

## **Episcias** *by Bobbi Johannsen*

**episcia** *noun* any plant of the genus *Episcia*; usually creeping and stoloniferous and of cascading habit; grown for their colorful foliage and flowers

Kingdom: [Plantae](#)  
Division: [Magnoliophyta](#)  
Class: [Magnoliopsida](#)  
Order: [Lamiales](#)  
Family: [Gesneriaceae](#)  
Genus: ***Episcia***

Also known as Flame violets, many species of episcia originated from Central America, the Caribbean and South America. Episcias are part of the Gesneriad family, as are African violets. Many of the “other Gesneriads” have tubers, rhizomes or bulbs, but episcias are fibrous rooted like African violets, and enjoy much the same culture.

I believe they are easier to grow than violets, as they can tolerate more light than violets and can handle more temperature variations than African violets. You do not need to turn them as often as violets to maintain symmetry, but they are heavy feeders and really like a monthly treat of fish emulsion (1 Tbsp. per gallon). They make handsome hanging baskets on the patio during the summer, but do not like temps below 50 degrees, and must be brought in for the winter, even here in Florida! Episcias require warmth and humidity to do well. They do not tolerate cool temperatures or dry conditions, and must be kept moist. They will let you know that they do not have enough water by drying up on the edges. If the soil seems moist enough, then the air may be too dry. Covering with a shower cap or dry cleaner bag may give them the humidity they crave!

Episcias propagate very easily. Violets often create “suckers” which are complete plantlets growing off the main stem. Episcias do the same thing, but create STOLONS, which are like suckers, but on a long stem. This allows them to spread into a dense ground cover in the wild, and allows us to propagate them more easily in captivity, for each stolon can be planted to become its own, separate plant.

There are many different varieties. Some are species, which means they are the wild episcias. Most are hybrids, which have been created from crossing wild species.

### **Grooming**

Many have trouble knowing what to do with the miles of stolons coming off the main plant. For the health of the Mama plant, try to keep SOME of them pinched off. This will allow more energy for the main plant to thrive. It can be hard to stay on top of them, but this actually makes the other leaves on Mama bigger. I grew one with NO stolons... would not allow the plant to have any of them, and the leaves on the Mama were HUGE!!!! Pinching them off will allow you to create MANY baby plants to share with your friends. And, as in violets, if the foliage is not allowed to go wild, the plant will try to reproduce in another way...creating blooms!!!!

If you are in a hurry to fill a hanging basket, you can pull the still attached stolons back onto the top of the soil and anchor it. They will root faster and soon you will have your very own ground cover in that basket!

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