

# AFRICAN VIOLET

(Saintpaulia)



The African Violet has become the most popular member of the Gesnariad family because of its ease of culture, continuous flowering habit, variety of 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 with regularity and promptness if beautiful flowering plants are desired 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 the summer sun by placing them on a shaded windowsill, or a table near a filtered sunny window. During the dark days of winter, direct sun will promote blooming. If your African Violet is not receiving sufficient sunlight, artificial lighting can be used. Florescent lights are recommended because of the balanced light spectrum they provide. Lights should be placed approximately 10-14" over the plant table and kept on from 12-14 hours per day. Be sure to turn your violets regularly, so it will not become lop-sided. A good way to remember is to turn them every time you water.

**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 will be beneficial to them if it is not over done. Use a fertilizer recommended for African Violets and read the manufacturer's instructions before applying. We suggest you feed your violets once a month. Be sure that the soil is moist to the touch before applying the fertilizer. Fertilizing a dry violet will burn the roots. Once every 6 months thoroughly water your violet from the top to wash out the salt build up from 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 degrees, with 50 to 60 percent 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 down, flowers will be sparse and of poor quality and the foliage will curl down around the rim of the pot instead of lying flat and neat. Air that is too hot and dry can cause the buds to fall off or the blossoms to drop soon after opening. Maintaining adequate humidity during winter without the aid

We welcome your plant questions!

of a humidifier is difficult. Otherwise, grouping the plants close together, placing them on a surface of moist pebbles in a shallow tray, placing open containers of water among them will heighten the 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.

## 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!

## Old-Timer Tips

Hints our customers have been giving us!

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

Courtesy of:  
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