

The Trials and Errors of Growing African Violets



By

Nancy Schoepflin

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this E-Book to all our friends; this includes everyone in love with these fabulous plants we enjoy and grow.

Please note: Rainbowviolets Greenhouse is no longer in business. This E-Book is only for educational purposes (not for resale)

Acknowledgment

My thanks to all of you who have contributed to my experience learning about African violet cultivation?

This includes the AVSA association and all of my online friends. Many thanks to my customers from eBay; you are a great group of people! And a special thanks to Bernadine Poulsen who is the President of the San Fernando Valley African Violet Society and editor of this EBook.

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Nancy Schoepflin

Rainbowviolets

Edited by Bernadine Poulsen

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Introduction

Thank you so much for purchasing our E-Book.

I wrote this EBook because customer's and novice plant lovers send me email with lots of questions about growing African violets.

This EBook contains actual growing techniques along with photos, Ideas, and tips. It does not contain a history of African violets.

I have information to share with African violet hobbyists and growers. For the new grower, I have growing tips and directions. There are clickable links in this book that are totally safe and virus free; they make this type of book real interesting and fun to have.

This EBook is in the form of PDF file, which cannot be edited in any way. It is designed to be opened and or saved on your computer, also you can PRINT IT so that you can refer to it wherever you want, Of course you may still choose to read the EBook on your computer if you prefer, but sometimes it's more satisfying to be able to sit on the couch or chair to relax and read. You can change the text size from the options above in the toolbar. Also, there's a Read Out Loud feature that actually reads to you. If you are new to Adobe Reader just click around on the buttons, explore and learn what it can do.

What is PDF? It means Portable Document Format and it was developed by Adobe systems.

I appreciate all the online and library materials available for us to read. I'm not a professional author. This is the first book I have written. Please excuse any imperfections.

It's all been said before but not by me

As I was contemplating what to write, I thought, what can I say that hasn't already been said? Then I thought, everyone has a different way of doing and saying things, so, that also applies to growing African violets.

You can read 10 different books or articles on any given subject and only have one or two really click with you. That's why I've written this instruction E-book. Maybe someone reading this will understand, and grow better African violets.

There is a ton of information out there waiting to confuse you. I will help you with that. I have learned the hard way through the years about experimenting on my poor plants. You just have to control yourself and stick to the basics. I'm not saying never to experiment that would be wrong. That's a good way to find new growing techniques. Limit your experiment to just a few plants.

The pictures I have provided in this EBook were taken by me.

You want to grow African violets?

I encourage it. Growing African violets is a wonderful hobby. I can be uptight about something, but the minute I step into my growing area, I feel a tremendous calm. I love to smell the plants, the potting soil, and the humidity in the air. Oh yes, I can really smell those things. You will love it too.

The Medical Association encourages people to have a relaxing hobby to soothe our brains. Many people own pets because it's relaxing to have a dog or cat to care for, pet, and love. Caring for African violets can do the same for us. Food for the soul.

My husband and I built a greenhouse in the garage in the summer of 2005. After we moved the plants in, the humidity became so high that when I walked through the door my glasses would fog up. The walls dripped with moisture; there was water and moisture around the base boards. I told my husband, "There must be a leak". No, we discovered it was too much humidity. We finally regulated the humidity with the air conditioner and kept the temperature about 69 degrees. We lost some plants because of too much humidity. There is always something to learn and experience when you grow plants.

We are Commercial members of the AVSA. Maybe you would like to become a member of the African Violet Society of America Inc. and receive four terrific magazines a year.

<http://www.avsa.org/> and <http://www.avsa.org/membership.html> is the Web Site addresses. There is a membership fee but well worth the money. Please go to the web site and explore it. There is a multitude of information.

You may decide to join an African violet club near you or an online African violet forum. Then you can ask questions and chat with others who are interested in African violets.

Note: *I did receive permission to include these links.*

Online African violets and web sites

There are wonderful places to learn and talk with other people with the same interest that you have. If you register and join, you can post and chat with the other members. It's a place where everyone learns from each other. In your browser on your computer, type in "African violet forums" and all the forums should come up for you to explore.

Yahoo has online groups for African violet, wasp blossoms, Streptocarpus, gesneriad and other interesting plant groups.

Here again is the African Violet Society of America web site www.avsa.org/
I really encourage you to join them; there is much to learn.

How much space do you have?

Think about the space you have where your plants will grow well, because soon you will be bitten by the “violet bug” and you won’t be satisfied with a few plants. If you lack space, you might consider growing the miniature varieties. If you want to grow Standard varieties, keep them in 2 ½ or 3-inch pots.

Did you ever think about vertical shelving? I have four shelves going up my one wall. My sprouting leaves are on the very top row, that way they receive the extra warmth and I get some stretching exercise when I have to water them.

I know someone who uses floor to ceiling racks the kind for bathroom. All you need to do is get creative in your thinking.

TIPS:

1. Stair step you’re Violets (place the smaller varieties in the back, up on a pedestal or a riser) you could use larger sized pots to sit smaller mini’s on or you might want to keep all the Mini’s on one side of the shelf and Standards on the other side and stair step them.
2. Unless you are showing your violets, only allow three rows of leaves on your plants (to help save some space). Take off the bottom row every month, plant the leaves if you want to, or give some of them away.
3. Keep standard and large varieties in a 3-inch pot (that’s what I do) Grow same type of varieties together (like Streptocarpus in one area and your African Violets in another area).

Taking care of your violets

How much of my time will they take?

That depends on how many plants you have.

You will fit your plants into your daily routine just fine. It's okay to ignore your house chores sometimes in order to take care of your plants.

1. The **flower blossoms** contain the reproductive parts of a plant.

1a. The two small **yellow sacs** in the center of the blossom are called anthers. They contain a fine powdery pollen. The pistil is the female part of the plant. It's sticky end collects the pollen and sends it down to the ovary.

2. This **bud** will develop and become a blossom.

3. **Bloom stalk** contains peduncle, pedicel, and cluster of blossoms growing on one stem as a unit. It appears from the juncture of the main stem and the petiole.

4. **Petiole stem** that connects leaf blade to the main center stem.

5. **Suckers** in the diagram to the right shows where crowns form between the stems. These are encouraged on trailing (multiple crown) varieties. Remove any suckers on single crowned plant varieties. (Sucker's can be rooted in soil for an additional plantlet)

Here are the parts of an African Violet



6. Developing **seed pod** resulting from fertilization of eggs in an ovary located at the base of the pistil.

7. **Spent** blossom this is an old flower that has wilted.

I'm writing about the most common diseases and pest at this time.

It's very important to really look at your plants at least every Month for any problems such as:

Fungal Diseases

Fungus starts as a minute spores which germinate and produce branching threads called *hyphae*.

- **Bacterial Diseases** are one celled organisms that enter a plant through a wound on a leaf or stem. This bacteria multiplies very fast and may show signs such as brown or black holes.

Control: Sterilize tools, pots with bleach or physan, and wash your hands often when working with your violets.

- **Botrytis** is a grey mold that is a secondary infection that attacks plants that are already infected.

Control/Prevention: You can't save a plant with this if the plant is badly infected. Sterilize containers, pots, trays and wash your hands completely. To prevent this from happening keep a fan going for good circulation. Try to keep humidity down to at least 60% if you can. Spray with Neem Oil every two weeks for control.

- **Crown rot** happens when your plants soil is to wet, leaves become mushy around the bottom, the roots and the main stem rot and plant will literally fall off at the soil line if not caught in time.

Prevention: Maybe your plant needs repotting. If the plant has a mass of roots and old soil that is packed around the roots, there probably is not sufficient air circulation around the root ball. The roots will absorb too much moisture and get mushy. If you wick water, make sure you have sufficient perlite mixed into your soil-less mix for aeration. If you are having problems, try letting your plants soil dry out a little before you water again. If you pick up your plant and it starts to feel lighter in weight then give it a little liquid but don't soak it.

Suggestion: If your plant starts to fall loose in the pot, leaves become dull and droop over sides, the bottom row looks mushy and the pot feels heavy, it has a crown rot. Cut the plant off at the soil line, and remove all the brown rotted plant material. You will probably have to take some leaves off too. Then re root the plant by planting the bare stem and what's left of the plant into moist (not soaking wet) soil-less soil with perlite added. Place newly planted plant into a zip lock bag blow your breath into the bag so plant receives carbon dioxide. It will take about four weeks before new roots will grow. Don't let moisture build up to much in the bag. Leave it open a little bit, check weekly to make sure it's not drying out.

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- **Powdery mildew** or fungal infection (white powdery substance on ends of leaves and or flowers)

Control: Make sure there is good air circulation by adding a fan the room. Take off all flowers on infected plants. Mist plants with Neem Oil every seven days, or spray with a fungicide. Make sure you turn lights off until plants are dry or leaves will spot. If you use Neem oil, spray the soil too and the main stem. This problem is mainly caused by keeping your plants to wet and having plants to close together. When I wick watered my plants I had problems with powdery mildew. You have to be more careful and do the above. The Neem Oil repeals the powdery mildew.

- **Pythium** is an infection in the soil that cause your plant's centers to shrink and or edges turn brown. I have had this one time and it looks like something was eating the center out.

Control: It's a cultural imbalance problem. Something is not right with your soil or you're keeping your plant to wet.

- **White mold** on top of your soil is nothing to be concerned about; you're keeping the soil to wet, if you don't like there you can scrape it off.

Insect Pests

There are microscopic insects in our plant soil. Some are good for our plants. The following insects are harmful and should be taken care of as soon as you notice them.

- **Gnats** are those pesky black little flies that fly around our plants.
Control: There are products you can purchase to drench the soil but they don't bother the plants much if kept at a minimum.
You can purchase yellow sticky cards to set on the plant stand to catch those pesty flies. You could also give your plants a drench. Repot often.
- **Foliar mealy bugs** show up as white patches on the leaves and stems, these insects are wingless, leaves will turn yellow and fall off eventually if not treated.

Control/Elimination: There are sprays and drenches for this if you have just a small infestation. Be very careful if you buy violets from a hardware store or market. Check them over very well for pests. Pull the plant out of the pot and check to see if there are any white mealies or fungus on the sides of the soil.

- **Mites** are very tiny critters that are of the spider family and can be found on violets. These are not considered insects. They have eight legs. You need a magnifying glass to see them. They damage the center of your plant. It would appear distorted; leaves are stunted, dull, rusty, more hairy, hard and shiny.
Control: If plants are badly infested, it's best to throw out the plants and sterilize everything and start over. There are sprays you can purchase online but you have to be very, very careful when using chemicals. Some culture problems can also give some of the same symptoms. Too much fertilizer or light can also cause your plant you have tight-growing centers. A sudden change in your watering habits may produce small suckers in the center with tiny leaves.

- **Soil mealy bugs** are small white critters that look like rice that are wingless (not to be mistaken for that white powdery mildew sometimes found between pot and soil and/or on and around sides and top of soil). They leave behind a white waxy film, looks like oil on top of water. If you wick water, you can see them floating on the top of the water (**woops**, not perlite, they do wiggle if you watch closely). They will be found on the bottom of the pot and tray container if you don't wick water.

Control: There are drenches like Malathion or Marathon a systemic, online but marathon is expensive. If you have a bad infestation and you don't want to throw your violets out, it's best to just decapitate your violets. Take off all leaves except for two rows, then cut the main stem at the soil line to about 1 ½ inches long. Scrape the stem and rinse it well in warm water. Plant this in moist soil in a 2 inch pot. Then place it in a zip lock bag in a good light until its well rooted (about one and a half months). Be neat when doing this; don't lay any infected material on the counter where you are working. Throw all old soil and pots away tied up in a plastic bag and straight into the trash, then go take a shower **yuk!**

Check your plants every month for several months, in case the bugs come back, but they should be okay.

- **Springtails** (also called soil lice) are light-colored tiny pests that crawl around the bottom of our plants in saucers or wick containers and you can even find them crawling on your leaves or trays (an occasional outbreak). They don't cause damage, but they are a nuisance, ignore them. Sometimes these are mistaken for Mites.
- **Thrips** love flowers. If you remove all the flowers, they might eat the new growth. If you have them, you will notice spilt pollen that resembles sprinkled powder on the flower petals.
Control: Neem oil sprayed every week for a month. Then use it every two weeks after that for control. Thrips are everywhere outside, they are on all flowers we have outside and we can bring them into our plants on our clothes or hair. So shower after you have been working in the yard before handling your plants.

Again I'm not going into a lot of different pests and diseases at this time. Unless your plants are outside or you leave the doors and windows open, your plants shouldn't be subjected to aphids, white flies and other pests.

Items you will need

Containers and pots: Pots, planters, and 3 oz. Solo bathroom cups, self watering pots (for wick watering). Containers to store your utensils in, your choice.

Pot sizes:

Miniature varieties use 2 inch, semi miniatures 2 ½ inch pot size.

Standard and large violets use 3 and 4 inch pots.

These are the sizes I prefer to use for. Your plant will bloom better if you don't plant it in a pot that's too large, the exception is if you're showing your violets. See diagram 2, 3, and 4

Soil Free Materials: Brown Canadian peat moss, perlite, vermiculite (fine, medium, or extra course or combined) Never, ever, reuse old soil. You can purchase the Brown peat moss and mix all the ingredients yourself, equal parts; it makes really light and fluffy soil less mix. I use Sunshine mix with the Bactericide in it; you can find it at some Nurseries. I buy mine in Camarillo at American Horticultural Supply, Inc. You can buy AV mix already mixed or mix ingredients yourself.

Other Ingredients: Dolomite lime, horticulture charcoal, (that's all you really need) but you can add other ingredients if you wish to, but its not really necessary. Some people add Bone Meal, worm castings, and other things.

Fertilizer: Try two or three different kinds (formulas). It's best **not** to use fertilizer with Urea in it but if you do use it for short periods of time only use 1/8 tsp. per gallon, I have used it at this strength for a month at a time with no problems. Look on the label, you will see some number's that are grouped like: 20-20-20, 12-36-14 etc., the first number is the Nitrogen makes nice green foliage and pretty blossoms, the second number is the phosphorus stimulates root growth, the third number is the potassium imparts vigor and resistance to disease. Normal use is ¼ to ½ tsp per gallon every time you water. It's a good idea to rotate different balances every month so your violets get all the nutrients they need. Make sure you water with plain water once or twice a month to rinse out the old fertilizer salts, If you don't the new growth can become tight and you will see orange crusty particles in the center of your plant.

A Small Fan: For air circulation (not blowing directly on your plants) helps keep away powdery mildew on leaves. This is a must.

A Pencil: I like to use a pencil when I'm planting up plantlets. I use it to make a whole where I place a small plantlet.

Tweezers: To pluck out small suckers that appear at the base of your plant or towards the top. They will grow right above the stems and the main plant stem.

A Sharp knife: For cutting off leaves and cutting a nice slanted cut when you're putting down leaves.

Small scissors: I use scissors quite often and is a must for me.

A Small spoon: (plastic or metal) for planting, to scoop clean fresh soil into your pot.

Sterilizing solution: Of some kind (bleach, physan) to sterilize tools, trays etc. First I wash everything in soapy water. Soak pots, tools, containers, and trays in a solution of about ¼ cup to a gallon. If I have a lot to soak, I fill my washing machine up with hot water and mix in two cups of bleach, then I put in all my pots, containers, trays, matting etc. and let soak for one hour.

Container or saucer: To set your plant in to catch the run off water when you water. At least one inch deep.

Zip lock bags: Large and small (in case your plant needs extra humidity).

Measuring spoons: To measure fertilizer, etc.

Measuring cups: To measure bleach, etc.

Pesticides: Neem Oil 11 by Green Light, I use it and I recommend it. It has Pyrethrins in it and it will kill Mites, Gnats, Aphids, and other pests, just mist your plants with it every two weeks. It also kills soil lice (commonly called springtails) Spray it on the soil, base of the plant and let it run out the bottom of the pot to kill those pesty little buggers. Plain Neem Oil is wonderful also to spray on your plants every month. If you need to bring out some big guns because you have a bad infestation of mites or Thrips then I recommend Avid or Pylon, vendors on AVSA web site online. Use one-fourth teaspoon per Gallon of warm water but go by the directions. I use it occasionally as a precaution. Wearing protective gear "a must" some online vendor's sell small portions of these products, some are listed on the AVSA web site.

Thermometer: You'll need a thermometer so you can keep the temperature around your plants between 65 and 80 degrees is best. Any hardware store will have this. You can buy them with the thermometer and a humidity gauge are together which is really convenient.

Shelving and plant stands: Home Depot or Lowe's carries a nice stand by Rubbermaid, I use the stainless steel stands. They are available in three shelf widths: 16 in., 18 in., and 24 in. deep by 48 in. long (your choice). Wheels are available for the stands which make it easy to maneuver them. If your stand will be in the living room or your bedroom you will want something smaller. Match it up with the length of your light fixture. Shop lights are available in several sizes. Maybe you already have a shelf to fix up and use. It could be one or two shelves. It can be wood or metal.

Artificial lighting: If you would like to grow your plants under lights here are some suggestions:

Decide where your plant stand will be placed, such as; dinning room, living room, family room, kitchen, bedroom or basement. Remember, the lights would be on in the day if your set up is in bedroom, and the temperature should be at least 69 degrees F in the basement. The lights will warm up the room.

Go to a hardware store of your choice and buy the fluorescent shop light fixture and bulbs, take measurements before you go shopping. We use the fixtures that are 48 inches long with two 40-watt bulbs in each fixture, one warm and one cool. They do put out a heat. Run your lights at night in the summer time, it will help. Your lights need to be 6 to 8 inches above Miniature varieties and

About eight to 16 inches for standard and large varieties (adjust according to plant needs). Lights should be on from 10 to 12 hours a day to produce flowers.



This is one of my racks (stainless steel). It has wheels so I can move it around. Put plastic on top of the shelf to protect the light fixtures underneath. It will keep it cleaner; it doesn't get hot enough to melt the plastic. I purchase this shelves at Lowe's.

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Repotting African violets

Cleaning up your violets:

If your violet looks a little sad or droopy do this...

For you to see better; I have already taken plant out of pot for this picture.

Take two rows of leaves off the bottom of one of your plants by gently pulling the leaf to one side or the other until the leaf pops off and either plant them, give them to someone or throw them away. You can leave as little as three or four leaves on the plant without damage to the plant. **See diagram 1**



Diagram 1

Squeeze the sides of the pot to loosen the roots from the sides and gently pull your plant out of the pot **diagram 2**. Take a sharp knife and slice 1 ½ inches off the bottom of the root ball **diagram 3**. This won't hurt your plant, it will thank you later. Slice away about ½ inch of soil around the sides of your plant, then gently scrape the main stem to clean off all the old dead brown plant material. This is where new little roots will grow **diagram 4**. Now, get a clean pot - 2 inch for minis, 2 ½ inch for Semi minis, and 3 to 4 inch for Standards.



Diagram 2



Diagram 3



Diagram 4

Place a small amount of soil in the bottom of a clean, sterilized pot. Put enough soil in the bottom so that when you set your plant in, the bottom row of leaves will line up with the top edge of the pot.

Now, cover the newly scraped stem with fresh soil, new roots will grow within four weeks or so.

See diagram 5



Diagram 5

Spoon in soil around your plant. Gently firm the soil down as you add more soil until you get to the top of the pot, don't pack it down real hard though.

Some people think you shouldn't firm the soil around the newly planted plant, but from my experience the plant may become loose in the soil if you don't.

The last row of leaves should be even with the edge of the pot. **See diagram 6**

Plant should not be loose.



Diagram 6

Long neck

If your plant has a very, very long neck, you need to slice off the entire root ball and plant the scraped stem in the soil. Leave a stem that's about 1 to 2 inches long and firm it in the soil. Moisten the soil slightly (not soaking wet). Place pot and all into a zip lock bag, zip it up and leave it for a month. Give it good light. Occasionally open bag and blow your breath in it to give it some oxygen and fresh air, don't let too much moisture build up, then zip it back up again. After a month, begin to harden it off by opening the bag a little more each week, but be sure you don't let it dry out totally. Give it little drinks, until you can take your newly rooted little plant out of the bag for good. **See diagram 7**



Diagram 7

Separating multiple crown plants Trailing varieties

For the beginner, separating multiple crowned plant varieties (trailing types) is always challenging. I have provided detailed instructions and photos to help you.

The example below in **diagram 1** is a miniature trailer.



Diagram 1



Diagram 2

This is going to be so much fun and exciting for you to learn. As you can see this plant has many crowns to be planted into individual pots.

Let's get started....

I have cut a section from the plant above, see **diagram 3** you can see two crowns, to help you identify them, you can see day light between the two. This is where you will make cuts to separate crowns, make cuts at the green lines in **diagram 3**. Start your newly planted crown as a single plant, as it grows it will automatically develop multiple crowns.

Make cuts with a sharp knife leaving at least six to eight leaves, this will give you a substantial amount to work with, see **diagram 4** after separating crown remove a row of leaves from bottom, leaving four.

You will need $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch stem to plant in the soil, (look back on Page 18, for scraping neck to refresh your memory)

TIP: To cause your plant to grow more crowns, after plant is older, pinch out some smaller crowns, this will force new growth on either side.



Diagram 3



Diagram 4

Here is the clean crown ready to be planted.

Fill a 2 inch pot with moist soil, you can also use a 1 ¼ thumb pot for tiny mini's.

Insert a pencil (to make hole) into the center approx. one inch deep **see diagram 5**



Diagram 5

Place crown in hole, it will rest exactly where it needs to sit **diagram 6** add more soil to fill in if needed, firm the soil slightly, moisten (not soaking wet), then label this new plant, place pot into a zip lock bag, place in good light (at least eight hours a day) new roots and growth will appear in about a month, don't let too much moisture build up on sides of the bag. Gradually open bag and eventually take out plant and place on shelf with your other violets.

Plants can remain in pots for two months (longer for smaller miniature varieties) for larger varieties plant into a 2 ½ inch and gradually repot into a 3 inch.

See diagram 7

Congratulations! You're finished.



Diagram 6



Diagram 7

Propagating African Violets

Grow more plantlets

You will want to grow new plants; it's so exciting to see a new plantlet coming up.

What is a plantlet?

If you place a leaf with a 1 inch approx. stem into a soil- less mix (if properly cared for) the results will be a cluster or grouping of tiny baby plantlets. If grown long enough you will have from one to eight or more new plants to plant in individual pots.

Here is a list of supplies you will need and the instructions on how to “put down a leaf” (an old term) plant a leaf.

- Pots (2 inch solo cup or regular pot, 3 inch pot for huge leaves).
- Small clear plastic hinged container if you prefer.
- Soil less mix ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown peat moss, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup perlite, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vermiculite) or pre packaged mix.
- Plain Luke warm water (no fertilizer yet).
- Label (plastic plant label and marking pen to write plant variety name) you could use a colored label. and color code your violets. For instance if your violet is pink, use a pink colored label.
- Sharp knife to cut off leaf and to make a nice slant cut, front of leaf as in the picture below. See diagram 1



Diagram 1

Write the variety name on your pot or plastic label using a sticky address label or masking tape, **fill your pot** with soil-less mix not quite to the top and press down the mix very gently, **cut off** a leaf from a plant you want to reproduce, recut it so the cut is on a slight slant about 1 ½ inches long, **hold the leaf** and push it into the soil until at least a good ½ to 1 inch is under the soil. The leaf can be leaning back wards or it can rest on the edge of the pot. Be sure it's not sticking straight up and down in the soil, you don't want the Mother leaf to over shadow the babies when they come up. Yes, the leaf you just planted is called the Mother leaf. **Water** the soil all around your leaf until soaking wet. If you put this leaf in a zip lock bag you may place it under the lights. **If left uncovered**, you will need to water the leaves every day and keep them wet for two weeks (this is a crucial time). **Don't** let your leaves ever dry out totally. After two weeks keep the leaves moist not soaking wet. This is the method I presently use and I have great success. See Diagram 2,3,4 on next page.



Newly planted leaf
diagram 2



Tiny plantlet appears diagram 3



Plantlets ready to plant diagram 4

Don't use any fertilizer yet, Wait about two weeks before using any fertilizer. Start with 1/8 tsp. per gallon of water, then gradually as the small plantlets get larger, feed them ¼ to ½ tsp. per gallon of water. Always water with plain water once a month to rinse out old fertilizer salts. This is very important when growing new plantlets because they can get burned easily from too much fertilizer at this stage.

For beginner's it's a good idea to put your pot with the leaf in a zip lock bag for four weeks to prevent it from drying out, leave the bag open a little but watch so soil doesn't dry out, keep the soil moist, moisture will collect in the bag and that's okay as long as it's not dripping with moisture. Give it good light (not direct sun). A window is fine for light. You should see little green plantlets within six weeks. Some varieties sprout faster than other's. On occasion I have even gotten a flower stem before the baby leaf.

Remember: Don't keep the soil soaking wet after two weeks or leaf might rot.

It may take from three to four months for plantlets to become big enough for you to handle, about 2 inches tall. Then you'll need to separate them and plant them into their own 2-inch pots.

Preparing and planting new starter plants

First you'll need to prepare the pots for new plantlets, of course at this point you won't know exactly how many to prepare so fill two or three to begin with, prepare labels either a plastic type or write the variety name on the pot making sure the name won't wear off; use a plain No. 2 pencil. You can also use a pencil to make hole in soil. See diagram 5.

Diagram 6 is called a leaf pot or cluster of new plantlets.



Diagram 5



Diagram 6

The little plantlets below have been separated from the mother leaf by gently pulling them apart, (plantlets will separate easier if soil is on the dryer side before proceeding) then remove cluster from pot, look at the cluster and spot plantlets with at least three or four leaves along with a good developed crown as in **diagram 7** below. Take off excess soil and some of the roots if they are long, lots of roots not needed at this time.

Helpful hint: As you are looking for single crowned plantlets, look for the single main stem as a guide, by looking through the cluster mass, use a blunt instrument to place in between the stems to separate them.

Place a plantlet into the hole of a prepared pot and fill in around with additional soil, press soil around plantlet **slightly** to keep it from becoming loose in the pot as it grows.

Refer back to page 24 if you need to.

Here is your newly planted starter in diagram 8.



Diagram 8



Diagram 7

Plant types

These are types of African violets recognized by the AVSA if you are going to show your violets:

Miniatures – Single crowned plant with small leaves. Plant cannot measure over 6 inch in diameter. There are also micro miniatures that grow under 5 inches but there is no official recognized category for them yet.

Semi-miniatures – Single crowned plant with small leaves that cannot measure over 8 inches in diameter.

Standards – Single crowned plant with larger leaves that measure 8 inches or over in diameter.

Large – Single crowned plant with very large leaves that measure over 16 inches or over sometimes. These large violets are still considered standard types. The hybridizer refers to them as standards or large in his/her description to differentiate their size.

Trailers – This is a plant with multiple crowns that grow in different directions. Not to be confused with sucker's that grow from the stems of our plants sometimes. Trailers are classified as Miniatures, semi-miniatures, or standards. Two types; trailers that climb over the sides of the pot, and those with shorter stems that grow in a bush style. There are also some semi-trailing violets. There are no size restrictions on these plants.

Leaf and edge types

These are leaf types recognized by the African violet Society of America (AVSA)



1. **Bustled** - A leaf that is folded under at the base underside. Wasp varieties have these types of leaves. Only found on wasp varieties.
2. **Girl** - Scalloped heart shaped edge with a lighter colored area at the base of the leaf.
3. **Holly** - Curled under at intervals on leaf, looks like a holly leaf.
4. **Longifolia** - This is a leaf that is longer in length sometimes called a strap leaf.
5. **Plain or Boy** - A plain smooth leaf.
6. **Pointed** - A little shorter than the Longifolia

Please continue to the following page for more leaf types.

These are leaf types recognized by the African violet Society of America (AVSA)



- 7. **Quilted** - Raised area between leaf veins.
- 8. **Serrated** - Edges are saw toothed like.
- 9. **Spooned** - This type of leaf is in the shape of a spoon cupped up.
- 10. **Supreme** - A very large leaf that's thick and hairy. Outstanding features.
- 11. **Variegated** - Leaf that has white, pink or beige coloration.
Supreme variegation - with most of the leaf is light.
Tommy Lou Variegation - which is white on the edges only?
Crown variegation - which is lighter only in the center crown area.
- 12. **Wavy** - This type of leaf has a curly or wavy ruffled edge.

Variegated leaf types

These leaf types are recognized by the AVSA

Variegated types:

1. Crowned variegation means the newest growth will have the lightest color variegation, as the older leaves grow out the leaves become greener.
2. Some leaves will have a great amount of variegation on the edges with green in the center area.
3. Variegation comes in several colors and variations; pink, light pink, dark beige, light beige, gold or bronze, white, and cream. I have a new wasp variety where the variegation is glittery.
4. Tommy Lou variegation is only on the outer edges of the leaves.
5. Mosaic variegation is rarer than any other kind. It looks speckled.
6. Another variation of Mosaic variegation.
7. Green and white variegation, some look marbled.
8. This is a large, supreme leaf with Tommy Lou variegation. This leaf type is very thick and more hairy sometimes.



The lightness and amount of any variegation depends on many things.

It can be seasonal changes, cultural (basic care of your violets), temperature, humidity, or how much bright light your plant receives or doesn't receive. Sometimes variegation can totally disappear because of warmer temperatures.

Blossom types

These blossom types are recognized by the AVSA



Single blossom type



Semidouble blossom type



Double blossom type



Pansy blossom type



Chimera flower - Pinwheel



Chimera with fantasy – frilled edge



Star blossom types



Star with thumb prints



Geneva edge blossom type
More on next page



Wasp blossoms



Bell shape is a closed type blossoms



Fantasy varieties have speckles on the flowers in colors of pink, purple, bottom is multicolored blossom

Never do's

Never let your violet sit in its run off water - It will rot.

Never save or reuse old soil.

Never repot a plant into a dirty pot.

Never sit your violet in the sun.

Never take your violets outside.

Never let your plant go bone dry.

Never go two months without leaching (rinsing out old fertilizer salts with plain warm water) from soil.

Never stop enjoying your plants!!

Questions and answers

What causes the leaves on my plant to become yellow?

- Insufficient amounts of nitrogen.
- Soil ph imbalance.
- soil mealy bugs (white rice shaped pests on roots and stem and bottom pot and saucers)
- Possible old leaves around the bottom edge need to come off.

Why do my leaves have ugly veins showing through?

- Check nitrogen levels of fertilizer – Plant needs more nitrogen possibly and more consistent moisture.
- Culture, soil not having proper ingredients.



What is this orange crusty stuff on the leaves and in the crown of my plant?

- Your fertilizer might have too much UREA nitrogen in it or your using too much fertilizer, try top water with plain water (once a month to flush out old fertilizer salts) this should take care of the problem.

Why isn't my plant flowering?

- Your plants may need more fertilizer, light, or repotting, this usually encourages more blooms.
- Note: Some varieties only bloom once a year.

Why does my plant have long stems?

- Your plant is not receiving enough light, try moving your plant to a lighter location, or maybe try artificial lighting leaving lights on 10 to 12 hours a day.

Why does my plant have tight centers?

- Several things could be wrong, too much fertilizer, plants are too close to the lights, mites, improper growing conditions and or growing media you're using. Also, plant might need repotting in a bigger pot if it's a starter plant.

Why did the variegation disappear from my plant?

- Possibly the variegation disappeared because your temperature is too warm for the plant right now. Or possibly you changed something about the culture of your plant, maybe it's not getting enough light. Place them in the center of your lights or a brighter window.

Can I grow my violets in an aquarium?

- Yes, African violets grow well in a terrarium atmosphere especially the small miniature and trailing varieties.

Sometimes nature gives us some interesting things



Winnie the Pooh leaf pot



Nancy's Ribbon Candy Leaf Pot

We want to thank you again for your interest in our E-book

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Pictures for your pleasure

All pictures were taken by Nancy Schoepflin of own plants



Aggie Trail



Alchemy Gold



Baby Moonbeam



Bad Girl



Black Congo



Blueberries N Cream



Blue Boy



Buckeye Disco Dancer



Bud's Irish Eyes



Bud's Royalty



Cathy's Fireworks



Chantaspring



Coral Spider



Long Legs



Ozio



Raspberry Sizzle



Rebels Night Breezes



Rob's Dust Storm



Rob's Snow Blossom



Rob's Tweety Bird



Royal Wasp



Sora Christine



Winnie The Pooh



Yesterday's Child

Hope you enjoyed this book thank you again!!

Keep your eyes out for the next EBook

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We want to thank you again for your interest in our E-book

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www.avsa.org/

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The African violet Society of American Hand Book

Please email us with any comments or questions you might have about this E-Book.

Other E-Books Nancy and Larry Schoepflin wrote:

[The Ultimate Guide to Watering African Violets](#) and [Wrapping and Packing Plants for Shipping](#)

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Nancy Schoepflin

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