but it still harmed the seedlings.

"About the abscission lines, I don't think I have shared this information with this list, but when I transplant a strep seedling I cut 1/3 to 1/2 of the tip of the very first leaf. This seems to quickly stimulate the production of new leaves. Therefore, just trim off the non-green tips and hopefully, in new soil, the little Streps will quickly produce strong new leaves.

Best of luck,
Dale Martens

Next was from Mr. Stephen Phillip, an experienced grower from the USA:

"Ron, I could be very wrong, but your problem seems like lack of iron. You may want to try some diluted liquid iron in the soil, or maybe the soil pH on that particular batch is off. Maybe someone else has a better answer than I.

Stephen P.

I was having minor problems with a few African violets. Mainly 'Optimara Monet' and 'Optimara Michelangelo' were both showing some yellow leaves. I had done a pH test before on one and found the pH about 7, a little high, but not too bad. I spoke with a fellow Association member, Lena Marzolla, who was experiencing a similar problem to a minor degree, so we just put it all down to the rather severe winter we were having at present.

I couldn't bring myself to believe that the seedlings were

suffering from a high pH, as I make all my own potting mixes, as well as the Association's, and have a system when adding dolomite and testing afterwards that has proved up to date reliable. Anyway, I thought I owed Stephen at least one test. Guess what? Tray No. 1 with the abscission lines had a pH of 8 1/2 to 9! So I proceeded to test everything. No. 2 tray (dormant with yellow leaves) had a pH of 8, the two good trays of seedlings were 6 - 6 1/2. Testing of stored potting mixes found nothing wrong.

My response to my friends was:

"Thanks Stephen and Dale for taking the time to help a fellow *Strep* fanatic in need, and Dale your suggestion of cutting seedling leaves back to promote the second leaf, I will definitely try.

"As it turns out Stephen, you were spot on, and you are probably right on both counts. Iron is not available to African violets in previous experience when the pH is above 8."

My conclusion was that I must have goofed with one 20 liter (5.25 gallons) container of small plant potting mix. This is a special brew I make with no added fertilizer, and I probably added dolomite twice during mixing, and then used this to pot up the two trays, and the rest on the poor violets. No telling how many plantlets are affected!

To rectify the blunder, I soaked the affected trays and the violets in a solution of 20ml (.68 ozs) of white vinegar to a liter of water for ten minutes and will retest in two days. I will keep you all informed of the outcome if you are interested. Any more successful suggestions on remedies - please don't hesitate. Thanks again for your help. As they say, "I couldn't see the forest for the trees."

Now, it goes to show that there is always someone out there who knows more than you do, and can find an answer for you. All members of this association have access to more experienced members who are more than willing to help at any time. You only need to ask.

From *The African Violet*

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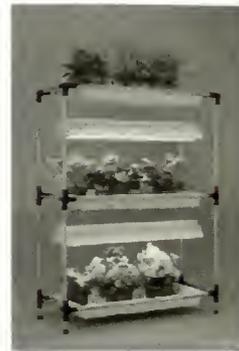
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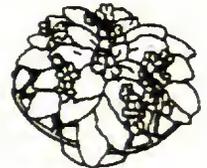
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