



The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society

Volume XVI, No. 5

January 2014

Basic Growing of African Violets

by Linda Abplanalp

Editor's Note: Linda Abplanalp presented a wonderful program on growing African Violets at the recent MAAVS Convention in New Bern, NC. Her sense of humor was captivating and made the hour long presentation seem to fly by. She graciously granted permission to share her presentation in our newsletter.

You've bought an African Violet from a big box store and several months later it has quit blooming and looks on the verge of dying. What went wrong? How can we do better? Just what do these things want anyway?

Potting mix - There are many formulations for potting mix. Buy African Violet premade potting mix from the big box stores and you may not be getting what you want. That potting mix will benefit from the addition of perlite. A better growing medium would be about 2/3 African Violet potting mix with about 1/3 perlite would improve it. Many African Violet vendors offer excellent mixes which do not require additional amendments.



Bobbie LaFashia's prize-winning entry of Saintpaulia 'Rob's Jitterbug' at the 2013 MAAVS Convention.

Potting mix Compaction occurs over time also. Repotting is the answer for this too. So, good potting mix from a reputable source and frequent repotting will put you on the right track for success.

Potting mix is "alive". It is not static. With time it will break down and become more acidic. Frequent repotting is beneficial to the plant to prevent a pH shift and the potting mix from becoming too acidic.

Water- Not too hot, not too cold. The "Goldilocks" type of room temperature water will be just right. Allow treated city water to sit for 12 or more hours to prevent chlorine and fluorine damage to the plants. This will also allow the water to come to room temperature. Well water - Have it tested for its suitability for use on plants. Softened water - do not use it on plants. No way! Reverse Osmosis water - good to use. It contains nothing but water and is pharmacologically pure.

Types of watering – There are many choices including top watering, bottom watering/reservoir watering with a wick, reservoir watering using diapers/ tray watering/Texas Style watering and Modified Texas Style watering. In any case water just till potting mix is damp throughout then don't water until it almost dries out. Then water again. Don't let it get too wet and don't let it get too dry. (Hmmm ... another "Goldilocks" thing!)

Light - I use fluorescent lights. I position the plants 12 inches under the lights for standards and nine inches for Semiminiatures and Miniatures. My lights burn for about eight hours. I also have, in some instances, 4 tubes running on a 2' X 4' shelf instead of the usual 2 tubes. And my plant room has lots of windows. Watch your plants and if they seem to be reaching up towards the light then move them closer to the lights. If they seem to be clinging down around the pot then move them further away.

For window sill growing remember to turn your plants a third of a turn two or three times a week to even out the distribution of light over time. Don't put them into direct sun - cover that window with a sheer curtain. Watch for cold drafts.

Temperature - Basically, if you are comfortable then they are comfortable. Temperatures of between 65 degrees and 75 degrees are optimum. At 45 degrees the plant will die.

Fertilizers - Lots of good ones. For Peter's 20-20-20 and the 12-34-14 type fertilizers use a scant 1/8 teaspoon per gallon of water. Water with this very dilute fertilizer at every watering. This provides a steady supply of good food to the plant. Over fertilizing is a real no, no.

What violets want you to do most is... Repot. ... Repot. ... Repot! Repot every 4-6 months. Semiminiatures and Miniatures. Will appreciate repotting every 3- 4 months.)

Grooming - For Standards, Semiminiatures and Miniatures go for **symmetry**. Growth should have the leaves going out like the spokes of a wheel. Growth comes in sets of three leaves. Remove spent blossoms, discolored or dead leaves and suckers.

Dust the plant with a 1" paintbrush to remove dirt and dust (and cat hair). Do so very gently. Wash the plant under a gentle stream of water. Tilt the plant sideways and gently stroke the leaf from the base to the outer edge. I said Gently!! Let dry completely if putting it back in a window .. it can go under florescent lighting immediately.

For trailers, go for **form**. Trailers must have a minimum of three crowns. But, more is better - way better! Again, remove spent blossoms and discolored or dead leaves. To increase the number of crowns, and thereby the fullness, remove all leaves except the terminal 3-6 leaves at the end of the stem.. New crowns will form because light has been allowed to reach the old stems. Picks can be used - gently - to move the old crowns into a desired new position. Leaves will grow and stabilize these new positions so that the picks can be removed in about three months.

Repotting Standards, Semiminiatures and Miniatures. (Instructions here will also work some for trailers.) - Groom the plant. Remove spent blossoms, old leaves, and suckers. Work on symmetry or form. Prepare the appropriate sized pot by putting a label on it, a wick in it if used, and a layer of slightly moist potting mix in the bottom of the pot. The pot should be 1/3 the width of the leaf span. So, a 12" plant goes into a 4" pot. This pot size does not hold for trailers. Remove the plant from its old pot and inspect the roots and potting mix. You want healthy roots and no evidence of pests. Cut off the bottom layer of potting mix equal to the depth of the new potting mix layer in

the new pot plus any neck. "Dust the Shoulders" to remove dust and debris. Put the plant in the middle of the new prepared pot and, using a postcard, fill in with more potting mix. "Knock Three Times" to settle the potting medium.

Use a support ring to help establish symmetry. Use fiberglass hardware cloth under leaves when the support ring is larger than the span of leaves on the plant.

Allow the newly repotted plant to sit for 2-3 hours. Then bottom water with plain tepid water for another 2-3 hours. Then it is ready to put back into your growing area. Water the plant with tepid water (no fertilizers) for 2 weeks. You can use 2-3 drops of Superthrive per gallon of water to water with for these two weeks.

How to Start a Leaf Cutting - Select a middle-aged leaf. Cut the stem (petiole) at a slant. Leave the stem just long enough to keep the leaf upright in a pot.

Put the prepared leaf into potting mix - not water. Water the potting mix. You can tent or not tent the leaf cutting but tenting seems to work best for me. Eventually, hopefully, in two or three months you will see the start of baby plantlets that develop at the base of the petiole.

Growing up baby from Seed – Sow seed on a sterile mix and do not cover the seed. Keep it enclosed in bright light so that the medium doesn't dry out. When germination has occurred wait till the seedlings are large enough to handle and transplant into a covered community tray. Grab the little plant by a leaf and lift it up with a toothpick etc. When a bit larger transplant again into another covered container. When they have grown large enough transplant into an individual pot - still covered - and slowly uncover the young plants over a period of 2-3 weeks to get them used to open air. Wait. wait. ... wait. ... repot.... wait. ... waitwait! And then...the first bloom opens. It is gorgeous and congratulations, you are a Hybridizer! !

Potting up the babies - Separate each Mother leaf into it and it's babies. Remove the Mother leaf and separate the babies. Pot each one individually. Tent or not to tent - it's up to you. Great - more violets! Trade anyone? Put the plant in the middle of the new prepared pot and, using a postcard, fill in with more potting mix. "Knock Three Times" to settle the potting mix. Use a support ring to help establish symmetry. Use fiberglass hardware cloth under leaves when the support ring is larger than the span of leaves on the plant. Allow the newly repotted plant to sit for 2-3

hours. Then bottom water with plain tepid water for another 2-3 hours. Then it is ready to put back into your lighting. Water with plain tepid water, no fertilizers, for 2 weeks. You can use 2-3 drops of Superthrive per gallon of water to water with for these two weeks.

The best sources of information on African Violets can be found on the internet. Google AVSA for top information in the world of African Violets. Googling will also provide numerous sources for information on any subject about growing African Violets and keeping them happy. But, to have fun and share information and plants, join a local club.

Gesneriads Go to the Movies

The National Capital Area Chapter of The Gesneriad Society will be holding its Annual Plant Show and Sale with the theme "Going to the Movies on March 8 and 9, 2014 at Behnkes Nursery 11300 Baltimore Ave, Beltsville, MD 20705 The Show and Sale will be open from 1 – 5 p.m. on Saturday and from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Sunday. A presentation titled "Sinningia in Brazil" by Dave Zaitlin will be presented at 2 p.m. Dave is the hybridizer of *Sinningia* 'Deep Purple Dreaming,' a cross of *Sinningia concinna* and *Sinningia sellovii*, and *Sinningia* 'Butter and Cream', a cross of (*Sinningia aggregata* x *Sinningia tubiflora*). On Sunday, two presentations are scheduled. The first will be "What is a Gesneriad?" by noted grower and judge Jim Roberts at 10 a.m. followed at 1 p.m. by a presentation titled "Gesneriad Propagation" by Brian Connor. Brian and Jim are both members of the Delaware Chapter. Jim is the Show Chairman, and Brian is Co-Chairman.

Design Classes will interpret a wide range of movies from "The Hobbit" to "Jurassic Park" and "Twilight." There also are a number of classes featuring gesneriad themed crafts and photography. The sale should be very good with a great selection of Gesneriads, many rare and hard to find, since Jim Roberts and Andrew Norris are active in the National Capital Area Chapter.

Behnke Nurseries now enjoys nationwide recognition as Washington's premiere plant and garden center. They offer a fantastic selection, from houseplants to vegetables to fruit trees to annuals. Their perennials section is particularly impressive, and they highlight local plants through their BaySafe labels. The staff is also extremely helpful and friendly. It's a lot of fun to just wander around, getting ideas. It's like Garden of Eden, except you can buy it! For directions and more information visit their website at <http://behnkes.com/website/>.

Schedule for Growing Prize-Winning African Violets

Spring Show April 11 & 12, 2014

Based on How to Grow Prize Winning African Violets by Pauline Bartholomew

This schedule appears in its entirety in your yearbook, but will be published in the newsletter as a reminder of the care you should be given to your potential show plants. Look for additional schedule updates each month up until the Show.

12 weeks: (January 17, 2014)

Remove leaves, pot down (necks), or pot up. Foliar feed once in addition to regular fertilizing program.

10 weeks: (January 31, 2014)

Completely disbud all plants except perhaps miniatures and trailers. Put one new tube in each fixture. Start "bloom booster" fertilizer formula.

9 weeks: (February 7, 2014)

Increase light time by one hour. Disbud heavily variegated varieties and double varieties, such as Rhapsodies, etc., for the last time. Continue to disbud all other varieties. Continue "bloom booster" fertilizer.

Note: If you keep your growing area cool, you will need to add additional time to the schedule to obtain the desired results by the mid-April Show.

Register for Conventions Now

AVSA's 68th consecutive convention and show will be held May 25 through June 1, 2014, at the Sheraton Music City Hotel. Holtkamp Greenhouses, Inc. will be hosting this convention with the assistance of the Lone Star African Violet Council and the Mid Atlantic African Violet Society. In addition to outstanding presentations and a wonderful show, a variety of scheduled tours will take place during convention week, one of which will be a tour of the Holtkamp Greenhouses. Other attractions in the area are the Grand Ole Opry House, Country Music Hall of Fame, Honky Tonky Row, The Hermitage and more.

The 2014 Gesneriad Society Convention also will be held in Nashville, TN and will run from July 1 through July 5, 2014. Presentations include Dr. Wen Fang speaking on "Vietnam and Gesneriads – Mystery upon Mystery;" Marcela Mora on "Paradrymonia and Nautilocalyx;" Michael Wenzel: "Gesneriads at the Atlanta Botanical Garden" and Mel Grice on "Sharing My Methods of Propagating Gesneriads." You can now register online for both conventions and we will have hard copies available at the January meeting.

Upcoming DAVS Meetings...

Tuesday, January 14, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Hosts: Snacks - Quentin Schlieder

Beverages – Mary Schaeffer

Since we had to cancel our traditional Holiday Party and Benefit Auction in December, we will be holding the auction benefit the Richardson Park Learning Center this month. Don't forget to bring plants, handicrafts, surprise box or something special from you kitchen for the auction!

Program: “Gesneriads from Viet Nam” Just back from his trip to Viet Nam and armed with lots of pictures, Stephen Maciejewski will update us on his trip looking for Gesneriads in the wilds of Viet Nam. Members are encouraged to bring violet leaves for a leaf exchange. Show and Tell and Plant/Supply Sale will be held.

Tuesday, February 11, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Hosts: Snacks - Mary Schaeffer

Beverages – Bill Dillon

Raffle Prizes – Geno Iubatti/Bobbie LaFashia

Program: “What to do with Your Plants When You Go Vacation” Stephanie Griffith will enlighten us on how to make sure our plants survive when we go on vacation. Members are asked to bring in anything (techniques, gadgets, etc.) they use which keeps their plants alive when they go on vacation. Stephanie would like for as much group participation as possible. Each member is encouraged to bring one plant for a plant exchange. We'll draw names to see who selects first. Little Show and Plant/Supply Sale will be held.

The Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society Newsletter

c/o Quentin Schlieder, Editor

36 South Main Street

Smyrna, DE 19977-1431

Upcoming Shows and Sales...

Saturday, April 5, 2014 from 1:30pm – 4:30pm and

Sunday, April 6, 2014 11:00am – 3:00pm

African Violet Club of Morris County will hold its 19th Annual Show and Plant Sale in The Haggerty Education Center at The Frelinghuysen Arboretum, 353 E. Hanover Ave., Morristown, NJ 07960. For more information contact Karyn Cichocki, kdc05@ptd.net or 973-579-7914

Saturday, April 12, 2014 from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

"Casting a Violet Spell" will be the theme of The Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society's 2014 Annual Show and Sale held Boscov's Department Store Christiana Town Center Delaware Route 273 Christiana, Delaware. Contact Quentin Schlieder at gcsjr@comcast.net or (302) 653-6449 for more information.

Saturday, May 3, 2014 from Noon to 4 p.m. and

Sunday, May 4, 2014 from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Violets Under the Big Top! is the theme for the Garden State African Violet Society's 2014 Annual Judged Show and Sale which will be held at the Mercer County Community College Student Center, 1200 Old Trenton Road, West Windsor, NJ 08550. For more information E-mail us at GSAVCmail@gmail.com.

Saturday, May 10, 2014 from noon to 5:00 p.m.

The African Violet Club of Burlington County will hold their Annual Judged Show and Sale at Medford Leas Retirement Community, 1 Medford Leas Way, Medford, NJ. For more information contact Sandra Skalski at sskalski@comcast.net or visit the Club's website at www.AVCBC.PBWorks.com.

..

First Class Mail

Time Value/ Please Expedite!

