



VIOLET TALK

May June 2015

3/2015

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.



Little Boy Blue

Celebrating our 50th Anniversary Year

Visit our website at www.waavsinc.com or Google *African Violet Society WA*

Acting President Sarah Pratt	Vice President Sarah Pratt
Treasurer Judy Toop	Secretary Barbara Johnson
The Trader Pat Humphreys	Competition Table Reiko Lee
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Photographs: Our thanks to Judy Toop and Eric Bateman who are the contributors to the photographs placed in this newsletter. Should other images be from another source, then that will be credited as appropriate.



Image provided by B. Van Bruinessen



Jolly Orchid



Kiwi Dazzler



Driftwood Trail

Cover page:

Little Boy Blue: Semi-miniature hybridised by Barnhill in 1976 with a plain leaf.

Inner page:

1. **Jolly Orchid:** A Miniature hybridised by H. Pittman and registered in 2007, a double orchid and white pansy. Leaves are medium green, plain and quilted.
2. **Kiwi Dazzler:** Single Standard Chimera hybridised by D. Snell registered in 1985. Wine red frilled/white striped. Medium green, plain leaf.
3. **Driftwood Trail:** Miniature trailer hybridised by C. Sotkiewicz registered in 1987. Bloom is a double royal blue star. Dark green leaves are plain and pointed glossy.

ACTIVITY TIME

At our recent meeting in June, there were also some lovely cultivars on display in our Competition Table with decisions by Judge June Woodley.



Spring Festival



Ness' Crinkle Blue

Jacqui demonstrated potting a new leaf with members practicing with pots (thanks Pat) and leaf (provided by Reiko) and soil (provided by Judy Toop). A real team effort!



Light Years Sport



Jacqui



Migaloo

So Busy Yet So Keen!

It would seem that there is not enough time in the day. However, some of us have to work and this article may help out with African violets in an office environment:



"Mr. Cartwright says you have to make a career decision—African violets or accounting."

Growing violets in the office setting can be challenging, but also a very rewarding. You have a better opportunity to enjoy sharing their beauty and your enthusiasm for African violets. Space limitations present one of the most common problems for office violet growers. If you occupy a small cubicle, as many workers do, you might want to consider miniatures or semi-miniatures. If you aren't near a window, try placing the violets on top of any furniture that is close to the office lighting that are positioned directly beneath fluorescent lighting tubes. They also get plenty of ambient light from the windows. These surfaces are about 2 metres above the floor and a metre beneath the ceiling. The violets can be placed where they are visible to everyone in the office, so always try to keep the prettiest blooming miniatures near the outer perimeter. If you have quite a few plants, try wick watering as you will quickly realise that

transporting water to your workspace can be a time consuming and watering frequently can be overlooked. Spraying for pests can be a problem if others are working near you. Of course, you shouldn't spray when others are present and could be bothered by the fumes. This task is best completed after hours when no one else is around and the fumes can disperse. Your employer may prohibit the use of pesticides in the workplace, and understandably so. If you have an ongoing problem follow the advice of one of our club's senior members. It may be recommended putting the plants in a box, spraying them, and then sealing them overnight with a plastic cover. At the reception desk, an African violet in can provide visitors and/or clients with an attractive fresh and beautiful attraction as they await their appointment or business.

COMPETITION TABLE RESULTS
PROGRESS POINTS TALLY February to June 2015

OPEN CLASS

P. Humphreys	10	A. LaRosa	44	R. Lee	26
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INTERMEDIATE CLASS

A. Cowie	11
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NOVICE CLASS

G. Gibbons	3	G. Currie	26	P. Fry	9
A. Wiltshire	3	E. Laidlaw	4	N. Gardiner	2
D. Osler	4				

From the Editor



There are wonderful articles contributed by so many knowledgeable growers from across the world. Currently it is the winter with season of warm days and cold nights here in Perth and a common disease one can encounter with their collection of African violets is Powdery Mildew. The following article is a collective of notes and points from various observations and publications.

Prevention and Control of Powdery Mildew

One of the main problems facing African violet growers at this time of year is powdery mildew. Powdery Mildew is caused by the Oidium fungus and can be eradicated from your African violets. Powdery Mildew may vary from grower to grower depending on the individual growing conditions; it is not uncommon for powdery mildew to show up on the African violets of even the most experienced and expert of growers.

WHAT IS IT: it is the most common disease you will encounter in the growing of African violets. It is a fungus which shows up in autumn, winter and spring when days are warm but nights are cold, as it is currently here in Perth.



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE: you will see it as white powder on the outer leaves and stems of the flower. It will mark the leaves and the flowers will be stunted and wither quickly. If left unchecked it will spread through your collection.

Mildew is, of course, a fungal problem. In its early stages, it may be just an inconspicuous light dusting of very fine powder on a leaf or two; or sometimes an isolated spot about the size of a small coin. Consequently, the initial onset of powdery mildew can be easily missed or overlooked.

If not attended to promptly and effectively, the mildew can develop into a thick coating of whitish powder on the leaves (particularly the outer ones), and also on flowers, buds and stalks. The end result can be a very unattractive and unhealthy looking plant,

DISCUSSION: There are many commercial horticultural products on the market that can no doubt rightly claim to provide effective control of fungal problems such as mildew. However, when applied as a spray to African violets, many of these fungicides are unacceptable, being prone to leave an unsatisfactory residue. The use of a much diluted solution of household bleach to prevent/control mildew on African violets is worth trying as a cheaper alternative if you haven't already done so.

Last winter, it became apparent for a number of reasons that it was needed to take some further or special steps to better ensure that any leaves being put down for propagation were sterile, meaning, in this context, clean and free of mildew spores or any other undesirables.

It was at this time that "bleach" was added to the shopping list and purchased a bottle of premium bleach for use whenever necessary either: [a] as a dip of 1 part bleach to 10 parts of water to sterilise leaves for propagation; or [b] as a mist spray to prevent/control mildew on planted-out leaves, non- flowering plantlets etc., and any affected plants. The spray dilution rate adopted was 1 part bleach to 20 parts of water. Use room temperature water for spray mixes but accept that others feel that tepid water is the only way to go.

Certain conditions around the African violets in their growing environment are generally blamed for the development of powdery mildew. For example: extended periods of very high humidity, poor air movement around the plants, inadequate light intensity, fluctuating day/ night temperatures, cold draughts and so on.

TREATMENT: the easiest solution is to wash the leaves by spraying them with warm water. You can remove the flowers rather than trying to wash them so no water will get on the crown. Alternatively you can apply powdered sulphur to the leaves and keep brushing until all the sulphur and mildew has been removed. One old remedy is to spray the leaves with a solution of 1:8 parts milk and water.

TIPS: Ruth Coulson suggests prevention is best. Try treatment but if it's not working get rid of the plant as powdery mildew will damage your collection. However if you can keep the problem at bay, as weather conditions change, the fungus will cease to be so active.

Basic Starting Kit



When you come to your first meeting with our wonderful and friendly members you can obtain a basic starting kit to send you on your way to growing more of the beautiful range of African violet cultivars available. Don't forget Gesneriads and they are a great addition to your range of growing options.



Princess of Gesneriads S.Meyari x C.Rouge bred by Reiko Lee 2015

Some Thoughts on Fertilising African violets

1. It is more important that you do fertilise than exactly what you use.
2. Less is commonly better than more
3. Young plants not ready to flower need a good general fertiliser with a balance of Nitrogen: Phosphorus: Potassium (N:P:K)
4. If available use a fertiliser that is high in phosphorus, and medium high in potassium. Nitrogen needs to be available but is rather less important for fully grown plants than it is for young ones.
5. Fertiliser should be provided regularly so that growth is continuous and even.
6. When growth is slowed because of cold weather apply less fertiliser, or less frequently
7. When weather is very hot reduce the strength of fertiliser solution because the plant will take up much more liquid.

CHIMERAS

A Chimera (pronounced ki-mir-a) is a unique type of African violet that cannot be reproduced from a leaf. These plants have flowers have pinwheel arrangement of colour. Each petal has a centre stripe and a stripe on each side. They are usually very attractive and different looking. You cannot just put down a leaf and get an identical plant like the parent.



Chimera African violets are grown just like any other violet. The only difference in propagating them you must use suckers instead of leaves. If you put down leaves you will probably get a plant with flowers that are solid coloured. The way to tell the difference between a sucker and a flower bud: Flower buds will only have two leaflets. A sucker will have at least four leaves and can be removed to root. You can use a sharp knife or small scissors to remove the sucker.



(*Tineke Humako above*) Let dry a few minutes. Place it on your regular potting soil. Make sure that the cutting is touching the soil. If you are using a fluorescent light, they can be placed in a clear plastic container or bag. The higher humidity will allow the sucker to root without drying out. Usually it will root in a couple weeks. When removing from a closed container opening it slightly and allow the plant to harden to the lower humidity. In a few days, you will be able to remove it from the pot. (*Enigma above*)

Propagation of Chimera African violets

Most African violets can be successfully propagated from leaf cuttings to vegetatively reproduce plants that will be identical to the plant from which the leaf cutting was taken. This is because the genetic make-up of any cell in the leaf cutting is the same as any other cell. This is not true with "*Chimeras*". These are plants that have developed plant tissues where the individual cells are genetically different. Because of this, plants produced from leaf cuttings frequently are not identical to the plant from which the cutting was taken from.



Though a *Chimera* is any plant having this genetic characteristic, in African violets, this term is typically used to describe the "pinwheel" blossomed varieties, which frequently don't propagate "true" to description from leaf cuttings.

Generally speaking they must be propagated by suckers. This is because a *Chimera* African violet has two different types of cells in the leaf and stem.

One genetic type is located in the skin cells and the other type is located in the middle cells. When a leaf from a *Chimera* African violet is put down to root, either one cell type or the other will generally produce plantlets. As a result, the vast majority of plantlets will bloom with only one colour rather than the bicolour pattern.

Ruth Coulson has one of the best collections of *chimera* images called Pinterest on the web and can be found at:

<http://www.pinterest.com/coulsonruth/african-violets-for-everyones-chimera-african-viol/>

Salty Pots, How Come?

Wick Watering – This is the preferred method by the African Violet Society of WA. It is a self-watering system that takes away the necessity of watering every few days and more from 7 to 10 days depending on the season and size, type and catchment container. This method eliminates the wet base and keeps the potting mix that the Society recommends, evenly moist. It is also very easy to add fertiliser which can be prepared in a litre bottle and stored at room temperature. The watering method also aids inspection of the African violet as you need to examine it for anything considered odd or maybe clean it up a bit. You can purchase a specially designed well suitable for 100mm pots (ideal for standards) and there is a smaller well designed for miniatures and semi miniatures. Adaptions can be made from yoghurt containers to sit the 100mm/75mm pot in or placing the pot with the African violet on top of container used as a reservoir that can last several weeks. Every few months water the African violets through the top and thus the potting mix to eliminate the build-up salt which will if not done start to effect the plant.



Top Watering – A watering can with a “thin” spout can be used to water your African violet to fit between and under the leaves, to one side or even better three points. Dry any water from the leaves or the centre of the plant so taking care with this method will save time. Paper towels or a tissue will do the job. Handle the pot when using this method and be aware of its weight (it may not need watering) and if very heavy could be developing root or crown rot.

Standing the Pot in Water – Has certain disadvantages. Forgetting to remove the plant from the saucer could render the potting mix too wet. Another one is that the fertiliser salts can rise to the top and cause a brown crust around the rim, healthy leaves could be lost. Similar to the wick watering system water from the top and make sure the African violet is clear of the saucer ensuring the crust will not quickly form again.



Repotting should be considered each six months to ensure refreshment of the potting mix.

Salty Tip

If your plants have been troubled by excess salts or 'muck' from the peat moss being drawn up and deposited on the centre leaves of young, newly potted plants, you might like to try **Jenny White's (AAVA)** remedy. She fills her sprayer with warm water and a drop of detergent, and then directs a jet onto the affected leaves. A bit of care should be exercised to avoid actually damaging the leaves, but it simply washes the problem away! Repeat application may be necessary.

Methylated Spirits

If your problem has been soil mealy bugs, here is an idea from **Reg Townsend (AAVA)** who says he has had success in dealing with these pests by treating infested plants with undiluted methylated spirits. When he finds evidence of soil mealy bugs (you will notice them on top of the water in the reservoir, on the wick, around the collar of the plant, or you may notice them when repotting) he washes the soil off the roots of the plant, then dips or sprays it with methylated spirits. After a few moments he re-washes the roots to remove the methylated spirits before potting up the plant. Reg reports very few bad effects on the plants.

The AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY of WA (Inc)

Renewal of membership.

Incorporation number A0820201A.

Subscriptions are due on July 1st, and may be paid either by mail or in person to the Membership Secretary. To facilitate the process, it would assist greatly if all subscriptions be paid by June 30th.

It will not be possible to forward subsequent Newsletters to Members failing to renew by the due date.

Aileen La Rosa (Membership Secretary)

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AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY of WA Inc

(Incorporation No A0820201A)

RENEWAL of MEMBERSHIP

Year for Renewal: July 1ST, ____ to June 30TH, ____

CURRENT DETAILS: Member Name: _____

Member Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

Birthday Date: (If you wish to share) _____

Anniversary Date: (If you wish to share) _____

Accurate records are essential. If changing address, please notify us of the change.

Your right to privacy is both understandable and respected.

Your details will not be communicated to other members without your prior permission.

Life Membership

Single Membership \$20.00

Joint Membership \$25.00

Please tick the appropriate box above, and return with remittance to:

**The Membership Secretary
African Violet Society of WA (Inc)
PO Box 197 COMO WA 6952**

Cheques: Please make payable to: African Violet Society of WA (Inc)

Cash: Meeting July 2015, please notify Aileen and pay the Treasurer.

Direct Debit: Telephone Aileen 08 9417 4117 who will provide WESTPAC Account details.



The AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY of WA (Inc)

PO Box 197 COMO, W.A. 6952

NOMINATION FORM

**NOMINATIONS are INVITED for POSITIONS on the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
and/or, for POSITIONS of RESPONSIBILITY
ALL POSITIONS ARE OPEN**

Nomination Form is for both positions on the Executive Committee (rule 10.5), or for Positions of Responsibility – Please list preferences in alphabetical order, e.g., A., B., C. etc.
Completed Nomination Forms should reach the Secretary prior to commencement of the AGM.
Only Financial members may nominate, propose, second or vote on this Nomination.

I, _____ wish to nominate for the following positions.

Nominated _____ Seconded By: _____

Signed _____ Signed _____

Date: _____ 2015 Date: _____ 2015

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Please List Preferences in Appropriate Boxes)

President

Secretary

Treasurer

Vice President

Committee Members *(Each with a PoR below)*

POSITIONS of RESPONSIBILITY

(Please List Preferences in Appropriate Boxes)

Mentor

Editor

Membership Secretary

Librarian

Trader

Competition Table Organiser

Assistant Competition Table

Tea Caddy

Raffle Organiser

Web Site Administrator

Door Person

DELEGATE Gesneriad Council

Assistant Trader

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African Violet Deformity

Violets, like all living things, are subject to distortions and deformities. Cells do not always divide completely and the result is similar to the "Siamese twin" syndrome.

Two leaves may share a common petiole (stem). The effect may be two fully formed leaves at the end of one petiole, or it may be a leaf with two tips. Sometimes the leaf just has a lumpy look. Usually the petiole will be thicker than usual and exhibit where the two leaves should have separated. This type of leaf deformity may appear only occasionally in a particular plant and be a small problem resolved by removal of the odd leaf. We have seen plants, however, that persistently grow with the deformity, through many generations. There is no cure for this except to dispose of the plant.

Occasionally a leaf may grow out with a twisted stem. This is extremely irritating to growers who wish to exhibit their plants in competition! It is probably the result of an uneven growth rate, either in the size or the number of cells, on opposite sides of the leaf stem. Some plants may consistently show this irregular growth and will never grow in the perfect rosettes that characterize championship plants. Those same plants may have blossoms that cause us to forgive the sins of their foliage. Not every plant has to go to show.

Blossoms can also share a common pedicel (the branching stem that connects the individual blossom to the main trunk of the peduncle or flower stem). That results in two blossoms which are back to back and held in an uncomfortable looking position. We have never seen this as a persistent condition on any plant, but perhaps some of you have had one plant that did this frequently.

Occasionally, blossoms may open with indistinct shapes.

Violet blossoms are commonly either star-shaped or pansy-shaped. It is possible for one blossom to take on a more peculiar shape as a result of a "genetic blip" in its growth pattern. This may be caused by a single bad cell on the flower stem. In that case, one flower looks odd, but all the others are normal. Sometimes the distortion is the result of a cultivar which has a faulty genetic code. A good example is the rare and most annoying distortion of blossoms which form with no flower petal! This reportedly was a problem in the development of the yellow hybrids. The problems resulted from inbreeding that is crossing one yellow cultivar with a closely related cultivar. Inbreeding may be a valuable hybridizing tool for establishing desirable traits, but it also tends to match up faulty genetic traits.

