

AFRICAN VIOLETS

HOW TO GROW AND PROPAGATE

WHY AFRICAN VIOLETS

They are one of the most popular houseplants because they are compact low growing plants that may flower several times a year. They come in a variety of color and their leaves are thick and fuzzy. Violet flowers bloom just above the foliage.

They are easy to grow as long as you follow a few simple rules.

CARE

They require bright, warm humid conditions and good air circulation.

Don't let water touch their leaves to avoid possible brown spots.

Deadhead flowers and leaves and to prevent root rot, make sure the soil is not too wet. Some mild damage is part of the growing process.

A. LIGHT

Plants do well in bright, indirect sunlight. If grown under fluorescent light, try to keep the light 12 to 15 inches above the leaves for 12 hours a day. Light green leaves develop from too much light, while dark leaves and leggy plants may be a sign of too little light.

B. SOIL

Well-drained potting mix is essential. Poor drainage can cause root rot and the leaves will fall. A good soil mix is:

1/2 peat moss

1/4 perlite

1/4 vermiculite

If you only intend to grow a few plants, it is best to use a ready-made bag of African Violet Mix. I use Miracle Gro African Violet Potting Mix and add some perlite for extra drainage and to retain moisture and aeration. The pH level should be slightly acidic from 5.8 to 6.5.

C. WATER

Use warm water. Water the plants from the saucers once a week. Do not let any water remain in the saucer after 24 hours. Do not use softened water because of the high salt content. I use distilled or hard water from my outside faucet. Remember not to allow the water to touch the leaves.

D. TEMPERATURE and HUMIDITY

Warm and humid conditions around 70 degrees are ideal. Less than 60 degrees is too cold. If possible, keep plants away from vents.

E. FERTILIZER

Feed an African Violet fertilizer once every other week in the Spring and Summer. You may cut back in the Fall and Winter to 1/2 strength once every other week.

F. REPOT

Repot every 6 to 12 months if the plants outgrow their pots.

PROPAGATION

1. Select a healthy green leaf from the middle of the plant. Avoid the older leaves. Snip them off at the base.
2. Cut a 1 inch stem at a 45 degree angle.
3. Place the cutting in a small pot filled with potting mix and water.
4. Cover the leaf with a clear plastic bag or a clear cup dome to form a "mini greenhouse."

5. **Sprouts should be ready to plant in about 12 weeks.**
6. **If your existing plant produces new shoots, remove and repot them.**
7. **Another method is to place a 1 inch leaf stem in a jar of water covered with aluminum foil. Make a small hole for the stem and in 4 to 6 weeks roots should form and the stem can be placed in the soil as in step 3 above.**

COMMON PESTS

The most common pests are mealy bugs. They will look like white cotton balls on the leaf stems. I use 70 percent ISOPROPHYL ALCOHOL and wipe with a Q-tip.

CONCLUSION

Now that you know how to do it, enjoy growing your beautiful African Violets.

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