



# 'VIOLET TALK'

January/February Issue 1 of 2017

*The AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY of WA (Inc)*

*Affiliated with the Gesneriad Council of Australia and New Zealand*

**We are celebrating 52 Years**

**PO Box 197, Como 6952.**



*Red Delicious – Hybridised by Margaret Taylor*

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## The 2016/2017 AVS-WA Inc. Committee

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<i>Committee Member</i>	Pat Humphreys	<i>Committee Member</i>	Diana Osler
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<i>Competition Table Organiser</i>	Ann Cowie	<i>Caddy</i>	Don Bulloch
<i>Website Administrator and</i>	Eric Bateman	<i>Violet Talk Newsletter Editor</i>	Eric Bateman

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE January February 2017

Hello members, I hope you all enjoyed the festive season and wish you all a Happy New Year. I look forward to having a successful 2017 with the Society.

It was nice to see so many happy faces at our Christmas Party. A big thank you to Joan Edwards for opening up her lovely home for the event. Once again our Sponsors RICHGRO and Floraplant kindly donated prizes for our raffle. It was so nice to see the generosity of our members, donating presents for the Women's Refuge. We had two washing baskets overflowing with presents. Well Done.

This month will be a bit hectic with the growers organising plants for the South Perth Fair on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2017. We are asking for help with the manning of the table at the show and also with manning the front door. I am sure our members will be only too happy to help in making this a successful show.

After the South Perth Show our focus will be the Annual May Show on the Mother's Day weekend. My aim will be to have as many members enter as possible. To that end we will be having demonstrations, tips and tricks to make that possible.

As the Society has a limited number of judges, I call on volunteers from the Society who are interested in doing their Judges course to contact either the Secretary or myself, we can then start the ball rolling to have sufficient qualified people for our shows.

I look forward to convening my first General Monthly Meeting for the year as President. Please feel free to contact me at any time. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Jacqui*

*President AVS-WA 2016/2017*



## Congratulations

### Members Birthdays:

#### December

Heather Liddell  
Cherryl Gadellaa  
Anne Light

#### January

Alan Humphreys

#### February

Don Bulloch  
Ruth Green



### Wedding Anniversaries

#### February

Jeanette Wood

## Christmas Function 2016

Joan Edwards hosted our Christmas Function at her home Saturday, 3rd December 2016. It was a great and friendly gathering with free gifts from RICHGRO and our President Jacqui who gave each person attending a red and white petunia in a pot. Everyone brought a fabulous amount of food and the variety would do any smorgasbord justice. Congratulations to Pat Humphries and Aileen La Rosa for organising the event. Congratulations to all Table Competition Trophy winners and also those who were successful in the various class categories.

		
<p>Joan's Patio</p>	<p>Women's Refuge Gifts</p>	<p><b>Gwen Currie</b> is the <i>Mary Galipo</i> Trophy Winner</p>
		
<p><b>Aileen LaRosa</b> is the <i>Norma Dougall</i> Trophy Winner</p>	<p><i>June Woodley</i> and <i>Lorna May</i> Two of our Life Members</p>	<p>RICHGRO's Gifts to Members attending the function</p>
		
<p>Jacqui presented <b>Diana Osler</b> with the <i>Barry Edwards</i> Award</p>	<p><i>Joan</i> you legend!</p>	<p>Jacqui with <b>Joan Meadowcroft</b> our Best Novice</p>

The *Sydney Crawcour* Certificate (Sponsored by The Gesneriad Council of Australia and NZ) is issued each year. This award is provided to the Society with the Certificate and is an acknowledgement of a member who has contributed to the Society above and beyond what are the normal duties or contributions.

The *Sydney Crawcour* certificate for 2016 was presented to our **2016/2017 President Jacqui**



**Bateman** for her outstanding contribution to our Society over the past twelve months. Jacqui was the Secretary on the 2015/2016 Committee of Management and it was her efforts in securing sponsorship from Garden City Plastics in February 2016 for funding of our printing and also arranging donations from *floraplant* to our monthly raffle later in 2016. Jacqui and Eric had returned to the Society from a year of absence in Sydney NSW, from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014 to 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015. After Jacqui was elected Secretary at the AGM in August 2015, Jacqui continued a rapport with our current supporters, Kardinya Park Shopping Centre and of course our Patron Geoff Richards of RICHGRO. Congratulations on a wonderful year Jacqui as Secretary. You must be relieved to be able to conduct your first General Monthly Meeting since being elected President in the AGM in August 2017, even though you have only chaired the Committee of Management meetings since your appointment. Perhaps you should do a presentation of the four Annual African Violet shows in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne that you attended, two of them (Sydney and Melbourne) coinciding with the October and November General Monthly Meeting weekends.

## *Grooming*

Time is starting to tick over towards our Annual May Show Championships on the Mother's Day weekend and your selection of Show Plants should be considered in the next few weeks. This becomes relevant to our February 18<sup>th</sup> monthly meeting when our more experienced growers, Aileen, Reiko, Pat, Gwen and Jacqui can help out with advice. Email anyone of them as they always willing to assist.

So it seems natural to include an article covering the basics of grooming as de-budding, de-blooming and removal of suckers and unwanted leaves become critical. It can be a continuous process and maintaining that sequence becomes a natural step on a weekly and monthly basis prior to our big Mother's Day weekend in May just over 12 weeks away.

Be wise when you remove leaves, suckers, buds and spent blooms as thick fingers can damage leaves close by. Use tweezers or long pointed scissors to assist in the task of removing buds or blooms.

Here is a suggested sequence that should be a reminder for some but maybe new to others.

- **O**nce a Week – Check for suckers. These are mini plants that grow from the base of the cultivar and are usually found under a larger leaf.
- **R**emove excess and spent bloom stalks and spent blossoms. Remove undesirable leaves and that will help new centre leaves to lie flat. Using a natural sponge or tissue, pat up any spilled fertilizer solution from foliage with a tissue or similar. Large droplets of solution may spot sensitive foliage.
- **O**nce a Month – With a damp cloth gently wipe the foliage to remove dust.



- **R**emoving Suckers – Remove suckers before they become large enough to distort the symmetry of the foliage. You will lose a lot of points if one is found by a judge.

## *What to take care with when Grooming*



- **R**emoving Spent Blossoms and Bloom Stalks – Removing faded blossoms and peduncles is part of the weekly grooming. Checking for, and possibly removing, excess bloom stalks should also be done weekly. However, removing peduncle and pedicel stubs is also a part of final grooming before a show.
- **B**rushing Foliage – Because of the hairy leaves of African violets and humid atmosphere, it is impossible to brush away dust without damaging the texture of the leaves. The only time foliage should be brushed is to flick away soil particles, etc., with a very soft bristled brush. A paint brush or similar maybe an alternative choice.



- **R**emoving Leaves – Leaves that are obviously limp, immature, etcetera should be removed. Take care that you are not over watering your African violets and a wick watering system can be best.
- **D**amp-wiping Foliage – Dust is not easily seen on African violet foliage because of the matte finish created by the minute hairs of the leaves. If you need reminding of how dust accumulates, check a tabletop that hasn't been dusted for a few days! It is necessary to damp-wipe foliage only about once a month. Even though some dust will have accumulated, adequate respiration is taking place from the undersides of the leaves.
- **W**ashing Foliage – Wash foliage when the temperature is at least 21°C and early enough in the day so that foliage dries before the lights turn off. Run tepid water over the foliage with the pot tilted so that the water does not flow into the pot, supporting each leaf in turn whilst using your thumb to wash away any imbedded grime. It is not necessary or advisable to wash the centre leaves. However, if some water does enter the central area, then tilt the plant and Pat up excess water with a soft natural sponge or tissue, and place the plant back

under the fluorescent lights – fluorescent light will not burn wet foliage. However, if large droplets of water are left on the foliage, the mineral content of the water may leave permanent spots. Sometimes water spots can be removed by damp-wiping the foliage with a weak vinegar solution – a couple of drops to a cup of water. Protect plants from drafts until foliage is dry.



- **W**hile you are at it, the pots you may use need to be washed so why not do the task, particularly when preparing your entries for Showing. A Clean pot always compliments the Show entry.

## An Introduction to Streptocarpus Plants

*Heather Harkness (Early Morn African Violet Group)*

Streptocarpus, although having a leaf similar to primroses, are not related to them, but belong to the Gesneriad family, which also includes African Violets (Saintpaulias), Columneas and Achimenes. (*Achimenes*, *Kohlerias* and *Smithianthas* form rhizomes when they go dormant. These rhizomes are underground structures some of which feel like grubs or pine cones. They should be potted up when just coming out of dormancy.)



Columnea 'Alladins Lamp'



Kohleria



Streptocarpella  
Streptocarpus  
*saxorum*  
Concord Blue

Streptocarpus fall into two distinct groups: those with stems, the Streptocarpellas, for example *Streptocarpus saxorum*, and the more commonly known types with a rosette of leaves. It is from these rosette types that the modern hybrids have been bred. These rosette species inhabit wooded ravines and valleys of the Drakensburg Mountains of Southern Africa. The first to be introduced into this country was *Streptocarpus rexii* in 1826. This has bluish flowers, but soon many other species followed and many crosses were made resulting in the hybrids found in many present-day seed mixtures. The first of the modern named hybrids was '*Constant Nymph*', bred at the John Innes Institute in 1946. In 1969, the John Innes Institute did more crosses involving other colours and produced the free-flowering varieties which form the base of our range.

Knowing their geographical distribution helps in understanding their care. Remember, they come from the wooded areas in mountains, so they do not want full sunshine, but they do want a bright position. Too much sun burns the leaves and fades the flowers. Keep them in a shaded greenhouse or indoors in an east or west window.

When you receive your plants, (if you have bought young plants) pot them into 80mm pots as soon as possible using a good peat or fibre-based potting compost. Shading is especially important for the first few days. Within a few weeks the plants should begin flowering. Know your plant and water regularly from above or below only when the plant requires it. The plant likes a higher humidity and because of the dryer conditions here in WA we use different methods to keep the humidity higher. One is to place the pot on small stones in water in a saucer like container. As it is important not to overwater Streptocarpus, wait until the compost feels dry to the touch. Overwatering, in particular regular over watering, will cause harm to the root system. They will go brown as healthy roots are white. The first symptom of overwatering is exactly the same as under watering, i.e. the plant will wilt. Outer leaves will droop first and so make sure the soil is actually dry to touch between watering. A month after potting up, commence feeding with a high-potash fertiliser. A convenient way is to insert a Streptocarpus fertiliser tablet each month. Please remember every plant is a separate individual and should be treated as such.

Always cut off dead flowers. Excessive or incorrect feed and poor light make the plants produce very large leaves and few flowers. It is quite natural as plants age for the old leaves to die back, and the ends should be trimmed off, especially in winter. In winter, water less often, do not feed and keep the plants in a place free from frost.

In September or October gradually start watering more often and commence feeding. Plants should be potted into a slightly larger pot each spring. Do not over-pot as you will get more flower by keeping on the pot-bound side. Using half or three-quarter depth pots is a good idea. Given this treatment you will be rewarded by a continuous display of flowers from about November until well into winter. You will also find the flowers are good for cutting. Streptocarpus varieties are easily grown plants which are remarkably free from pests and diseases. Greenfly (*pictured below left*) occasionally attack



plants and can be spotted from their white discarded skins on the flower stalks and leaf bases. A spray with a proprietary insecticide, either as an aerosol or mixed with water, will soon cure the problem.

The Horticultural Council of WA has released a new version of ***The Gardener's Handbook***. This is an essential 'bible' to have and **Helen Martin-Beck**, Chief Executive, is to be commended for her excellent production. It is free to download from the website.

### Watering using a Fertiliser

There are many ways to water African violets and the most common factor with most of the methods is to prepare the water premixed with fertiliser. There is a lot of advice from those who have experience in the preparation of large amounts for the many hundreds they grow implement different methods. Some of it depends on whether the fertiliser is a solid (such as Manutec) or a fluid fertiliser (such as Kenrose) and how they wish to deliver it to the plant.



The experienced growers err on the weaker side of a mix rather than follow a fertiliser manufacturer's recommended strengths. The majority of growers that the author has encountered use the wick watering system with either a grid system over a tray or the potted plant on its own reservoir. They also have to tray propagating multiple leaves which require frequent hand watering when baby plants start to grow from the leaf. A hose system from a large container (such as a bucket with a pump) or from containers like used milk containers thoroughly cleaned and flushed with bleach.



Other methods are foliage sprayers and the basic saucer that might be used in a kitchen window style. The type of water is reasonably important.

Rainwater is recommended, filtered tap water or tap water (left to stand for 24 hours), boiled water and when initially mixing in a soluble fertiliser, the use of a tepid water.

*Milk containers with rainwater and fertiliser mix outside for 24 hours before using, is one option.*

## Semi Miniatures and Miniatures



Texas Space Dust



Blue Jeans Baby Semi -  
Miniature



Little Pro Semi-miniature

1. The miniatures and semi-miniatures are very popular, but sadly, not as readily available as the standard plants. This is probably because the public are not prepared to pay for a plant only about 150mm in diameter. Although they don't take the same amount of room to grow, they do take just as long as the standard violets to grow and with considerably more care.

2. The culture for miniatures is exactly the same as for standard violets, but they are kept in smaller pots.

3. When taking baby miniatures off the mother leaf they should be potted into the smallest pot you can find and certainly no larger than 50mm. Being very small plants you will need to be very careful with watering until they have become established. They are left in 50mm pots until they have grown and flowered and after this they may be repotted and this means putting back into the same size pot.

4. Any old and yellowing lower leaves may be removed, some soil teased away from the roots and a little cut off the bottom.

5. Flowers should be removed and while it is out of the pot, check for suckers. Miniatures generally sucker more than standard plants and frequent inspections are needed to keep them off.

6. The spread of the leaves of a miniature is only 150mm so it should remain in a 50mm pot. Micro minis are even smaller than miniatures and a mature plant only grows to about 50 to 60 mm in diameter. These require very dexterous fingers to groom. Perhaps a small pointed pair of scissors.



Little Shimmer

Keep off any suckers and keep in as small a pot as you can find, and of course this requires very careful and frequent watering. Semi miniatures are a little larger and grow to approximately 200mm in diameter. They can be repotted into a 80mm pot after they have grown and flowered. Many of these sucker freely, so again check frequently and remove them.

Miniatures and semi-miniatures are beautiful little violets and flower freely and make a delightful display where you may not have room for the larger violets.

Miniatures are ideal for planting in terrariums because they remain small and do not outgrow the container, and they enjoy the humidity that prevails in a closed or nearly closed glass container. Remove spent blossoms frequently and watch for suckers. The plastic type bowls with the lift-off top makes grooming so much easier.



RD's True Blue



Optimara Little Pearl



Mickey Mouse - Miniature

The following is an excerpt from an article named **Thirty-five years down the track** by one of our E-members; Margaret Taylor. Margaret provided the article for the AVAA's *African Violet Newsletter* just this month:



"Someone once told me that experience is the best teacher, (another wise piece of wisdom upon which I often reflect). Experience comes with many mistakes, some disheartening. True Av addicts do (Pictured at left *Star Turn*) not give in to temporary failure. It is simply not an option.

Simple lessons I have learned:-

- Home-made potting mix is the best idea. It may take several attempts to get it right. It is good to know the ingredients, which is rarely the case with commercial mixes. Do not add lots of weird and wonderful ingredients. It is counter-productive.
- Keep the pH as close to 6.5 as possible. A pH meter is the best way to ensure this.
- Under-fertilise. Less is better than more. Av's are not heavy feeders.
- Do not over- water or allow drying out. Swamp/drought culture can be



lethal. (*Integrity pictured at left*)

- Groom plants regularly and watch for problems.
- If obtaining plants from another source do be sure to quarantine them well away from your own collection.
- If showing or distributing do check that your

name labels are accurate.

- Be very cautious about using strong chemicals. Preventative spraying for pests is counter-productive.
- Have a compost bin handy and learn to be ruthless. It pays in the long run.
- "Let there be light" Av's will not flourish without it."

## AVS-WA Inc. Competition Table Categories

The Competition starts at our first Meeting on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2017

So please enter and earn some points.

### **Open Class Categories**

Class 1	African violet - Single Colour
Class 2	African violet - Multi Colour
Class 3	African violet - Variegated
Class 5	African violet - Semi-Mini
Class 6	African violet - Trailing
Class 9	Gesneriad-Fibrous Rooted

### **Intermediate Class Categories**

Class 17	AV Single Colour
Class 18	AV Multi Colour
Class 19	AV Mini, Semi-miniature

### **Novice Class Categories**

Class 21	AV Single Colour
Class 22	AV Multi Colour

**Note:** Awards will only be given where an exhibitor has accumulated five or more points.

### **Note:**

An exhibitor must accumulate five or more points to be eligible for the Awards.

2016 Winner - Joan Meadowcroft now promoted to Intermediate Class

2016 Winner - Gwen Currie is now promoted to Open Class

### **Open Class**

This class has Aileen LaRosa, Reiko Lee, Jacqui Bateman and Gwen Currie

**Promotion** Congratulations to Gwen Currie who will exhibit in the Open Class of the 2017 Monthly Table Competition.

Trophies

**The Mary Galipo Trophy** for the most improved grower

**The Norma Dougall Perpetual Trophy** for overall the most points accumulated during the year 2017.

**Reiko Lee** is once again the Table Competition Organiser and ably assisted by Ann Cowie during 2017. Reiko also exhibits and does a fine job organising judges and entrants. Reiko provides feedback from entries after each Monthly Table Competition is finished. Reiko is a qualified judge and with Aileen LaRosa judges Intermediate and Novice entries. Reiko is one of our finest growers in the Society, winning many awards since joining 35 years ago.

## Tips and Tricks



- Some success with using the chlorine bleach solution spray has been experienced to get rid of **mildew**.

- 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 this remedy. Fill your sprayer with **warm water and a drop of detergent**, and then direct 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.
- Another way to possibly prevent pests is to regularly spray your leaves with a solution of 2.5 mls of **Neem Oil** per litre, once a week. If they are under lights, leave them off for about 12 hours after spraying.

- If your problem has been **soil mealy bugs**, by treating infested plants with undiluted methylated spirits. If evidence of soil mealy bugs (you 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) wash the soil off the roots of the plant, then dip or spray with methylated spirits. After a few moments re-wash the roots to remove the methylated spirits before potting up the plant. There are very few bad effects on the plants.



- We have been reminded that the **short clear plastic straws** which come with small tetra-pak drinks make excellent stakes for training African violets and other small gesneriads.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2017

*Subject to change*

- **WA Horticultural Council of WA Garden and Fairs – Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2017**

This is held at the South Perth Community Centre Corner South Terrace & Sandgate Street, South Perth. Need volunteers, growers must have plants in before 8 am on the Saturday. We will need volunteers to help with sales please. Open to the public from 8.30am to 4pm Saturday and 9am to 3pm Sunday.

- **Violet Talk 1 of 2017**

Our bi-monthly newsletter will be issued at the February 2017 General Meeting with photos of Christmas Luncheon and presentation of 2016 Table Competition Trophies. This will be available on the website that weekend. Coloured copies will also be sent to our supporters; RICHGRO, Floraplant, Kardinya Park Shopping Centre and Garden City Plastics now in Forreestfield. This is the first of 6 issues planned for 2017. Emailed copies are also sent to each of the African violet organisations in the eastern states. Electronic copies sent to Archives at the Battye Library in Perth.

- **The 2017 Annual May Show**

Held at Kardinya Park Shopping Centre, the public will have access from Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

Preparation of Show plants have eleven weeks to go before being judged on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May at the Shopping Centre.

More details from the Show Organiser.

- **The 2017 Annual May Show Presentations**

This is held a week after the completion of the Annual May Show Championships at the Manning Activity Centre in place of the normal Monthly General Meeting. A special guest will be invited to present the Championship Sashes and the trophies to the winners of the various categories in the Open, Intermediate and Novice Sections.

Remember anyone can enter Category One (African Violet group) and Category Two (Gesneriad group). It is open to anyone in the State of WA and is sponsored by the Horticultural Council of WA Inc).



**Optimara Samoa**

**Species *S. ionantha***



# AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF W.A. INC. SUPPORTERS



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## CANNINGTON

Supporting our competition table

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Adelaide South Australia



Early Morn – Melbourne Victoria



Hunter Valley



Brisbane - Queensland



Burwood Sydney NSW





***Celebrating 52 years***  
***1965 - 2017***

Visit our website [www.waavsinc.com](http://www.waavsinc.com) or Search the Internet for  
***African Violet Society WA***