



Quick Tips for **Growing African Violets**

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African Violets can provide beauty and enjoyment to your indoor gardening. The following information will provide a few tips to help you get off to a good start with raising them successfully.

Temperature and Light

African violets adjust well to the warm temperatures and dry air of homes. Windows facing north or east provide favorable light conditions and are preferable to those exposed to midday and afternoon sunshine during summer. The sunnier, warmer windows are better in the winter. In greenhouses, the glass is kept shaded even in the winter. The best temperature for African violets is about 60° F at night and up to 80° to 85° F during the day. The plants become stunted at cool temperatures and are slow to recover even when put into a warm place. In hot weather (over 85° F), plants are especially susceptible to rot.

Watering & Fertilizing

The soil must be kept moist at all times, but it is good to keep the foliage dry. Drops of water on the leaves cause disfiguring light-colored spots or rings. The easiest way to water is to use a wick extending through the drainage hole in the bottom of their growing container down into a saucer of water. Mix a soluble liquid feed African Violet fertilizer product into the water at the label rate.



Potting

Most violets are now grown in a pasteurized soilless mix. A good soilless mix is made up of 3 parts sphagnum peat moss, 2 parts vermiculite, and 1 part perlite, with some lime added to balance the acidity of the peat moss. Such a soil mix is very porous.

When potting African violets, take care to set the plant so that the bottom set of leaves is just above the surface and the soil is firmly pressed around it. Emphasis should be on good soil drainage because water standing on the surface may cause decay at the bottom set of leaves or at the bases of the leaf stalks. A saturated soil mix also leads to poor top growth and the roots may rot.

Repot violets about once a year, or when the leafless portion at the bottom of the stem is about 1 to 1 1/2 inches long. Gently remove the plant from the pot with a paring knife. Remove all of the lateral bottom leaves, leaving only the center set of leaves. Trim off one or two rows of leaves, leaving a wheel of leaves around the top few leaves. With the paring knife, scrape the neck (lower part of the main stem) as you would a carrot until all the brown plant material is removed and the neck is firm and green. Break or cut off about 1/4 of an inch of the root. Have a clean pot ready to pot up the pruned violet. Gently firm in new soil around the plant and water well. The pot should be 1/3 the diameter of the plant; a 4-inch pot is usually adequate.

Propagation (Making More Plants!)

The usual method of propagation is by leaf cuttings. Cut off mature leaves with about an inch of their stalks. Firmly plant the stalk into potting mix or perlite with the leaf blade exposed. Then, water the mix enough to make it evenly moist. Cover the container with a plastic bag or some other clear plastic. In a few weeks young plants will form at the bases of the stalks. After these have formed two or three small leaves, they are ready to be potted.

