



'VIOLET TALK'

March April 2016

2/2016

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.



Codonanthus Crassifolia



Nematanthus



Aeschynanthus

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

Celebrating 50 years



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Printing sponsored by Rob Grey, Garden City Plastics Australia, Canning Vale WA

All photographs by Eric Bateman

2015/2016 President's Report

Welcome everyone. We are now on the threshold of our Annual May Show on the Mother's Day weekend 5th, 6th and 7th May at the Kardinya Park Shopping Centre. This year the theme is Colour Parade and the weather patterns, soil mix and perhaps alkalinity of the local water has had an effect on the effort of our growers. Still they have encountered some of these problems in the past and have come through it. Just the passion does it and raises the outlook to a prosperous event in that the State Championship sashes from the WA Horticultural Society await the African Violet and Gesneriad growers as well as some beautiful trophies for Queen of the Show and Princesses awards. The outlook for the Society looks good with a number of new Novice growers supporting our Intermediates and Open Classes. We have had 130 quality entries in 39 categories from so few with 6 entries in the African Violet State Championship which is open to all of the members.



From left : Gwen and Jeff Curry presented with the Mary Gallipo award by our Vice President Peter Fry



To enhance knowledge of the members our Q&A panel answers their questions and provide tips and advice.

More members would not go astray and our Webmaster has introduced an E-Member strategy which enables that E-Member access to the Member Only section of the website in addition to visits to meetings if time allows. It is probably the incentive to the younger generations who seem to be so busy and have so much access to information on the Internet through their mobile phones. Workshops are a very important part with grooming and Gesneriads.

Jacqui and I have been away for some of the time and found the support of our friends and colleagues in the African Violet communities extremely confidence boosting the future.

Eric Bateman



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Subject to change

- **Monthly Meeting – Saturday, May 21st** at the Manning Activity Centre 3 Downey Drive Manning 12.30 pm to 3 pm. Annual May Show Trophies and awards afternoon. Members see the website for details.
- **Monthly Meeting – Saturday, June 18th**, details published in the **Members Only** link on our website.

GROWING IN NATURAL LIGHT

When you find the best position in your house to produce flowering plants, you will have solved 90% of your problems. Light and warmth are the two main essentials needed when seeking the right spot. Other essentials are tepid water, fertilizer and a light potting medium. Plants can be killed by over-watering and over-fertilising.

Plants can be grown on windowsills or shelves close to the light source. Choose a window as free as possible from shading by bushes, trees, fences, or wide eaves. I have two stands in almost floor to ceiling windows, facing north. Each stand has four shelves and each shelf will hold six kitty-litter trays lapping over each side. I made a nylon curtain strung on elastic, and the height from which it is hung is adjustable. It protects the plants when the sun is in the north. I also use a venetian blind.



For the summer months of the year in Australia, I don't have to worry, as the sun's trajectory is so high that the eaves cut off direct sunlight. During autumn and spring, when the sun's trajectory is lower in the sky, great care has to be taken to protect the plants from the sun's rays.

The plants at the front, nearest the windows, always come into flower first, so their position is changed, usually when watering, in order to bring other plants forward. Remember to turn each pot or tray regularly, every time you water. This will encourage leaves to grow in a flat rosette.

In winter, draw curtains or blinds at night to prevent heat loss. Reduce or dilute fertilizer in winter if your growing area is cool. If your growing area is kept warm, fertilize as normal.

To flourish, plants need all available light. Clean windows can help. If you do not have windows with sufficient light, consider using fluorescent lights.

If plants are cold, their leaves will grow down to hug the pot. To avoid this problem, as winter approaches make a collar by cutting a hole in a paper plate, slip it up from under the pot to a little below the leaves and hold it in place with another pot. Do this when the plant is on the dry side to avoid leaf breakages.



Poppy Charm grown by June Woodley

Always water your plants with tepid water. Not only will cold water damage the roots and cause markings on leaves, it also chills the potting mix. It takes many hours for the mix to return to room temperature.

African Violets Trailers Beginner's Hints

Trailers should have one main stem, but many branches (or centres), **never** many plantlets in one pot. Trailers come in four sizes – standard, semi-miniature, miniature and micro-miniature. Unlike rosette plants there is no restriction to the size to which they can grow. For example, a semi-miniature trailer can exceed the 20cm which could result in the disqualification of a rosette semi.

There are trailing species viz. S. grotei, a large trailer, S. magungensis and minima which are a miniature.



Propagation

Propagation of trailers can be achieved in three ways. The usual way for Saintpaulia is by leaf cutting and sometimes by setting suckers. Trailers can be grown in this way, but also by setting tip cuttings in the same way that suckers are put down. A tip cutting will come on much faster than a leaf.

Young trailer plants may have the centre leaves removed to make them branch and this should be done while the plantlet is quite young and then each trail should be again pinched to achieve a bushy plant.

Please Note: *This Process is only Carried Out for Trailers. Standards or Miniatures have only one centre.*

Some plants become bushy naturally with little help from the grower; others never really produce real trails and are described as semi-trailers. Knowing the variety here is very helpful.

Since each trail can carry many flowers, trailers, while taking a little more trouble and time than single rosette plants, reward with a spectacular show when in full flower.

Position

Trailers can be grown under lights, but as some growers have no lights, and those who have lights are usually short of space it is well to mention that trailing Saintpaulia actually like to be grown in natural light and perform well when grown in good natural light. These conditions are best described as strong light but not direct sunlight. A sheer curtain can be used to break direct sunlight.



Fertilizer

Any Saintpaulia fertilizer is suitable, remembering it is a good idea to alternate brands of fertilizers – one high in Nitrogen could be followed by one high in Potassium, then one rich in Phosphorous. Remember that if your trailer has variegated leaves it should not have one with high Nitrogen too often, or it will lose its variegation. Trailers are hungry feeders and can accept a little more fertilizer than the single rosette types. Remember that too much fertilizer for any plant is worse than too little.

Grooming for Showing

Plants that have less than three trails are penalized by judges, who look for plants which fill their pots, and perhaps trail over the rim. Some people do not disbud, but rather concentrate on training the plants for fullness after which flowers appear either in flushes or continuously, depending on the type. Others say that repotting and disbudding till 10 weeks before show will bring on a good head of bloom. Plants should be turned regularly to make growth even. Trailers are judged on form, rather than symmetry as are rosette types. Leaves should be kept free of dust by brushing or carefully washing.

Older leaves, yellowed and obvious by their long petioles, should be removed, not just at showing time, but so that the plant gives the grower maximum pleasure. New leads grow in the leaf axils, so care should be taken not to damage these when removing leaves. Points are lost when soil is visible rather than covered by foliage and flowers should be evenly distributed over the whole plant, rather than to one side as would happen if the plant is not regularly rotated.

Which Fertilizer?

There are a number of good fertilizers that will work well, especially those that are labelled for African violets. You can use either a balanced fertilizer (e.g. a 20-20-20 formulation) or one that has a higher phosphorus count (e.g. 15-30-15). The latter is believed to improve flowering. Fertilizers also contain many trace elements, but these are not always listed on the package.

Occasionally a grower may find that the local water supplies also contain some of the same trace elements which can lead to problems with toxicity. It is often wise to ask others in your area which fertilizer works best for them. If you grow in cold conditions or have problems with acid pH, you may prefer a fertilizer that does not use urea as a source, as this can lead to a condition called ammonium toxicity which spots the leaves.

Some growers like to rotate and use different fertilizers during the year, using balanced formulas during times when more growth is desired and high phosphorus formulas when preparing for show.

NPK

What does N-P-K stand for?

Have you looked on your fertilizer pack and wondered what it means? AVS-WA currently use Manutec.

N = Nitrogen **14-15-11.5** Nitrogen is the first major element responsible for the vegetative growth of plants above ground. With a good supply, plants grow sturdily and mature rapidly, with rich, dark green foliage;

P = Phosphorus **14-15-11.5** the second major element in plant nutrition, phosphorus is essential for healthy growth, strong roots, fruit and flower development, and greater resistance to disease; and

K = Potassium (Potash) **14-15-11.5** the third major plant nutrient, potassium oxide is essential for the development of strong plants. It helps plants to resist diseases, protects them from the cold and protects during dry weather by preventing excessive water loss.

2016 Competition Table Results

These will be published for March April edition. Accumulative points for the four months are included. Below is a list of the classes that are applicable to the Open, Intermediate and Novice categories: in April

April 2016 Judged by Norma Dougall

Open Class

1	AV-Single Colour	1 st	Bob Serbin	R. Lee
		2 nd	Narelle	A. LaRosa
2	AV-Multi Colour	1 st	Kiwi Dazzler	R. Lee
3	AV-Variegated	1 st	Not awarded	
		2 nd	Flower Drum	A. LaRosa
4	AV-Miniature	1 st	Texas Space Dust	A. LaRosa
		2 nd	Optimara Little Pearl	A. LaRosa
5	AV- Semi-Mini	1 st	Bonnie Ross	R. Lee
		2 nd	Little Pro	A. LaRosa
13	Novelty	1 st	Milky Way Trail	G. Curry



Texas Space Dust



Bob Serbin



Repeat Performance

Intermediate Class

17	AV-Single Colour	1 st	Repeat Performance	P. Fry
18	AV-Multi Colour	2 nd	Optimara EverGrace	G. Currie
19	AV-Mini, Semi-Mini	2 nd	Ness' Jesse	P. Fry
		2 nd	Minuet	G. Currie

Novice Class

22	AV-Multi Colour	1 st	Unnamed	J Meadowcroft
		2 nd	Party Time	J Meadowcroft

Progressive Points Tally 2016

Open

A. LaRosa	28
R Lee	24
J Bateman	6

Intermediate

G. Currie	17
P. Fry	11
E Bateman	2

Novice

J Meadowcroft	16
J. Bulloch	4
Ernie Laidlaw	3

Note

Awards are given only where an exhibitor has accumulated five or more points. Our Monthly Table Competition is so very important; Reiko is again to be assisted by Ann Cowie organising the layout, judging, and compilation and reporting of the results. Please enter as a Novice in 2016 it is still not too late.

Our judges particularly Norma Dougall and June Woodley are very important part and their time is very much appreciated.

Did you know?

Aeschynanthus (family Gesneriaceae) are a genus of herbs, bole climbers, or epiphytes, many of which have fleshy leaves. The flowers are vivid red, and there are about 100 species, found in forest undergrowth from warm temperate China to tropical South-east Asia.

Check that you have the correct names for your plants

For reference the AVAA Master Variety List will be available. Also the rules for exhibitors can be found in the May Show handout issued in February. If you wish to sell your show plants you will need "flag" them and have a separate sheet handed to the Trader with a price listed respectively. Boxes like cereal and the like should also be brought along for the packing of the sale plants. A separate Sales Sheet is required if you have plants that are not Show entries available for sale.

Creative Arrangements

An unusual or odd container will serve in creating your lovely display of that pretty plant which did not pass the test as a show specimen. You may dare to create a lovely dish garden or even a display depicting the show theme of a hat with a gesneriad or African violet in it. How about an arrangement of cut flowers?

Did you Know?

Saintpaulias grow from 6 to 15 cm tall and can be anywhere from 6 to 30 cm wide. The leaves are rounded to oval, 2.5 to 8.5 cm long with a 2 to 10 cm petiole, finely hairy, and have a fleshy texture. The flowers are 2 to 3 cm in diameter, with a five-lobed velvety corolla ("petals"), and grow in clusters of 3 to 10 or more on slender stalks called peduncles. Wild species can have violet, purple, pale blue and/or white.

Advertising and Publicity

It is so important that the public be aware of our Organisations around Australia and the passion we have for our "hobby". There are so many good people that we alone have met and I am sure there are many more we hope to meet that the public if they are made aware might also want to. Certainly our web site for AVS-WA Inc. has helped with a steady flow of virtual visitors to the site each day. The webmaster has a busy Home page within the more normal layout seen or maybe expected.

This newsletter is another way of letting not only our members see a "hard copy" but also communicating with our fellow Societies and Associations around Australia who provide us with excellent information and websites into our African violet world.

	 Early Morn African Violet Group Inc. African violets are addictive	
	 African Violet Association of Australia Inc. Home Photo Gallery Diary Growing Hints Links Contact Us	

THE AUSTRALASIAN AFRICAN VIOLET COMMUNITY

However, the occasional opportunity comes up with local outlets and even a small article can make a difference. Such was the case with Habitat, a section of the West Australian newspaper published each Friday. A small article telling the public about our Society and its activities resulted in two new members signing up. The ABC newsletter has also listed our activities for the next six months. So links with agencies such as these and most importantly with other African Violet organisations is just so important.

Violet Talk (*AVS-WA Inc's Newsletter*) 2/2016

The Kardinya Park Shopping Centre is also displaying large posters that advertise our Mother's Day weekend at their respective entrances which also helps in that period.

The Fremantle Herald also has an advertisement and 4,000 readers in their distribution area.

A Healthy Environment?

There are multiple things to consider when looking after African violets that a healthy environment plays an important part in the African violet culture. Many factors can be considered and if not practiced or applied such as fertiliser, cleanliness, temperature, humidity, watering, light, soil, pots and space. If a plant is growing in a cold room or well lived in with family pets, this could create a "dusty" atmosphere and lead to various problems particularly with the health of leaves. It has been often said by visitors to our displays that "I have an African violet and I never do anything but water it and it's full of blooms." Well here is an example as to how hardy these African violets can be. The photograph below shows African violets that have been in a plastic roofed shade house with shade cloth walls for 12 months. Temperature during the summer reached 32° C and winter temperatures as low as 6° C. They are sitting on plastic trays in plain water and when the owner remembers to, he adds a slurp of fertilizer. These plants have flowered continually over the last 12 months and while they may not be show plants they are healthy.



Did you Know?

African violets combine beautifully with white wax begonias, pink foliage plants like grape ivy and ferns like the rabbit's foot fern. However, you hardly need these extras to make a special splash of colour. A window garden or similar can look marvellous with a small collection of Saintpaulias alone with singles, doubles, variegated, multi-coloured, standards, miniatures and trailers. Some very artistic entries have been created with similar combinations.

What was that you said?

'Each flower is a soul opening out to nature'. - *Gerald De Nerval*