

Basics of Episcias

This year's project plant is the Episcia. It has been called a Flame Violet. Many people grow them just for their beautiful foliage. You'll note the variety of leaves that we have in the plants we brought today. Just like our African Violets there are many types of leaves and a variety of colors in the flowers. BUT all of the flowers are the same "shape". Episcias have a magnificent range of foliage and flower color with leaves of shiny green, bronze and silver and tubular flowers of white, yellow, lavender, pink or red.

One key difference in growing Episcias as compared to African Violets is their need for high humidity. Nearly all of the plants prefer to be grown in a domed or terrarium environment. They are very fast growers and love to be groomed. Keep them consistently moist, without being soggy. This is why they are ideal for the terrarium environment. If allowed to dry out they will reward you with dead or browning leaves. Brown, curled leaves are a good sign of under watering.

Episcias put off stolons that should be removed to encourage a strong central plant with larger leaves. Most growers suggest leaving on just 3 stolons after the main stem gets thicker/stronger and the plant matures. The removed stolons can be placed in the pot around the parent plant to produce a more luxurious planting or to start new plants in their own pots

Episcias enjoy lighting similar to the African Violets. Good light is important to bring out the color of the leaves but if it is too bright the color may be "burnt" out.

Two exceptional lessons on the web are on the following links. We have posted the links on our website. http://www.violetbarn.com/lessons/grooming_episcias.htm
http://www.violetbarn.com/lessons/repotting_episcias.htm

A tip from Rob's Violet Barn - Is your Episcia growing like crazy but never blooming? This question just answered itself--why should it want to bloom when it's so happy producing so much foliage! Episcias are actually excellent bloomers, though you wouldn't know it looking at most of the plants being grown. Even at shows, you'll rarely see them exhibited in bloom. They are so easy to grow, and their leaves so pretty, that blooms are usually just an afterthought. Want to see blooms? Limit the growth of foliage. For Episcias this means not allowing your plant to produce all the stolons (runners) that it wants to. Like any plant, it will find another way to thrive and reproduce--produce bloom! One you begin to see flowers, then you can let more stolons grow.

One Gesneriad grower's tips for preparing her Episcias for show: When preparing Episcias for display, I select a 10" shallow bowl with a clear plastic dome. The dome has a 2-1/2" hole in the center to allow some air circulation while maintaining high humidity. After preparing the container with the African Violet soil, I place 5 to 7 plantlets throughout the container, add the sphagnum moss, and put on the dome. Plantlets of the same size are chosen so they will continue to grow uniformly to fill in the container. I moisten the soil so it will be damp and NOT wet. To keep growth in the container fairly uniform I allow each plantlet to send out about 3 stolons. If the container starts to look crowded or growth appears uneven, I clip off any excess stolons. Any flower buds that form are removed to encourage foliage growth.

PLEASE plan on bringing your project plant to our show on April 1st. You can enter Episcia in a show even if they aren't blooming. They are such beautiful plants with so much variety that our customers will love to see the results of the various growing environments our members have to offer.