

AFRICAN VIOLET



The African violet (*Saintpaulia ionantha*) is easily grown in the home environment and can flower profusely throughout most of the year. Flowers are single, double, or semi-double in shades of pink, lavender, purple or white. Foliage may be smooth or velvety, scalloped or wavy, lance or heart-shaped, green or variegated.

Light is the most important factor influencing flower production. Windows facing north and east usually provide the best light conditions. Plants grown in a south or west exposure may need shading against strong sun rays. Growing under artificial light can be successful. With a suitable reflector, two 40-watt daylight or cool white

fluorescent tubes will give enough light. Provide light for 14-18 hours a day with the plants 12" below the light.

African violets can be grown at 60°F night temperature and day temperatures 10° to 15°F higher. Plants become brittle, stunted, discolored, and curl in cool temperatures, and need protection from cold window sills. Most homes are too dry for African violets. Locate plants on trays that are filled with gravel. Keeping the gravel moist will raise the humidity around the plants.

Use a commercial potting mix to grow African Violets. When using soil-less mixes, it is important to use complete fertilizers containing minor elements. For continuous flowering and vigorous growth, fertilize every 3-5 weeks with a complete soluble fertilizer. Dilute according to the manufacturer's directions.

The African violet should be watered when the soil is dry to touch but before it is wilted or before the soil is hard. Never plant in containers without drainage holes. Plants may be watered from the bottom or the top. When watering from the bottom, fertilizer salts accumulate on the soil surface. Watering every third time from the top will reduce this. Use water warmed to room temperature. Cold water on the foliage will form yellow and brown spots and rings.

African violets can be troubled by aphids, mealybugs, cyclamen mites, thrips, and powdery mildew. Isolate new plants for 6 weeks. Any trouble will show up with that time.

African violets may be propagated by leaf cuttings. Select a mature leaf and remove it from the crown of the plant. Cut off all but 1-inch of the leaf stalk (petiole.) Insert the petiole into sand, vermiculate, perlite or a combination of sand and peat moss. Keep moist by covering with a glass jar or clear plastic bag. New plants will form at the base of the petiole in a few weeks. After 3 to 4 new small leaves have emerged, they are ready to be repotted.



Prepared by Kathleen M. Carroll

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may be cut out to allow better light penetration.

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