



VIOLET TALK

MARCH APRIL 2015

ISSUE 2/2015

The AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY of WA (Inc.)

Affiliated with the Gesneriad Council of Australia and New Zealand

Founded August 1965

PO Box 197, Como 6952

Celebrating our 50th Anniversary Year



Episcia Ginko Yellow

Greetings all, the 'Violet Talk' newsletter has been extended to take in our Annual May Show combined with informative and interesting articles gathered from within our African violet world.

DISCLAIMER

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President's Message May 2015

Hi we have had a major change in our Committee with our President Helen Gilbert having to resign her position with short notice due to personal reasons. As the Vice President, I have stepped into the role as Acting President until our August AGM. I have had fantastic support from the committee in our biggest event of the year, the Annual May Show. Everyone has worked hard to ensure the Annual Show has once again been a great success with the public. We have our celebration year in full swing with another major event planned for August. A big welcome to two new members Kerry Carey and Robyn Hills and we shall enjoy their company and share the passion for African violets.

On behalf of our Society, I wish happiness and success to all other Societies and Associations in Australia and New Zealand for the remainder of 2015.

Sarah Pratt

Acting President

African Violet Society WA Inc

2015

Current Calendar of events May to June 2015

- **Meeting Saturday May 16th**

Starts 12 Noon, Finger food by 11.30 AM, Annual May Show Trophies presented. Patron Geoff Richards is the special guest.

- **Meeting Saturday June 21st**

General Information, Workshop Leaf propagation (bring your own leaf), Competition Table, Trade Table and more.

Please note Members: Trading Table hours are 12.45 PM to 1.45 PM there will be no exceptions or sales after the Table is closed. BE EARLY, to avoid disappointment. We start the meeting at 2 PM and the Trade Table do want to finish reconciling funds before that time!!

ANNUAL MAY SHOW – GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY 2015

Having just completed our Annual May Show, we wish to thank the Kardinya Park Shopping Centre for their tremendous sponsorship, support and venue leading up to and during the display. We also take the opportunity to announce our winners:

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP – AFRICAN VIOLET	OPEN	Aileen LaRosa
STATE CHAMPIONSHIP – GESNERIADS	OPEN	Reiko Lee
SHOW QUEEN – AFRICAN VIOLET/GESNERIADS	OPEN	Aileen LaRosa
PRINCESS of STANDARDS – AFRICAN VIOLET	OPEN	Aileen LaRosa
PRINCESS of MINIATURES – AFRICAN VIOLET	OPEN	Reiko Lee
PRINCESS of TRAILERS – AFRICAN VIOLET	OPEN	Aileen LaRosa
PRINCESS of GESNERIADS – AFRICAN VIOLET	OPEN	Reiko Lee
A SET OF THREE – AFRICAN VIOLET	OPEN	Aileen LaRosa
SHOW CHAMPION – AFRICAN VIOLET & GESNERIADS	OPEN	Aileen LaRosa
MOST SUCCESSFUL GROWER – AFRICAN VIOLETS/GESNERIADS	INTERMEDIATE	Anne Cowie
MOST SUCCESSFUL GROWER – AFRICAN VIOLETS/GESNERIADS	NOVICE	Gwen Currie
MOST SUCCESSFUL GROWER OVERALL - AFRICAN VIOLET/GESNERIADS/ARTISTIC AVS-WA		Aileen LaRosa

Congratulations to all participants and in particular thanks goes to our two main judges Norma Dougall and Colleen McCormick. Thanks also to Aileen LaRosa and Reiko Lee for their assistance in judging the Intermediate and Novice classes.

Photographs are from our Annual Golden Anniversary Show. Thanks to Judy Toop and Eric Bateman for the photos.



African Violets Championship Set



Main Prize Table



Rob's Cloudy Skies



Frosted Denim



Set of Three



Princess of Trailers



Princess of Gesneriads S.Meyari x C.Rouge



Princess of Standards



This

edition continues the sequence of articles on the subject of *hybridizing*. The third one is a second one by Margaret Taylor who is a very highly regarded member of the African Violet Association of Australia. With this article, Margaret won a deserved award when it was published in the American African Violet magazine in 2002. In addition there is an article on the importance that a spouse or partner to a grower plays their role in sharing the passion of growing African violets and Gesneriads.

ADVENTURES IN HYBRIDISING

By Margaret Taylor

Hybridizing African violets can be an in-depth exercise in genetics, a game of chance, or a combination of both. The late Bill Johnson (U.S.A.) who gave us many lovely hybrids said, "Logic can often lead you astray in genetics". So, if intuition is your driving force, hybridizing can still be absorbing, challenging, and a rich source of learning.

For me, the most suitable time to cross-pollinate is autumn. This allows the seed pods to develop over winter, in time to sow the seed in spring when temperatures reach around 20 degrees Celsius. It seems that attempting cross-pollination in very hot conditions is largely unsuccessful. Seed pods which do develop in summer invariably wither before the necessary time of four months or more has elapsed. Then they will almost never produce viable seed.

Harvesting

After harvesting, when the stem supporting the pod starts to shrivel, I place it in an envelope containing a small packet of silica gel for about two weeks to dry out. Then the seed is ready to be used or stored. Many seed-pods contain hundreds of seeds, some a few, and occasionally some are found to be non-viable.

I have learned to sow only a small number of seeds at a time. The advantages are that the tiny seedlings are less crowded and easier to prick out and, should one bed not germinate for any reason, subsequent sowings may be more successful. Seed may be stored for long periods of time in a small, folded piece of paper contained in a screw-top jar or vial in the refrigerator appropriately labeled of course.

Planting

When sowing seed I use a 2, 1, 1 mix with a little fine grade charcoal and dolomite, reduced to a fine tith in the food processor. It is essential to pasteurize or even sterilize the seed raising mix. This is easily done by having it quite damp and popping it in the microwave oven for a minute, then cooling to room temperature before using. One winter, I lost a number of germinating seeds because of a layer of white fungus which overtook the surface of the seed-bed. This has not re-occurred since I followed the microwaving practice.

Transplanting

With tiny seedlings, I now start very early and transplant only a few at a time, thereby staggering the numbers so that there are not too many of one cross growing at the same time. To save space, community trays are used initially and these are placed on capillary matting which is kept moderately damp. They receive foliar feeding once a week, and are potted on after two months.

Flowering

The real fun begins when flowering commences. It is a time of suspense and anticipation. The first eagerly awaited flowers can be maddeningly slow to bloom. Disappointment occurs when a new single flowered seedling seems to offer everything, sits there for weeks looking pretty, and then drops its flowers. No mercy is shown here. It has to go. True singles, the most likely to drop, have only one pair of anthers to each flower. If there are several pairs, there is a strong chance that the blooms will be stick-tight and develop into semi-doubles or doubles.

Evaluation

Appraisal of seedlings is a process which allows little room for sympathy or bias. What yardstick is used? "Nice" is inadequate. "Superb" is acceptable. At first it is hard to toss out the "also rans". Sometimes, more than one flowering is needed to ascertain the potential flower count and foliar development. Different seasons produce varying results in many African violets, so sometimes it is wise to give some seedlings a longer trial than others. Variegated foliage in young seedlings may be absent or sparse in hot spells, then, on maturity and a consistent drop in temperature, variegation may appear and develop quite noticeably.

Good foliage traits are flat symmetrical leaf patterns and no visible space between leaves or rows. Wavy foliage may be quite attractive but is harder to grow and generally less popular. Good bloom traits are high bloom count more than five per stem, eager flowering, long-lasting blooms, strong upright stems, and if at all possible, distinctiveness of blooms.

Long term stability cannot be ascertained in the first generation; therefore, it is necessary to propagate two further generations from leaf cuttings. This is a must if registration is being considered.

Some examples

I have many seedlings in the pipe line of probably too many different crosses, but I can share observations of two earlier crosses that have grown out.

These are 'Optimara Smoky Mountain' x Tomahawk' and 'Picasso' x 'Anastasia'. With the first, the objective was to improve the somewhat wayward foliage of 'Optimara Smoky Mountain' but maintain the high flower count and "lastabiity" of blooms. Many interesting colours eventuated with much improved foliage (giant in some cases). I feel this was a good cross, but as yet, I cannot claim a real winner. With the second cross, there were hundreds of seeds, most of which were grown out (before I learned better ways). The objective here was to maintain the lovely variegation of 'Picasso' while hoping to obtain a larger, longer lasting flower on taller stems.

Seedling after seedling had to top up the already well-stocked compost heat. They produced very nice foliage in the main, but offered pathetic nondescript flowers which were all blue. I considered discarding all the remaining seedlings and accepting defeat. Then a late arrival changed all that, and I have one plant with super qualities, not in a five inch pot. Maybe it should be named Late Edition, but for now, it manages with the nickname 'Bluey'. All this bears out the hard fact that success is elusive and tenacity of purpose essential.

Hybridizing is, as with anything worthwhile, a pastime of highs and lows. For me it is an adventure I wouldn't miss for anything. As an extra bonus, my compost heaps must be the most nourished in my locality! So the garden gets its share of the spoils and shows its appreciation too.

Happy hybridizing!

AVOCD

By Amy Cash-Allison

A Spouse's View

While AVOCD (African Violet Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder) is a growing and incurable ailment among individuals all over the world, it fortunately is not fatal. Victims of AVOCD will exhibit a wide range of symptoms, typified by the seemingly harmless onset of growing and collecting increasing numbers of African violets, sometimes more than



he/she can adequately care for. The plants will first begin to appear on tables as decorations, but will soon engulf entire shelves in the home. In a short period of time, spouses may be asked to build or buy plant stands to house the growing collection. The subject will happily continue acquiring more violets, whether through any one of the numerous mail-order catalogues which begin to plague the mailbox or from on-line trading friends.

Simultaneously, the sufferer may begin engaging in odd behaviors such as collecting deli containers, saving condiment cups from the restaurant, speaking highly and excitably about "babies," leaching, show schedules, or conventions (of which spouses know nothing about.) Those with AVOCD appear loving toward their plants, sometimes speaking to them, playing music for them, or skipping important engagements to "repot." Frequently, the AVOCD patient will insist upon visiting African violet vendors on family vacations, thus further

enabling the disorder.

It is important for AVOCD spouses to familiarize themselves with this disorder to avoid serious marital discord, since patients usually seem highly sensitive to criticism regarding any aspect of their passion. Since AVOCD is not physically harmful, it is the unbiased opinion of the author to allow your spouse to indulge in his/her hobby, regardless of how many cubic square feet remain in your home to actually live in, or how many hours per week your partner spends tending the violets. The advantages of allowing this illness to continue can benefit everyone in the family, even the pets. Since pet hair can accumulate on violet leaves, the patient is more likely to brush the family dog than if there were no plants in the home. Even children benefit, since time spent completely ignored can lead to tremendous independence in life. And since the AVOCD subject will spend much time tending their violets, their spouse is then free to do whatever he/she wishes, engaging in all types of new and interesting hobbies. All of this leads to a harmonious way of life for the entire family.

While it may be the spouse's desire to "cure" the victim of this disorder, it is unnecessary and inadvisable since there are many ways of coping with the effects. Below, you will find a recommended list of rules to adopt, ensuring a happy home life.

Always listen intently when your spouse speaks of his/her violets. (Pretend if you must, since you should always strive to share in the joys of your partner.)

Never question your spouse on the number of African violets in the home. (Besides, what's really the difference between two and three hundred?)

Never help your spouse with watering or repotting chores unless strictly supervised.

Never ever reach across a shelf of African violets. (You do want to live, right?)

Never complain about the cost of utilities as it relates to the fluorescent lights. (Remember that fluorescent is very cost and energy efficient, so you should really be thanking your spouse for being so conservative.)

Never complain about any spilled "dirt." (Feel free to vacuum if it bothers you, but don't let the cord knock over any trays or plants on the floor.)

"Adopt" at least one violet your spouse grows and comment on its loveliness regularly. (Even if you really don't care, it gives the impression that what he/she does is noticed and appreciated, which is always desirable for a happy union.)

Study books from the library concerning basic carpentry, reverse osmosis, humidity, pH, plant pests (with their corresponding insecticides,) and fluorescent lighting. (Occasional trips to the home supply store will be beneficial, but while you are there you should at least check to see if there are any sales on violets or growing supplies.)

Gladly give your spouse gift certificates for and/or books about African violets. (Even if you are not happy about that, you should pretend, since it's important for him/her to feel your loving support.)

Offer to baby-sit while your spouse attends African violet meetings, conventions, and/or sales. (This is important since you would never want there to be any resentment toward other family members.)

Begin to recognize the usefulness of ordinary objects and how they might improve the quality of your spouse's hobby. (One package of Solo cups or a couple extra deli containers can have long-lasting effects in a healthy marriage.)

"Feel" your spouse's pain when a beloved plant suddenly wilts and dies. Offer to replace it at any cost. (This is much better than your spouse going on a painful binge.)

Without being asked, clear out all of your clutter and unused furniture. (If you have to ask why, you should begin reading this article again from the beginning.)

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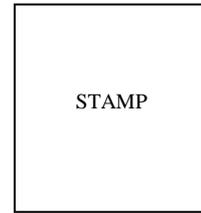
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