

THE ROSETTE

Albuquerque African Violet Club (AAVC)

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News Bits:

- Garden Center Fund Raiser:
Name a Brick for \$125 and
become part of the Los Altos
Garden - Contact Laurie
Rivera at (505 296-6020 or
abqgardenctr@swcp.com
- Next AAVC ZOOM call:
September 8, 2020, 1:00pm



Sharon and JoEllen at the August 1st AAVC Sale (Photo: Shirley Tetreault)

Sharon's Notes:

Hello Violeteers!

I want to extend a big welcome to our two newest members!
Welcome to Renee Bernard who joined us in March! She recently

AV Q&A's

We often struggle with some basic questions with our African Violets. Some of the issues relate to the following: containers, fertilizer, temperature, watering and light. However, one of the most puzzling for most is Soil. So I went to our AAVC Member and Master Gardener, Carl Soderberg, to ask "What is the best soil mix for African Violets"? After some thought Carl related that he has tried several different mixes over the years but recently he has gone back to the tried and tested recipe that works well for both top and bottom watering:

- 2 parts sphagnum peat moss;
- 1 part vermiculite;
- 1 part perlite;
- small amount of charcoal;
- 1 tsp, dolomite.

A Big "Thank you" to Carl for the information!

How can I prevent crooked growth? Even when I turn my plants sometimes a leaf will grow crooked.

In that case, while the plant is dry, gently pull the leaf to the desired position, and hold it in place with a toothpick or small plastic straw. In a short time the leaf will be trained to grow in the proper position.

"1001 African Violet Questions Answered by 12 Experts"

moved back to New Mexico from Ohio where she was very active in the violet clubs there. She's also a judge and will be able to help us out at our shows! **Yay!**

And welcome to Anne May who joined us last month! She is a violet lover who lives in Santa Fe and joined us when she visited with us at our sale.

I hope everyone is staying home and staying well. I can say that I sure am tired of the worry and isolation, but on the other hand, I've been able to spend some quality time with my violets. I've repotted, cleaned, and reorganized, and I feel a whole lot better about my growing conditions now.

I'm so happy to say that our sale was a success. It seems like we had just the right number of customers for the number of plants that we had and everything sold. It was also a great time to see some of our members – it seems like it's been SO long!

Our Zoom meetings

have been a success also! Although nothing like being in person, being on screen is better than nothing. I'm sorry that some members are unable to participate fully in the meetings; however, those without cameras and microphones on their computers can still join the meeting and see and hear what's going on, but they will just not be seen or heard. A couple members did that last month and I think they will probably do so again next month.

Again, I hope everyone is well!

Happy Violeting!

Pests and Problems 2020: Dena Brent

Just as a mother can tell when her child is not "feeling" well, an AV grower should be able to recognize a healthy violet- and an unhealthy violet. You need to know your plants and what healthy growth is like. Is it the leaves that look unhealthy? Is your violet just not blooming? Did your violet collapse, suddenly?

We need to consider 3 sources of "woe" - environment, pests and



Kathy Hajner, August 1st AAVC Sale (Photo: Shirley Tetreault)

pathogens. Planning a good environment is the first step to healthy plants.

Soil: A light “soilless” soil is a good beginning. (Note: See AV Soil Recipe in the AV Q&A's Section above.) Many growers mix their own “soil” but you can find “AV soil” at garden and big box stores. It is better to have plastic pots, because clay pots can dry out very quickly. Oyama Planters are good for those who have just a few violets, because of their cost.

Light: Sufficient light is critical-too much light and you get sunburn leaves, too little light and you get nice leaves, but no blossoms. An AV needs about 12 hours a day of light, but not directly in the sun. Many growers use light tables that are easily and quickly constructed from ordinary materials found at Lowe's and Home Depot – metal stand, shop-lights. If you have just one or two violets, a desk lamp turned on for 12 hours a day about 10 inches away is suitable.

Water: Overwatering is the leading cause of death of AVs. In our dry New Mexico climate, you will probably need to water twice a week in the summer, probably once a week in winter. You can water from the top or the bottom. Don't let AVs stand in water for more than 30 minutes. AVs can grow nicely in our less humid climate- but do enjoy a misting of room temperature water from time to time. Also important is the type of water- city water, well water, bottled water. Both the pH of the water and other trace elements are important. If your water is hard (with calcium- or silicates) you will want to use bottled water. pH is the alkalinity or acidity of the water. Unfortunately, many cities have water with a pH of 8 or higher- its OK for you, but your violets will not like it at all. You can use pH up/down- found in pet stores.

Temperature: AV's are like people- not too hot, not too cold- from about 60-90 degrees. Expect less growth during the hotter times. Running a fan to keep the air moving is a good plan. When it is over 90, you might want to have your lights on at night, and then off during the hotter day.

Fertilizer: Depending on your water, you may not need fertilizer. Use ¼ tsp per gallon of water of any of the many AV fertilizers. If you buy AV soil, they usually come with their own fertilizer.

Pathogens: Fungi (spread by spores), Viruses (which need a vector), Bacteria and Nematodes are all part of the AV world. Powdery mildew is the most common and usually caused by a quick change in temperature- think 100 during the day and 55 during the night. Sometimes a violet is vigorous and healthy and then the next day it is completely limp. This is probably root rot (fusarium wilt) and the best that can be done is to take the best leaf and throw the plant away. A gray haze over your violets? Could be Gray mold (Botrytis). IMMUNOX is a good fungicide to use.

Be careful with your watering. If most of your plants dry out between watering, and one AV stays wet, you'd better do a bit more investigation. Nematodes look like lumps in the roots of the violet. This is the reason why we don't use regular garden soil for our AVs. Viruses need a vector- so they will be included with the pests.

Although there can be a variety of insects attacking your AVs- fungus gnats, stink bugs- the most problematic are thrips, mites, and mealy bugs. The Western Flower Thrips infest most plants. They are a particular problem for AVs. Besides eating the pollen sacks, they are the vector for the virus Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus (INSV)- which infects your whole collection and has no cure. How do you stop thrips? Good question. Thrips are everywhere in my yard/garden- roses, peonies, dahlias. You (or your pet) can easily bring these minute creatures in on your clothes or fur. First, do not open your window. Thrips easily fit through screens. Regularly inspect your violets and look for spilled pollen in new flowers. You can hang yellow (or blue) sticky paper on your shelves to know the magnitude of the invasion. You must dis-bud every violet- throwing the buds in a plastic bag, sealed and tossed in an outside trash. You will need to add MARATHON as a soil dressing, and spray with insecticide (Spinosad, Imidacloprid, AVID) – every 3-5 days for several weeks.

Mites, which can only be seen with a magnifier, attack the very center of the plant- causing the new leaves to become very “hairy” and then grey and brittle. Fortunately, the pesticides listed can be used for mites. Just pour the solution on the center of the plant.

There are two types of mealy bugs, which look like small tufts of cotton- or even a piece of perlite. Foliar mealy bugs can easily be picked off- or use a cotton bud dipped in alcohol. Consistent treatment will rid you of that pest. Their cousins, soil mealy bugs, are very sneaky. The AV can have a severe infestation of SMB- and you would not even suspect what is going on in the soil- until you repot. Eventually, though SMB will kill an AV. I have tried treating for SMB- but they are very sneaky. Leave just one in the soil around the roots- and they regenerate. The best thing to do is to take a leaf and toss the plant.

Other recommended treatments:

Monterey Garden Insect Spray (Spinosad) – Thrips

Bonide Annual Tree and Shrub Insect Control (Imidacloprid) – As a drench for mealy bugs

AVID- Thrips/mites – Available on Amazon (Expensive)

AzaMax- Thrips, mites

The information provided above was a summary of a three part presentation by Glenda Williams given during the recent virtual African Violet National Convention. The complete three part presentation is available for viewing at: africanvioletassociationofamerica.org/virtual, “African Violet Plant Health & Diagnostics: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly”.