



The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society

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Favorite 25 Lists Solicited

Each year the African Violet Magazine in its November/December issue prints a list of the Best Varieties from around the world. This list will be compiled by AVSA Best Variety/Honor Roll Chairman, Floyd Lawson.

Every member gets 25 votes, so the number of violets and the number of total votes can be very large. The result of this survey is a great list of what is growing and blooming around the world. It's fun to do, and it is so helpful to other growers who learn of old favorites and new introductions.

It's time for members to review their favorite plants and choose a list of 25 to send to AVSA. Members are encouraged to forward their lists to Quentin Schlieder either at the May meeting or the June picnic dinner. If you can't attend these events, don't despair, you can e-mail them to him at qcsjr@comcast.net or mail them to him at: **Quentin Schlieder**

**36 South Main Street
Smyrna, DE 19977-1431**



Terry Celano(l) and Libby Behnke (r)and Mary Schaeffer (not pictured) judged the beautiful show staged by the African Violet Society of Springfield at the Granite Run Mall on April 20, 2013.

MAAVS and DAVS

The Mid-Atlantic African Violet Society or MAAVS, was founded in 1991 as a regional affiliate of the African Violet Society of America (AVSA) operating in the Middle Atlantic States. This regional organization stimulates a wide spread interest in the propagation and culture of African violets and other gesneriads, provide opportunities for fellowship and friendship among and between all member clubs and individual members, and brings information to the public about our hobby.

The Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society has been a longtime affiliate of this regional organization, but has never hosted one of its autumn Conventions which usually take place in early November.

Despite the central location of the Delaware African Violet Society, our Chapter has never hosted a MAAVS Convention. Some of our members feel that since we have a very successful regional meeting of the Gesneriad Society, now might be a good time to consider the possibility to host a MAAVS Convention in the greater Wilmington area. Actually, a MAAVS Convention is much easier that hosting the regional meting of the Gesneriad Society since there is a regional organization already in place and a number of nearby affiliates which would probably be willing to pitch in to make it a success.

Organizations like MAAVS depend on their affiliates to shoulder some of the burden. It really isn't fair that only a few do all the work. DAVS is a pretty dynamic organization at this point with an engaged and active membership. It would be great if we could pitch in and help by hosting a MAAVS Convention.

There are inherent benefits to our members to host a MAAVS Convention. Generally some of the best national sources for plants and supplies including Lyndon Lyon, Rob's Violet Barn and Cape Cod Violetry participate as vendors. This event would also be a wonderful opportunity to recruit new members.

Mary Schaeffer and Quentin Schlieder have already done a little preliminary investigation on the proposal and it appears that if the membership agrees, we could host a Convention as early as 2015 since this year it is in New Bern, NC and next year in Nashville, TN. The proposal will be discussed further at future meetings.

The \$10 annual dues are now payable to Bobbie LaFashia, the Chapter's Treasurer. Make Checks payable to DAVS and give them to her at either the May or June meetings. A preaddressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience except for new and honorary members who don't owe dues.

Propagation Techniques for Getting More from Your Collection

by Andrew Norris

Reprinted with permission of the author and the Editor from the February 2013 issue of Petal Tones, the newsletter of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society.

Having been an avid grower of several genera of gesneriads for nearly 5 years, I heard the word 'propagation' and I immediately thought of asexual or vegetative reproduction of plants. While many people recall the mechanics of sexual plant production, where the pollen from one flower fertilizes the pistil of another and seeds are formed; where violets are concerned, it is not possible to obtain an exact replica of a variety in this familiar fashion. How then, does one go about getting more of their favorite African violet? The following are some methods of getting exact duplicates of your most desired varieties.

Leaf Propagation:

Leaves are the most common and productive means of getting exact copies of your favorite violet. With few exceptions, the humble leaf contains all of the genetic information and ability to form a new, identical plant. A leaf should not be too old, but is best taken from the third row out from the growing center or crown of the plant. A plant with more rows of leaves may have perfectly viable leaves in the 4th or 5th rows, but the last and largest row is typically the oldest and will not be as productive as younger leaves. Immature or "baby" leaves are said to often give you only one or two, but very strong plantlets, so may also be used. Simply remove the leaf as close to the stem of the violet as possible. I find using my index finger to follow the petiole (leaf stem) to where it meets the neck or stem of the violet and pressing downward from above gives a clean break. Sometimes a gentle pull to one side or scissors may be needed to avoid damaging other leaves.



Once you have removed your leaf, cut the petiole down to about an inch in length and at an angle. This allows the most contact with the rooting media and moisture that the leaf will need to root. I like to put the leaf in a bowl of tepid water with a few drops of 'Super Thrive' and allow it to soak, but this optional. If you obtained your leaves from a friend or a vendor, it is

always a good idea to make a fresh cut at the end of the leaf stem and give the leaf a soak. Even a wilted leaf can

be revived in this way and go on to produce new plants. 'Super Thrive' is a product containing vitamins said to help with rooting and general plant health. No rooting powders or hormones are recommended, because often you end up with a leaf putting out lots of roots and no new plants. If your petiole is broken, the leaf can still be saved by cutting away part of the leaf, nearest the lost petiole, and in essence a new petiole is formed by the exposed midrib of the leaf. Some like to remove the top third of the leaf or trim the top and sides of the leaf to fit the available space some believe this speeds up rooting as well. I will remove the top of the leaf on a reluctant leaf, that has failed to produce or has been seen to continue growing in size, but prefer not to remove the top initially.

While your leaf is soaking, choose a container to root it in. The smaller and shallower the container, the faster the leaf will fill the available space with roots and send up new plants. A favorite among growers is the plastic solo cups. Punch a hole or several holes in the bottom for drainage and label the cup with the date and the name of the variety you are propagating. Never neglect to label your cups, before potting the leaves or you will learn how inadequate the human memory can be! There are several materials one can use for rooting leaves in. Leaves will root in seed starting mix, your usual violet mix, perlite, vermiculite, sphagnum moss, or a suitable combination of the above. Leaves will root in plain water, but lose the roots formed in the water, once potted in soil and are best started in some solid media from the start. My preference is to root leaves in my usual potting mix, perhaps lightened a bit with additional perlite. I do utilize sphagnum moss for treasured or more difficult varieties.

You are now ready to pot up the leaf. For smaller leaves, I simply fill the cup 1/3 to 1/2 full of my chosen media, moisten the media to saturation of a wrung out sponge (barely damp), and tap the cup lightly on a surface to settle the mix, but never pack it down. Now, gently press the petiole into the mix, up to the base of the leaf. For larger leaves, I will place a small amount of mix in the bottom of the cup and hold onto the leaf, while spooning mix around the petiole. This provides the best possible situation for the leaf to be supported and held upright. Hair pins, floral wire, tooth picks, and the like can be used to hold a leaf in place.

Once potted, the leaves will need a humid atmosphere, for best production. A plastic bag sealed and inflated with air, will do for one or a few small leaves. Various clamshell type containers, used for pastries, salads, and readymade foods are perfectly adaptable for this purpose. The container need only be large enough to accommodate the leaves, clear to allow in light and to

see the progress of the leaves, without disturbing them or letting the humidity escape, and sealed well enough to prevent desiccation of the leaves. Remember, the leaves, at this stage, have no roots for absorbing water, so are only able to stay hydrated by absorbing water from the humid air, through the leaf.

Place the sealed container in a warm, bright location. Leaves need less light to root than actively growing plants, but a bright location will give the best results. I like the top shelf of the light stand, for warmth, but the top of a well-lit kitchen refrigerator, or similar location will yield results. The leaves will need little to no care, while they root. Checking them one a week to ensure none have dried out and adding a few drops or a tablespoon of water as needed is all. Often this is never required, since the humidity is high enough so the potting mix never dries out. Keep an eye out for and remove any leaves that turn moldy, black, or become mush. This is not cause for concern and is something we all see from time to time, though a 98% success rate is not hard to achieve with rooting leaves.

From here, you can expect that the leaves will begin to produce roots after a week or 2 in the mix and then fill the cup with roots within a month or two, and new plants should begin to appear within 6-8 weeks. These are not hard rules, as cooler temperatures slow the process and some varieties take longer than others, for example those with white, pink, or yellow patterns, or variegation in the leaves. Try to take the leaf showing as much as green as possible from these varieties, so that enough chlorophyll (the green parts of the plant cells) is present to provide the leaf with a strong start. As long as the leaf is green and turgid, it still has the potential to bring about new life.

There is little you can do for a reluctant leaf. Squeezing or banging the cup sharply on a hard surface to disturb the roots is said to work. Removing the top 1/3 of the leaf, or adding a few drops of fertilizer, such as fish emulsion or 1/8-1/16 a teaspoon per gallon of your usual fertilizer may help. Otherwise, try a brighter or warmer location, being careful not to "cook" the leaves in a sunny window, and let nature take its course.

When the new plants are large enough to handle comfortably for you or have leaves as large as the American dime, they can be gently teased away from the mother leaf with a tooth pick, by gently uprooting the whole leaf. Resist the urge to pot up every baby, keeping only the strongest 3 or so, as you will find, some leaves are quite generous. Leaves can be cut and set down to root a second time, if more plants are desired. Remove any tiny or unhealthy leaves from the young plant, leaving 3 of the largest leaves intact. Pot the new babies

in your usual violet mix and give them a sealed environment, as you did the leaves for a week or 2, to establish themselves, then slowly expose them to room air, opening the container or bag a little more each day, until fully open at about a week. Treat them as you would a full sized plant, and begin fertilizing as you



normally would. Expect to see your first blooms in 3-6 months and to achieve a show-worthy specimen in about 1 year. Repotting the new plants every few months and removing immature leaves from the plants will speed things up considerably. Leaves are amazing in their simplicity and their ability to be manipulated into bringing about lots of new material to grow and share.

Suckers:

Using suckers another way of reproducing your favorite plants and is very fast. Suckers are small plants, usually without their own roots, seen as a cluster of leaves between the leaf axils of established plants. In the case of chimera (pinwheel colored flowers), suckers are one of only two ways to reproduce exact copies of the plant, the other being bloom stalk propagation, covered later. Suckers are also valuable ways to get some fantasy (splashes or spots of a different color over a background of another color) varieties to come true, where leaves only yield solid color blossoms. I find spotted or puff fantasy typically successful with leaves, where suckers are desirable in case of streaking type fantasy, though sometimes leaves will work as well. Saintpaulia 'Live Wire' is an example of a fantasy variety that seldom comes true from leaves. Suckers are most often removed on sight for the dedicated show grower, because they destroy the plant's symmetry and rob the main crown of energy for blooming. Suckers are normal and encouraged on trailing varieties and are considered to be crowns in this case. In some cases, as in the chimera, suckers are desired and are encouraged by removing the top of the plant (crown), putting the decapitated crown down to roots and allowing the remaining roots and stump to produce suckers. Rooting suckers is fairly straight forward. Allow them to grow to a manageable size and using a dull pencil, clay working tool, paring knife, or similar implement, pop the sucker from the main stem, as close to the stem as possible, trying to keep the sucker intact. Pot the sucker up, as you would a small plant, separated from a leaf, and treat the same, allowing 4-6 weeks for it to form roots, before exposing it to room air. Once rooted and growing in the open, treat as you do your other plants and expect a show plant in as little as 6 months.

...to be continued next month

Upcoming DAVS Meetings....

Tuesday, May 14, 2013 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Hosts: Snacks - Anne Petrucci
Beverages – Julia Lynch

Program: “Collecting Gesneriads in Ecuador” - Our own Elizabeth Varley will present a beautifully illustrated program her trip to Ecuador in April 1988. Varley formerly was the curator of the Gesneriads at Longwood Gardens. Cuttings of some of the plants Elizabeth discusses will be available.

Tuesday, June 11, 2013 – 6:00 p.m. (Note earlier time!) **Potluck Dinner and Picnic** – Enjoy the home and garden of Steve and Barb Borleske. Everyone is invited to bring their significant other or a guest and your favorite dish.

Tuesday, September 10, 2013 - 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Program: “Secrets from an Award-Winning African Violet Grower” - Sandy Skalski, winner of numerous awards at the national African Violet Convention in Cherry Hill, will reveal her secrets to producing award winning violets.

Tuesday, October 8, 2013 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Program: “How to Grow Fabulous Episcias in Your Home” Andrew Norris, Vice President of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society will share his considerable expertise in growing huge episcias that blow the judges away. Complimentary Episcia plants will be distributed to enjoy at home!

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Upcoming Shows and Sales...

Saturday, May 18th, 2013

Medford Leas Community Building, 1 Medford Leas Way, Medford, NJ. Free and open to the public. Join The African Violet Society of Burlington County, NJ at their annual judged show and plant sale. Buy leaves, starter violets, and mature plants, as well as growing supplies. Get growing tips from members at our educational display. View over 100 exhibits including African Violets, other gesneriads, dish gardens and terrariums, plus plant and blossom designs. For more information call 610-353-3712 or go to:

<http://avcbc.pbworks.com/w/page/9191531/FrontPage>

Tuesday, July 2 – Saturday July 6, 2013

The Gesneriad Society will be holding their 57th Annual International Convention from July 2-6, 2013 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 370 King Street, West, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1J9. This special event “Toronto a Gesneriad Meeting Place” is being hosted by The Toronto Gesneriad Society. Flower Show and Plant Sales open to the public. For more information visit

www.torontogesneriadsociety.org or
www.gesneriadsociety.org.

Sunday, October 6, 2013

The Frelinghuysen Arboretum Gesneriad Society will hold their Annual show & plant sale on Sunday, October 6, 2013 from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at The Frelinghuysen Arboretum, 353 E Hanover Avenue, Morristown, NJ 07960. The Show always feature some of the newest, rarest and choicest gesneriads since Karyn takes in seed for the seed fund and is a consummate grower. The sale also features a great selection of choice gesneriads. For more information contact: Karyn Cichocki at kdc05@ptd.net.

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