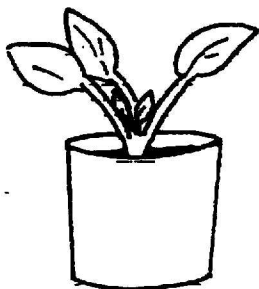


HOW DO I CARE FOR THAT BABY?

by Sue Gardner

So you have removed your baby African violet from its mother leaf and placed it in a small pot.

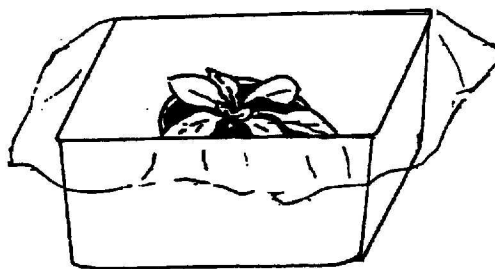


How do you care for it so that it will thrive and grow into a large flowering plant?

Here are some points to head you in the right direction. We assume you have placed a wick in the pot. If not, you need to do so.

1. Water your baby with a weak solution of plant starter (a hormone preparation to stimulate root growth).
2. Place in a warm position with bright natural light, or on a light stand.
3. After a few days, if all is well, wet the wick and place on a reservoir filled with a weak solution of balanced fertilizer. Do not use strong fertilizer solution, as the small root ball may not be able to absorb all the fertilizer salts moving into the potting mix. This would result in crystals forming on the center leaves of the plant, causing fertilizer burn and often destroying the center.
4. Keep an eye on the plant to make sure the wick is working and the potting mix is kept moist. Occasionally, new potting mix does not wet well and the wick does not start working.

5. If your baby develops droopy leaves, remove from the reservoir and place in a "humidicrib". This can be a butter container or similar plastic dish where the plant can sit without touching the sides. Cover loosely with a piece of plastic wrap.



When the plant perks up and looks healthy again, remove the plastic wrap for a few days (making sure the potting mix does not dry out). Then replace on the reservoir and allow plant to grow.

6. After a few weeks, when the plant has started developing new leaves, you may increase the fertilizer strength to that which you use on your other African violets. You may even wish to use a fertilizer with a higher nitrogen content to promote leaf growth. At this stage you may even get a "Baby Smile" - flowers!
7. After a few months, your baby may have outgrown its "crib" and need re-potting. To keep your plant progressing with even growth, it will need potting up to the next size pot when the roots fill the pot. Do not do this if the root ball is still small, as African violets do not like to be surrounded by a large amount of wet soil.

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