



# African Violet

The African Violet has become popular because of its ease of culture, continuous flowering habit and blossom forms, range of colors, and leaf patterns. If there is any magic formula for culture, it is a faithfully followed program of care. Watering, fertilizing, and repotting must be done regularly and faithfully for beautiful flowering plants year around. "Hit-or-miss" attention will give only mediocre results.

## LIGHT

Indirect filtered light from the summer sun is their natural preference. African Violets should be shaded from intense sun by placing them on a shaded windowsill or a table near a filtered sunny window. In winter, direct sun will promote blooming. Artificial lighting can also be used. Florescent lights are recommended because of the balanced light spectrum they provide. Place lights approximately 10-14" over the plant for 12-14 hours per day. Turn violets regularly to keep them from becoming lop-sided.

## WATER

Check the soil twice a week and water only when the soil is dry. To water, fill your kitchen sink to a depth of 2 inches with warm water. Place the violet in the sink for 30 minutes or until the soil is completely wet. Let the excess water drain out before placing back in the saucer. Violets should never be left sitting in water once they are wet. Always use warm or room temperature water.

## FERTILIZING

Feeding your violets is beneficial if not overdone – we suggest once a month. Use fertilizer recommended for African Violets and read the manufacturer's instructions before applying. Be sure the soil is moist to the touch before applying fertilizer, as fertilizing a dry violet will burn the roots. Once every 6 months thoroughly water your violet from the top to wash out salt buildup from the fertilizer.

## SOIL

As a rule, these plants do best in soils which are loose in texture, porous and well drained, with a high percentage of organic matter. Because of their fine hair roots they need a substance that can be easily penetrated. There are several good commercial mixes especially made for African Violets.

## TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

The best temperatures range from 65° to 75° with 50-60% relative humidity. African Violets can endure higher or lower temperatures, but they will not prosper if the air is excessively dry. If the



temperature is too low, growth slows, flowers are sparse and of poor quality and the foliage will curl down around the rim of the pot. Air that is too hot & dry can cause buds to fall off or blossoms to drop soon after opening. In winter, use a humidifier or group plants close together on a surface of moist pebbles in a shallow tray. Placing open containers of water among the plants can also heighten humidity.

## **PROPAGATION**

New African Violets can be grown by one of three methods; leaf cuttings, plant divisions, and seeds. Propagation by leaf cuttings is the most frequently used method (there are a number of satisfactory ways of rooting them).

## **REPOTTING**

Every 2 years your violet will need its soil changed. Break off the outer  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of soil (or more if the pot is large). Be careful to only remove soil from around the edge. Removing all of the soil would harm your plant. It is best to repot the violet into the same size pot as it had been in since African Violets like to be root bound.

## **OLD-TIMER TIPS**

- Occasionally give a moist violet  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of day old tea.
- Place a rusty nail in the soil.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Why do my violet's flowers come out paler at home?**

The intensity of the light available to the violet will affect the boldness of color of the flowers. Winter blooms are often paler than summer blooms. There is also no doubt that the regular application of fertilizer will enhance the color of violet flowers.

### **Do violets need a rest period?**

African violets do not have a natural dormancy period, and given sufficient warmth and light, will continue to grow and bloom throughout the year.

### **My violets are all leaf! What is wrong?**

The most important factor in bringing violets into bloom is light. The chances are that your violets are never given sufficient light to enable them to bloom. Move them to a place where they will get more light.

### **Why are my violets all droopy?**

Drooping leaves generally indicate a water problem – most likely an over-watering problem. Check the pot: if it is heavy, and the soil is damp, then the violet needs to dry out a little. If the pot is light, and the soil is dry, your violet is asking for a drink!