



THE DIXIE NEWS

Publication of Dixie African Violet Society (www.DAVS.org)
Affiliate of African Violet Society of America, Inc. (www.avsa.org)
Mary Lou Harden, Editor (mlhard@verizon.net)

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President's Message

Lynne Wilson

tpalynne@tampabay.rr.com

Dear Members,

I hope that the excitement is spreading. The AVSA annual convention and show will be in Florida soon. So many of our Dixie members are excellent growers and designers and are sure to be amongst the award winners.

Please plan on entering the show in either the horticulture and or design divisions. Your involvement is what makes our shows so beautiful. Be sure to touch base with Linda Price, AVSA Convention Chairman and Thad Skaggs, AVSA Show Chairman and volunteer to help. It takes a multitude of people to produce a successful show, and there are plenty of opportunities for each of you to help. The email for Linda is laprice41@gmail.com and Thad's email is tascaggs@yahoo.com.

Bobbi Johannsen is in charge of goody bags. Consider a donation to add to these bags. Please contact Bobbi at Bobbibiz@bellsouth.net

Raffle and Silent Auction items are also needed. The raffle proceeds benefit AVSA and the silent auction will benefit next year's "2018" Convention organizers. Items don't have to be plant-related, but they can be. Here are a few suggestions: African violets that may not be readily available in the U.S., other plants in the Gesneriad family, leaf cuttings, home-made craft items, gift certificates, crystal, growing containers such as Oyamas, Dandy Pots, humidity domes, light stands, jewelry. . . just use your imagination!



We were saddened to hear of the passing of Linda Price's sister, Sybil. Linda's Dixie friends send her love and sympathy.

I wish everyone well and I hope to see you in Orlando.

Happy growing and showing.

Lynne

It's Time to
RENEW

Dues for all classes of memberships are due February 1 each year. Please send your dues now so you won't miss any issues of *The Dixie News*. You'll find the Membership Application on page 16 of this issue.

MEETING NOTICE!

WHAT: Dixie's 2017 Annual Membership Meeting

WHEN: Friday, June 2, at 4 pm

WHERE: Wyndham Hotel, International Drive, Orlando, FL

Agenda items will include election of a Nominating Committee and discussion of the 2018 annual convention and show. Hope to see you there!

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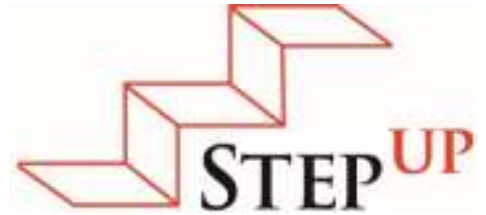
Calico Queen

**AVSA 2017
Convention and
Show**

**ORLANDO, FL
May 28 –June 4**



**IT'S
TIME
TO**



Kathy Spissman, Convention Director
mrsstrepstrels@comcast.net or 770-939-5289

I am asking a Dixie affiliate or Violet club to volunteer to sponsor the next Dixie Convention for 2018. We need a volunteer now! Here's a short list of things we ask a club to do. . . I do the rest.

- A club roster
- Registration and Treasurer chairman
- If your affiliate is not a Dixie member, you would need to join.
- Pick a theme and decorations for a backdrop and showroom award table
- Provide a Goodie Bag for all attendees along with local brochures for 60 or so members
- Centerpieces for 2 dinners (Friday and Saturday)
- Table favors – 1 or 2 per person, per dinner
- Decorations for Thursday night Welcome Reception
- Entertainment for Friday night dinner, if possible
- Donations from club for Raffle
- Be in charge of Hospitality Room-Friday am and pm and Saturday am only. I send a letter to all affiliates asking for donations, plus many members bring items for the Hospitality room (if we have one).
- Enter plants in the show as you are all the closest
- Chairman for list that will be provided
- And best of all, as the host club you are welcome to have tables and sell with the commercials. It is a great opportunity to make some money for your club. Also Dixie gives a stipend to the host club for expenses.

We are very lucky as some chairman positions are handled every year by other Dixie members.

I will find and make all the arrangements with a hotel with the club's approval of the property. I work with the hotel as to all the rooms, food, money, etc.

I really hope your club will give this serious consideration and get in touch with me. Plus 2019 isn't far away!

I would like to make the announcement of state, city, place and date at the annual Dixie Board meeting that will be held at the AVSA convention that begins May 28th!

If you have any questions or concerns, please email or call me.

Thank you,



AVSA's 2017 convention and show will be held May 28–June 4 at the Wyndham Orlando Resort International Hotel, 8001 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819 - (407) 351-2420. The African Violet Council of Florida will be the hosting club.

Come join us to see our African violet show consisting of many different varieties and colors. There will be an AVSA commercial vendor salesroom with vendors from different parts of the country. During the convention, there will be seminars covering all aspects of growing and showing African violets. . .and there will also be a variety of scheduled tours.

2017 Convention Hours

Show Room Schedule During Convention Week

The show room is open to members registered for the convention on Thursday evening following the Awards Banquet.

The show room is open to the public on:
Friday, June 2, 2017 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday, June 3, 2017 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Note: *There is a \$5.00 admission charge for people who are not AVSA members. If non-members join AVSA at the door, this fee is waived. AVSA members who are not registered with the convention and show their AVSA membership card will receive a \$1.00 discount.*

For additional information or questions about the 2017 AVSA Convention, please contact Linda Price, Convention Chair, at conventionchair@avsa.org.

JOIN THE AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA

An AVSA membership offers the following benefits:

- Six full-color issues annually (64 pages each) of the African Violet Magazine filled with great growing information
- Regular columns include
- For Beginners
- Question Box
- In Search of New Violets
- Gesneriad Advice
- Thinking Small
- Coming Events



The AVM gives members continuous information on the latest developments in the African violet world. Commercial members advertise and sell the latest and most popular violets and products. The September issue contains an insert which lists all commercial members so you can find one near you or write for their latest catalog or list. *(Some information formerly published in the AVM, such as the Commercial List, can now be found on the website, on the Magazine page, and is available for members only.)*

- Discounted prices on all products sold in the AVSA Store.
- AVSA holds annual conventions in various regions of the country. All members may participate in these exciting events which feature judged shows open to all registered AVSA members.
- Informative presentations are made by experts in African violet culture.
- AVSA maintains an extensive library of slide and video programs which are available to members at a nominal service charge. Individual Membership is \$30. Send check with contact information to:
AVSA
2375 North Street
Beaumont, TX 77702
- Or register online at www.AVSA.org
- Commercial members also display their newest introductions and have booths where plants and plant-related products are sold.



Know Your Virginia State Director and Judging School Teacher

By Betty Ferguson



Sue Hoffmann

Susan Mary Burris von der Linden Hoffmann—who you probably know as Sue Hoffman, an AVSA/Dixie judging school teacher, horticulture and design exhibitor, Dixie State Representative, and workshop presenter—is also your AVSA Publications Chairman. And much more. Here are just a few tidbits.

Sue's first African violet leaf came from her grandmother, who explained how to root the leaf in water. Sue says, "I was amazed when a plant appeared! After that, I was hooked."



She reports growing up on seven acres in the woods near the Des Plaines River, which flows through southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

The family had horses and a riding ring, and the neighborhood often congregated in the Burris' backyard. The adults socialized (drank beer and rode horses) and the kids socialized (made forts in the barn

and rode). Sue found learning to drive a tractor and disc the ring to be fun and believes that's where her love of dirt probably began.

"Dad had a construction company," she said. "Mom had five children." Sue is the oldest of the five with a little brother and three little sisters. When asked to describe herself as a child, she answered simply, "The oldest is always the teacher." She still is, and an outstanding one.

In sixth grade, she started playing bass and began playing in the school orchestra. In 1970, the year Sue left for college in Kansas, her dad's mid-life crisis moved the family to a cattle-ranch in Arizona. Her dad, truly a cattle rancher at heart, lived that life style the rest of his life.



In New Zealand with a Maori Tribesman

Growing up too fast, Sue worked at a pharmacy through high school, graduated from high school in three years, and married at 19. Even yet, she completed her college degree in marketing from the University of New Mexico.

The first of her two "wonderful husbands," Jim von der Linden, died in 1984. Her "dear second husband," Norman Hoffmann, was her boss at the newspaper. Now, Norman has retired from publishing—newspaper, CFO of the Trader magazine group (*Auto Trader*, *Antique Car*, *Motorcycle*, *Boat*, etc.) and teaches graduate studies at the University of Utah in the spring--and skis. That gives Sue time to move everything into the kitchen and repot her violets, without having to clean up.

When asked what Norman has to say about her violet hobby, she initially commented to the effect that he prefers her music to her flowers. She later added that he says, "Very little. He's careful, because I was growing plants before he came into my life." She and Norman have two adult children. All three of Sue's

sisters grow African violets. Her sister, Carol Burris, assists Paul Sorano in the salesroom.

After working at the newspaper, Sue worked for the *National Science* magazine in New Mexico. She played double bass with the symphony for 18 years and taught fifth grade strings in the public school system for 22 years.

It was shortly after the couple moved to Virginia in 1989 with two babies (one four and a half months old), two cats, and all of her 27 violets packed into the car that Sue's involvement in African violet clubs began. Attending an advertised violet show on Mothers' Day at Norfolk Botanical Garden, she was mesmerized.

Sue and Melodie Kimi, her very favorite African violet, have a long, long history. She purchased the plant at the grocery store, and it soon became "The Bloomin' Idiot," blooming all the time.

She and Norman built a plant room onto their current house before they moved in. Her collection includes a 5-tier stand with crowns growing in plastic bags. The plant stock, she said, offers favorite varieties to grow later and allows for more plants in less space. According to Norman, "There are trays everywhere."

Pests and diseases are her least favorite part of growing. It was after bringing home INSV a few years ago that she began growing in bags. Her favorite part of growing is having her hands in the dirt. Indoors or outside, if she is planting something, she's happy.

Her other hobbies include playing bridge, crocheting and her music.

Sue's AVSA Publicity Chairman duties keep her busy the rest of the time, or maybe most of the time.



Blue Dragon

Visit our Website
www.davs.org

LOUISIANA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR SPRING 2017



by Becky McMeel
Louisiana State Director

Hello from Louisiana--where weather can change in the blink of an eye! Case in point would be the weekend of January 6th when temps started in the upper 70's and plummeted to the low 30's in a matter of hours. If you did not bring EVERYTHING inside, it died of frostbite. . .lol. It's gonna be a busy Spring for lots of landscapers and growers here! And how did your state survive the freeze?

Sundowners African Violet Society will be welcoming a new member to their ranks as Dot Benge, longtime judge and violet grower from New Orleans, will be joining our gabby group of growers! We are excited to have her in our ranks and look forward to learning from her. Welcome Mrs. Dot!

October saw the return of Sundowners to the Hilltop Arboretum Plant and Garden sale in Baton Rouge. Crowds were lighter than last year and sales were slower. However-as you all know- parts of southern Louisiana experienced tremendous amounts of flooding from rain-filled local rivers. The Baton Rouge area was hit hard, so the crowds were looking to replace landscaping lost to the high water. All in all, the club members sold some violets and other stuff and enjoyed the weekend.

Our club had its annual Christmas social at the home of DJ and Annita Blanco. Good food and great company were enjoyed by all. Members also contributed unwrapped toys for the Toys for Tots campaign in the area, a yearly tradition of the club.



The Club's January meeting was held at the home of Belinda Thibodeaux-grower and violet hybridizer of the "Cajun" series. After the business part of the meeting was taken care of, a tour of her plant room and a program on how she hybridizes her crosses was held. She demonstrated her pollinating procedure between the Mother plant

Pow Wow--the seed parent--and the pollen parent Astreya-a Russian. She also showed us the various stages of growth and what the plantlets look like at



various stages in their growth. It was a most informative demo for all the members new and old!

Springtime will find Sundowners having their Annual Show and Plant Sale on Saturday, March 18th and Sunday, 19th at the Baton Rouge Garden Center on Independence Blvd. Visit our Face book page (Sundowners) for all the details! This year's theme will be Rainbow of Violets, and, if you're in the Baton Rouge area-please stop by!

FROM THE DAVS AWARDS DESK

Marian & Greg Zoller
marigregz@gmail.com

We are looking forward to going to Orlando for the AVSA Convention in May, but we sure will miss having our DAVS Convention this year as we support AVSA.

Just thinking about our 2018 DAVS Convention gets me excited. I would like it to be the best ever with lots of good plants and even better prize money. But for that to happen we need all of you to send in your contributions. Why not double your contribution since we're missing a year. Just a thought.

We look forward to seeing you at AVSA and at DAVS in 2018.

Please send your checks to the following address:
DAVS Awards
Greg Zoller
4815 Oak Lane Cove
Arlington, TN 38002

TENNESSEE STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR SPRING 2017



By Greg Zoller
Tennessee State Director

The Memphis African Violet Club has been having a lot of fun activities. Some of these happenings for the past several months include leaf bingo, a great fall plant sale, a Chinese Auction, programs on potting, propagation, and selecting the right pesticide for problems, and we ended the year with a pot luck Christmas party and a Dirty Santa gift exchange. In addition to our regular meeting activities two carloads of members took a trip to Little Rock for the Arkansas Show and Sale. There we saw a beautiful show, bought plants, and were privileged to hear Anne and Richard Nicholas explain how the plants in the show were judged.

Now we are excitedly working on our 2017 African Violet Show and Sale scheduled for March 17 (10 am to 5 pm) and March 18 (10 am to 4 pm) to be held at Central Christian Church. The show title this year is "Violets Celebrate the Holidays". We would love for any of you to come and visit.



Live Wire
By Lyndon Lyon

BECOME A MEMBER! (Membership Application on p. 16)

Please send check payable to DAVS to
Johnnie Berry, Membership Secretary
287 Fennel Way, SW, Atlanta, GA 30331
johnniepearl@comcast.net

ROSETTES AVAILABLE

BALTIMORE AFRICAN VIOLET CLUB BEST FANTASY ROSETTE. To order this rosette for an AVSA-judged show, send your request along with check for \$5 to:

The Baltimore African Violet Club
JoAnne Baker-Pruner (410) 315-8513
125 Dalesway Drive
Pasadena, MD 21122-4057
E-mail: jpbaker@coldwellbankermove.com

OPTIMARA BEST OF SHOW ROSETTE FOR OPTIMARA & RHAPSODIE. To order this rosette and a sample kit of Optimara products, send your request to:

Optimara
Attn: Best of Show Rosette
P.O. Box 78565
Nashville, TN 37207
sales@optimara.com

Include your name, name of the AVSA-affiliated club holding the show, dates of the show, your complete address (NO P.O. Boxes), and daytime phone number.



Episcia fimbriata Blue Heaven



Buckeye Cranberry Sparkler

THE OTHER GESNERIADS

Paliavana & Vanhouttea

by Thad Scaggs

This paper includes two genera because they are closely related to each other. Both are closely related to Sinningia as well and the two genera each have only 7 species, Paliavana now has 6 since one was moved to sinningia. From my experience, as well as that of others I've spoken to, these 3 genera are interbred fairly easily even though there are few intergeneric hybrids between them. That may be at least partially due to the fact that Paliavana and Vanhouttea are larger growers, more shrub like or large with upright stems. Most of these species are large growers and take up a lot of space, which for most of us is at a premium, and we just can't spare space for sparse bloomers with relatively unattractive foliage.

I've heard for several years the 3 genera will probably be reclassified into a single genus, but that remains to be seen.



Mojito Bandito

I have grown a few from these 2 genera, but only because I could grow them on my lanai. I have grown *Paliavana prasinata* for well over 5 years and still do only because it is in a corner just to fill the space. It can easily reach 6' tall and it has bloomed once since I've been growing it. I've grown *Vanhouttea lanata* and *Vanhouttea calcarata*, both I've kept small, relatively speaking, 2' – 4' and both have bloomed, but if you blink you'll miss the blossoms. Actually a couple of summers my *Vanhouttea lanata* has almost consistently bloomed, but with only one or two blossoms at a time, that could be easily missed.

I like the bloom of *Paliavana prasinata* for the unusual color, a light greenish with dark brown or black speckles on the outside. You will see the buds for weeks before they decide to open.



Paliavana prasinata



Vanhouttea lanata

I believe the late Jon Lindstrom made the first intergeneric cross using *Sinningia conspicua* x *Paliavana tenuiflora* that produced xSinvana 'Mount Magazine' which is a nice plant for anyone's collection and doesn't get too large to grow on a light stand. He also made 'Mount Nebo' using *Paliavana prasinata* x *Sinningia insularis*. For me it was a much larger grower than 'Mount Magazine' due to using *Paliavana prasinata*, I'm sure. He made the only xVanvana cross I've heard of -- 'Harlequinade' -- using *Vanhouttea lanata* x *Paliavana tenuiflora*, another large grower.



Heartland's Maverick

Dale Martens crossed *Sinningia* 'Los Angeles' x *Sinvana* 'Mount Magazine' producing 'Heartland's Maverick' which is a plant I enjoy having in my collection, with beautiful blossoms and a medium size, well suited for light stands.

I've tried a couple of these crosses, one using *Sinningia* 'Seminole' x *Paliavana prasinata*. The first four or five seedlings looked almost identical so I picked the best one because it is a good bloomer, light stand size, with a yellow-green blossom, 'Mojito Bandito'. I did finally get one from that cross I really liked, 'Optical Delusion' because of the unique blossom shape and color, also a manageable size. I also tried *Sinningia cardinalis* x *Paliavana prasinata*, but the seedlings all looked alike or very similar with unruly foliage, not something I would give space to on my light stands.



Optical Delusion

If you want to try something from these 2 genera I would recommend *Paliavana tenuiflora* and if you have plenty of space and patience *Paliavana prasinata*. *Vanhouttea brueggeri* would be a good selection from that genus because the blossoms are nice and the plant isn't too large, but I haven't been able to find it.



P1110

For more detailed information which also includes *Sinningia* try Alan LaVergne's website *Sinningia* &

Friends at <http://www.burwur.net/sinns/sinns.htm>. Much of what I know about the 3 genera I've read at some time or another on his site. He goes into great detail and if you're a sinningia lover I have never seen a better site for information and photos.



Topsy-turvy
Planter
Thad Scaggs

PUBLICATION DEADLINES

February issue – January 15

May issue – April 15

August issue – July 15

November issue – October 15

attention affiliates

Robbie McMeel, DAVS Affiliate Chair
204 Greenwood Street
Houma, Louisiana 70364
985-868-0439
rmcmeel@bellsouth.net



Please remember to include classes for Dixie AVS Collections in your show schedules! Dixie has ribbons available for the Best Standard Dixie Collection and Best Mini/Semimini Dixie Collection. Cost for these ribbons is \$10.00 which helps defray the cost of the ribbons and to pay for the postage.

Along with your request, send a copy of your show schedule, name of the Club, Show chair person's name, complete shipping address with 9-digit zip code, and a contact email address if possible.

In addition, why not offer a special ribbon award for the Best Dixie-registered plant in your show. All Dixie-registered plants are listed on Dixie's website (www.davs.org). There are many plants that are registered with both AVSA and Dixie.

If you have the First Class program, the Dixie Registration Number will be displayed in the plant information. Here are some of the hybridizers who have registered their plants with Dixie:

1. Wrangler's Series (Smith)
2. Rodeo Series (JC Munk)
3. Apache Series (JC Munk)
4. Jolly Series (Hortense Pittman)
5. Alamo Series (Hortense Pittman)
6. Buckeye Series (Pat Hancock)
7. Cajun Series (Belinda Thibodeaux)
8. Dean's Series (Harold Hobbs)

So please remember to include the Dixie Collection Classes in your show schedules. If you have questions, please contact me by phone or e-mail (listed above).

NEEM



by Betty Ferguson

This natural insecticide might be in your organic toothpaste. You might also use it to get rid of intestinal worms, to cause an abortion, to control a cough or phlegm or asthma, prevent dental plaque, or to increase your sperm count. You might use it as a form of vaginal birth control, to treat your diabetes or your leprosy, hemorrhoids, or malaria. You might also use it to get rid of head or body lice. Your naturopath might prescribe it to rid your digestive tract of *h. pylori*. Or you might simply use it a pesticide or fungicide on your African violets. Dr. Rob Robinson of Violet Barn does.

Neem oil, made from the seeds of the neem tree, *Azadirachta indica*, is an ingredient of about 75% of Ayurvedic medicines. According to the website, *Discover Neem*¹, Indians call the sacred neem tree "the village pharmacy." The website also proclaims neem to be, "like a dream come true for the old snake oil salesman."

The neem tree, sometimes called Indian lilac, is a member of the mahogany family and a cousin to Chinaberry, which its compound leaves resemble. As the tree's scientific name reveals, it's a native of India and surrounding areas. It is now grown in many tropical and frost-free areas, including south Texas and south Florida, and survives in drought. The tree easily reaches 60 feet and occasionally grows as tall as 130 feet. Because neem timber has been shown to be rot and insect-resistant, the wood is highly sought after.



Clarified Hydroponic Extract of Neem

Some don't like the sesame seed/peanut buttery scent of neem oil. Others say neem does not work as an insecticide. True, it doesn't employ the quick knock-down effect often expected. Instead, after entering the chewing or sucking insect's system and blocking the hormone's normal functioning, neem induces dementia-like effects. *Discover Neem* says it like this:

"Insects 'forget' to eat, to mate, or they stop laying eggs. Some forget that they can fly. If eggs are produced they don't hatch, or the larvae don't moult.

"Obviously, insects that are too confused to eat or breed will not survive. The population eventually plummets, and they disappear. The cycle is broken."

Actually neem works in a number of different ways. When applied to the soil, neem acts as a mild systemic. As a repellent, bugs find the treated plant unattractive. Neem oil sprayed on an insect suffocates it. As insects breathe through pores in the cuticle surrounding their bodies, when the pores are plugged by oil, the insects suffocate and die. Also, by directly penetrating the outside cuticle, oils destroy insects' internal cells.

Neem is said to affect more than 60 plant pests including mites, thrips, mealy bugs and, used as a drench, fungus gnats. It is effective, as well, against powdery mildew and other fungal diseases.

Neem is biodegradable and is safe for birds, pets, fish, beneficial insects and earthworms. You can apply neem oil straight to your body to keep mosquitos at bay, if you aren't turned off by the scent yourself. It only minimally damages blossoms, if at all.

In addition to pure neem oil products, such as Dyna-Gro, neem comes in a variety of formulas and concentrations. Some products, such as BioNEEM by Safer, list the active ingredient as azadirachtin. Others, including Garden Safe, list clarified hydrophobic extract of neem oil. In processing, when the natural neem oil is removed from the seeds and treated with alcohol, the azadirachtin separates from the oil, which is called clarified hydrophobic extract of neem oil. Azadirachtin affects the insect's hormonal system. The clarified hydrophobic extract is lacking this major insecticidal chemical of the oil and, therefore, works only by smothering the pest. As a result, pure and natural neem oil products are recommended to address both problems.



Pure Neem Oil needs a little dish soap as an emulsifier

Here is Dr. Robinson's response to my question about his use of neem at Violet Barn:

We regularly use neem, primarily as a means for dealing with powdery mildew. It's also our go-to product to spray when we haven't the time or means to spray with other things. It's not a miracle cure but helps in keeping things from getting out of control until we can deal with them more effectively. Most importantly, it's one of our limited arsenal of weapons that we can use that is nontoxic to us, our help, our pets, and our plants. We'll even use it (in a limited way, since it does have an odor) during the work day if needed.

¹<http://www.discoverneem.com/>



Episcia Silver Dust by Ruth Coulson

LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT SOILLESS MIX

by Sue Hoffmann, Dixie AVS Judges Chair
violetsue123@outlook.com

To amend or not to amend, that is a tough question. Is it better to leave it alone or start adding stuff to your soil mix to make it better? It can be a true hit or miss. Only your plants will know for sure, but they will show you quickly whether it is a yea or nay.

Soilless potting mixes are wonderful! They are conveniently bagged, readily available and assumed to be free of disease and contaminants. This allows growers to amend the mix for their preferred drainage, water retention, air space and nutrients.



Most African violet and Gesneriad mixes are predominantly sphagnum peat moss, which is lightweight and drains well yet is water retentive. It must be thoroughly moistened or it is hard to work with, and it should never be allowed to dry out completely once planted, because it's not easy to rehydrate properly. Peat is on the acidic side with a starting pH around 5.8.

Additional ingredients in bagged mixes may include 1) **Bark** – improves drainage and air space, but decreases water retention; 2) **Coir** - a coconut fiber by-product that has good drainage and water retaining qualities; 3) **Perlite** – volcanic mineral which does not affect the nutrient quality or pH of the mix, but adds drainage, air spaces and water retention; 4) **Vermiculite** – a mica-type material that is heated and expanded to increase its water holding capacity; and 5) **Poly-regrind** – tiny Styrofoam beads used for air spaces. These are found in Optimara's mix. 6) A few bagged mixes may also contain **slow-release fertilizer, trace minerals, and/or wetting agents**. These should be listed as added ingredients on the bag.

Most African violet growers add perlite to their mix. Several I know add it at a 1:1 ratio. This is usually for wick-watered plants. Others rely on a 3:1:1 mixture, with vermiculite as the third additive. (Be careful not to buy construction-grade vermiculite from a hardware store. It is used for insulation, repels moisture and is not suitable for plants.) Horticultural charcoal is another popular potting mix additive used to “sweeten” the soil. Here also, make sure to use a horticultural grade charcoal, not briquettes.



Perlite Vermiculite Charcoal

All nutrients available for an African violet are limited to the planting medium in the pot. When freshly repotted, your plants won't need much if any fertilizer. This is especially true when using modern, fortified potting soils that often have fertilizer and other enhancements added. After about two months, nutrients in the soil will have been consumed, so you'll have to use a fertilizer if you want continued, healthy growth.

Plants need a number of nutrients to survive and thrive. So far, researchers have identified sixteen nutrients that are essential for plant life. The macronutrients (listed) and trace elements:

- 1) Carbon (C) Hydrogen (H) Oxygen (O)
- 2) Nitrogen (N) Phosphorus (P) Potassium (K)
- 3) Calcium (Ca) Magnesium (Mg)
- 4) Sulfur (S)

The first three—carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen—are known as structural elements and are present in the atmosphere and growing environment.

The next three are called the fertilizer elements since they are the familiar N-P-K identified on fertilizer labels. The NPK rating of a fertilizer identifies how much of the fertilizer by volume is comprised of these three elements. For example, a 10-10-10 balanced fertilizer would contain 10% each by volume of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. Although each of these fertilizer elements has multiple roles, in general nitrogen encourages strong leaf growth, phosphorus encourages flowering and budding, and potassium encourages stronger root growth.

The next two macronutrients, calcium and magnesium, are crucial for cellular function and flower formation. They might not be present in your fertilizer mix (but dolomite lime is a good way to deliver both).

Make sure your fertilizer is complete, with both calcium and magnesium present.

The final macronutrient, sulfur, is often not included on the lists of "critical" major elements because it's so common. In most fertilizers, the other nutrients are delivered in the form of sulfate salts, which automatically includes sulfur. As a result, sulfur deficiency is not common.

Make sure you're supplying each of the five critical elements, either in your balanced fertilizer or through a combination of your fertilizer and soil amendments. Common amendments (fertilizers) for bagged soil mix include:



Dolomite lime which provides calcium and magnesium, adds water retention, and raises pH levels.

Bone meal is a slow-release fertilizer and a source of phosphorus and protein for flower formation.

Blood meal provides one of the highest sources of organic nitrogen. It is fast release and too much leads to excess ammonia in your soil. It can burn plants. Use caution.

Bat Guano an organic source of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium (10-3-1). Used as an additive or made into a tea for pour-through in watering. Again, use caution. This is a strong, quick-release additive.

Worm castings improve soil structure and increase microbial activity. Minerals and nutrients from earthworm castings are in a water-soluble form, making them readily available to plants

Green sand supplies a variety of nutrients to improve plant health. It's a good source of potash, silica, iron oxide, magnesium, lime, phosphoric acid and 22 trace minerals.

Kelp Meal contains minerals, carbohydrates and amino acids. It will add organic matter to your soil, help retain moisture and enhance healthy root growth. Combining kelp meal with fish meal increases the NPK ratio in kelp meal nutrients, releasing them over about 4 months.

Molasses – watering with molasses provides a natural food source for microbial populations in the soil. Blackstrap molasses contains calcium, magnesium, potassium, and iron and trace amounts of manganese, copper, and zinc. The unsulfured variety is preferred

when using as fertilizer because the form of sulfur used in most molasses is there to *kill* microbes, while we're trying to *feed* microbes. Application standard concentration is: about 2 oz. (4 tbsp.) per gallon of water using either a watering can or a sprayer. Apply enough to get the soil wet but not soaked or foliar feed. (I use about 1 tbsp. in regular watering.)

Epsom salts supply both magnesium and sulfate – both vital plant nutrients. Apply 1 tbsp. /gallon of water and use as a pour-through once a month.

SUPERthrive is well known among growers as the "magical" watering additive. Not a fertilizer, it can be used with any fertilizing regime. It is the "original vitamins-hormones solution with 50 instant BioUsables normal pure complexes from carbon-hydrogen-oxygen natural organic crystals," and also listed to contain Vitamin B-1 (.09%), 1-Naphthyl acetic acid (.048%). Who knows what it does, but I'm afraid not to use it! I wonder if the Dr. Bronner's Peppermint Soap label was written by the same person.



Fertilizers come in several different varieties: liquid, sticks and tablets, and granular and slow-release forms. Of these, the two best suited for indoor use are liquid and slow-release fertilizers. Osmocote (slow release) lasts about four months. As a word of warning, always read and follow the label instructions on your fertilizer. Less is almost always better than more.

Make sure to flush your pots thoroughly every month, at a minimum. Take the plant to the kitchen sink and thoroughly flush the soil to wash out accumulated salts from fertilizer and deposits from tap water.

Peat decomposes quickly. It will look like the dirt is "settling," when in fact, it's actually breaking down. As this occurs, the peat particles pack themselves around the roots, slowly starving them of oxygen. The youngest, newest and smallest roots are affected first. At this point, it's definitely time to repot. So, this cycle begins again.

I've had fun doing research on these topics. The following websites have whiled away the hours with interesting information and far more than I expected to learn. Check them out. You can even learn about making organic household cleaners! How fun

About.com/houseplants
www.thebalance.com/frugalliving
<https://www.gardening-forums.com>

<https://www.smilinggardener.com/organic-fertilizers/>
<https://gardens.naturalorganicwarehouse.com>
<https://www.goldenbarrel.com/product/golden-barrel-blackstrap-molasses/>

For an interesting supply site, see:
Homegardenpro.com



Primulina Tamiana
By Ruth Coulson

COMING EVENTS

February 9-20, 2017 – Florida State Fair, with African violet and Gesneriad exhibits. Tampa, FL Visit www.floridastatefair.com for days and times the fair is open.

February 24-25, 2017 – Tampa AVS Annual Show & Sale, “Hats Off to our American Heroes.” Show hours: February 24, Noon to 5 pm; February 25, 9 am to 3 pm. Plant Sales hours: February 24, 9 am to 5 pm; February 25, 9 am to 3 pm. Farm Bureau, 100 S. Mulrennan Road Valrico, FL 33594. Information: jasb39@gmail.com.

March 19-20, 2017 - Baton Rouge Sundowners, Baton Rouge, LA, Annual Show & Sale, “Violets and Rainbows.” Show hours: March 19, 1-5 pm; March 20, 11 am to 3 pm. Baton Rouge Garden Center, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806. Information: Susie Smith (225) 603-9256 or susiesmith@live.com.

March 4-5, 2017 - Spring Branch African Violet Club, Houston, TX, Show & Sale. Hours: March 4,

Show from 1-5 pm; Sale from 9 am to 5 pm; March 5, Show & Sale from 10 am to 3 pm. Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Hermann Park Drive, Houston, TX 77004. Information: Karla Ross 281-748-8417 or kjwross@yahoo.com.

March 17-18, 2017, First AVS of Denton, Denton, TX, Spring Show & Sale. Hours: March 17, 1 to 3 pm; March 18, 9 am to 3 pm. First Presbyterian Church, Erwin Hall, 1114 W. University Drive, Denton, TX 76201. Information: Linda Turner 940-368-8915 or Texasblackcow@yahoo.com

March 18, 2017 – First Austin AVS, Austin, TX, 48th Annual Show & Plant Sale, “Luck O’ the Violets.” Hours: March 18, 9 am to 4:30 pm. Austin Area Garden Center, Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX 78746. Information: Susan Kautz 512- 365-1818 or gizzmo@austin.rr.com. Website URL: www.faaavs.org. Free Admission to show. Entry fee to Zilker Botanical Garden is \$1-children 3-12/seniors 62+, \$2-adults 13-61 & \$3-nonresidents.

March 24-25, 2017 – Heart of Jacksonville AVS, Jacksonville, FL, Judged Show & Plant Sale, “Symphony of Violets.” Hours: March 24, Noon to 5 pm; March 25, 10 am to 4 pm. San Jose Church of Christ, 6233 San Jose Blvd., Family Life Center Fellowship Hall, Jacksonville, FL 32217. Information: Sharon Gartner Sharon@jacksonvilleviolets.org. Website URL: www.jacksonvilleviolets.org.

March 31-April 1, 2017 - Magic Knight AVS, San Antonio, TX, Show & Sale. Hours: March 31, Show from 1 to 4 pm; Sale from 9 am to 4 pm; April 1, Show & Sale, 9 am to 4 pm. San Antonio Garden Center, 3310 N. New Braunfels Ave., San Antonio, TX. Information: Dorcas Brashear 210-824-9981 or rdbbrashear@gvic.com.

April 7-8, 2017 - Dallas Metro African Violet Societies, Dallas, TX, Show & Sale. Hours: 10 am to 4 pm. North Haven Gardens, 7700 Northaven Road, Dallas, TX 75230. Information: Sylvia Leeds 903-356-2540 or roseotx@gmail.com.

April 8-9 USF Spring Plant Festival at USF Botanical Gardens on the campus of the University of South Florida. Hours are 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday and 10 am to 3 pm on Sunday. For information, visit <http://gardens.usf.edu/>.

April 22-23, 2017, Cincinnati & Dayton AV Societies, Batavia, OH, Annual Show & Sale. Hours: April 22, 10 am to 9 pm; April 23, Noon to 6

pm. Eastgate Mall, I-275 and St. Route 32, Batavia, OH. Information: Karen Cenci 513-325-0395 or kcenci@hotmail.com.

April 29-30, 2017, Columbus African Violet Society, Columbus, OH, Annual Show & Sale. Hours: April 29, Noon to 5 pm; April 30, 10 am to 5 pm. Franklin Park Conservatory & Botanical Gardens, 1777 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43203. Information: Gary Saunders 614-875-4748 garychefgary@gmail.com Website URL: www.columbusafricanvioletsociety.org. Facebook: Columbus African Violet Society

April 29-30, 2017, Tidewater African Violet Society, Norfolk, VA, Show & Sale. April 29 Hours: Show 1 pm to 5 pm; Sale 9 am to 4 pm; April 30 Hours: Show & Sale, 9 to 4 pm. Norfolk Botanical Gardens, 6700 Azalea Garden Road, Norfolk, VA 23518. Information: Pat Knight 757-479-2115 or kemts@cox.net. Facebook: African Violet Society of Tidewater Virginia

May 28-June 4, 2017 – AVSA Convention & Show, Wyndham Hotel, Orlando, FL. Open to the public Friday, June 2, 9 am to 5 pm and Saturday, June 3, 9 am to 4 pm. Admission is \$ 5.00. For information, visit Convention information at www.AVSA.org or laprice41@yahoo.com.

July 2017 – The Gesneriad Society Convention & Show, Hilton Hotel, downtown Omaha, NE. Convention information at www.gesneriadsociety.org

September 15-16, 2017 - Ohio State African Violet Society, Mansfield, OH, Annual Show & Sale. Hours: September 15, Sale 9 am to 5 pm; Show 1 pm to 5 pm; September 16, Show & Sale, 9 am to 4 pm. Kingwood Center Gardens, 50 N. Trimble Road, Mansfield, OH 44906. Information: Mel Grice 937-654-7014 or melsgrice@earthlink.net. Website URL: www.osavs.org.



Optimara Meg

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From the Editor. . .Mary Lou Harden
mlhard@verizon.net

Dear Dixie Members,

Although Dixie is not having its own convention and show this Spring, I've heard from several Dixie members who say they're busier than ever. . .and it seems like I am also. My local club, Tampa AVS, is currently involved in the Florida State Fair which runs from February 9 through the 20th. Club displays are 10'x10'. I've included a picture of our display on page 18 of this newsletter. We're also having our own show February 24-25, so we have a lot going on.

In addition, many of us are involved in committees preparing for the AVSA convention which begins May 28 at the Wyndham Hotel on International Drive in Orlando. I hope many of you are planning to attend and that you'll be bringing your horticulture and design entries with you! This will be a first for many people who come to this convention and we want to show them what a first-rate African violet show looks like! I fondly remember my very first AVSA convention in 1980 in San Francisco, CA! Wow! Was I impressed! Not only was it a spectacular show, I was seated at one of the banquets with J.R. and Hortense Pittman and had the pleasure of sharing a table at the Japanese Tea Garden with the then president of AVSA.

I know you're going to enjoy the articles in this issue. Thank you to each of you who writes on a regular basis, as well as those of you who periodically send information, articles and pictures. All are appreciated!

Many blessings to all of you, and I'm looking forward to seeing you in Orlando!



Rob's
June Bug

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