

# INTRODUCTION TO TRAILERS

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(courtesy of AVSA.org -- <https://africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org/learn/violets-101/introduction-to-trailers/>)

Trailers are great fun to grow, and they do just as well in natural light as under fluorescent light. Soil and fertilizer requirements are the same as other African violets. A light, porous soil in a shallow, wider pot is best. Look for fertilizers which are low urea and use no more than ¼ teaspoon per gallon of water, less if wick watering.

Trailing violets originated in the species. There are several varieties that trail naturally. Trailing is an inbred trait and should not be confused with violets that genetically should have only one crown but have been allowed to sucker. True trailers often have more space between leaves on the main stem. This space allows them to have multiple crowns that are not too tightly packed.

Trailers may be classified as micro-miniature, miniature, semi-miniature or standard according to the size of the individual leaves. There is no limit to pot size or the overall growth of a mature trailer, regardless of its leaf classification. They are floriferous and come in most of the flower types/colors of other African violets.

Trailers have varied growing habits. Some trailers have short internodes (distance between successive leaves on the stem) which produces clumping or upright growth habits. Others have long internodes and stems are more vining, with a sprawling growth habit.

In order for a trailer to be a good show plant, it must be a single plant with no less than three crowns. Trailers are judged on form, not symmetry and the goal is to achieve a pleasing form. Try to anticipate the ultimate form of the plant and groom towards it. Blooms should be spaced evenly around the plant from all main crowns in accordance to the variety. All the crowns should be uniform in size and shape. One crown should not have leaves noticeably different in size than the other crowns. The plant should be well groomed and clean without yellow, marred leaves or faded blooms.

Trailers may be grown in different ways.

One method keeps a trailing violet in a pot that is approximately one-third the overall diameter of the plant. This allows the plant to grow out over the sides of the pot. Some crowns are pinched out to encourage secondary growth between leaves so a pretty form develops. In this method, the main stems of the trailing growth are not allowed to come in contact with the potting mix.

A second approach called the Japanese method, is to place the plant into a broad shallow pot or tray. As the stems elongate, they are positioned/pinned to the soil. This results in a mound that extends just to the edge of the pot. Plants grown using the Japanese method can grow quite large.

No matter which method is used, the best way to produce blooms is to keep the plant pot-bound, well-fed and exposed to plenty of light.

Grooming trailers is a necessity. Leaves on every crown should be the same size according to their stage of growth. But trailers can develop either stunted or oversized leaves that need removal from the stem of a crown. Marred, yellowing or old limp leaves must be removed. You may groom with a pair of tweezers, or simply cut or pinch with your fingers.

An important grooming technique is the removal of leaves to expose center stems. This results in the growth of dormant crowns. Removal of leaves covering other crowns allows all crowns to grow more evenly. Cutting off crowns with tight growth and/or thinning too many clustered crowns improves the trailer's overall form. Another technique is gently moving, staking or pinning stems to rearrange and train into balance the placement of crowns within the form.

What can be done with a plant that has minimal branching or one dominate leader? First, thin the leaves on the dominate crown. Then pinch the very center growth and give the stem lots of light to encourage branching.

Above all, enjoy your trailer!