



THE DIXIE NEWS

Publication of Dixie African Violet Society (www.DAVS.org)
Affiliate of African Violet Society of America, Inc. (www.avsa.org)
Mary Lou Harden, Editor (mlhard@verizon.net)

February 2015
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President's Message

Lynne Wilson



Dear Dixie Members,

This year started on a sad note just as last year ended on one. Dixie lost a devoted member, Mina Menish. Mina was also an active member of Tampa AVS and AVSA. Mina had a fall and it resulted in her death on December 9. I speak for many of us to say she will be missed. Cheryl Luna, of Central Florida AVS, and Christel Collier, of First Lakeland (FL) AVS, both suffered strokes. At this writing, both Cheryl and Christel are making great progress in their recovery. Please keep them in your prayers. We will wish them both a complete recovery.

Work is progressing for our 2015 Show and Convention. 'OZsome Violets', or Dixie in the Land of OZ, is a marvelous theme and one sure to have our designers' creative juices flowing. Can't wait to see what they come up with.

Our convention city has everything from 'Winter the Dolphin' star of A Dolphin's Tale to Bascom's Chop House Restaurant (one of the top rated in Clearwater) which is practically next door. Beaches, Moonlight Dinner Cruises, Golf, Deep Sea Fishing, etc. This is a vacation destination for many.

Hosting club, the African Violet Council of Florida, is co-sponsoring an AVSA Judging School, open to any member of AVSA. The School will be taught by Dixie's Judges' Chair, Sue Hoffmann, and will take place on Wednesday, April 15. You'll find complete details elsewhere in this newsletter.

Also, you'll find a listing in this issue of the presentations – workshops which will be given at the convention. Be sure to check them out and plan to attend all of them.

Finally, it is the friends we have made over the years and the chance to buy new plants and old favorites from the vendors that makes these conventions so enjoyable. Bring items for the auction. This is so much fun for the bidders and really helps Dixie recover some convention costs.

Hope to see you all in Clearwater!

Lynne



Harbor Blue
Christel Collier photo

**Check out our website
at
www.DAVS.org**

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Episcia
'Suomi'

2015 DIXIE CONVENTION UPDATE

Kathy Spissman, Dixie Convention Director
770-939-5289 or mrsstrepstreps@comcast.net

HOLIDAY INN HOTEL
ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER AIRPORT
3535 Ulmerton Road, Clearwater, FL 33762
APRIL 15-18, 2015
Hosted by: African Violet Council of Florida

The days are clicking away so it is time to make those reservations at the hotel. Please call the hotel direct (727-577-9100) and if you have any trouble, ask for Lindsay Middleton who will help with your reservation. Also send in your convention registration (with check made payable to African Violet Council of Florida) to Therese Lynam, 1403 Compton Street, Brandon, FL 33511.

We will have two more commercials to tempt you! Laura Perdomo (The Peacock Cottage) of Silver Springs, FL, has bought the Dandy Pot business and will have Dandy Pots for sale along with violets. Also, Steve Turner (Southgate, MI) of Starz N Streps has joined Dixie and will be selling violets and streptocarpus. We welcome all our commercials, so tell all your friends and family. It will be a wonderful opportunity to get our favorite varieties -- plus we need to support all our commercials.

If you have any comments or questions, do not hesitate to call or email.

See you soon!



Eternal Orbit
by
Lyndon Lyon

AVSA NEWS

by Lynne Wilson
tpalynne@tampabay.rr.com

The African Violet Society of America 69th Annual Convention and Show “Violets Love Jazz, Blues & Barbecue!” Holiday Inn KCI Airport Hotel Kansas City, MO May 24-31, 2015

I hope many of you are planning to attend the 2015 AVSA Convention in Kansas City from Sunday, May 24 through Sunday May 31. “Violets Love Jazz, Blues and Barbecue” is this year’s theme. Many vendors from all over the country will be on hand to tempt us with new introductions as well as old favorites.

AVSA is participating in the Amazon Smile donation program. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate to AVSA a percentage of the purchase price on purchases made on Amazon through the AmazonSmile website. Your shopping experience functions just like regular Amazon website shopping.

You may access AmazonSmile by clicking on the button at the bottom of any page on the AVSA website. Once you have signed in to AmazonSmile through this link, your purchases will be credited to the AVSA’s donation amount.

Remember to always shop at AmazonSmile. Save the link in your favorites list. You will know you’re helping AVSA when the AmazonSmile page says “Supporting The African Violet Society of America Inc.” in the upper left.

First Class for Android Phones is now available. This product listing is in the AVSA Store. For more information check the AVSA Store.

JOIN THE AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA

An AVSA membership offers the following benefits:

- Six full-color issues annually (64 pages each) of the African Violet Magazine filled with great growing information
 - Regular columns include

- For Beginners
- Question Box
- In Search of New Violets
- Gesneriad Advice
- Thinking Small
- Coming Events

The AVM gives members continuous information on the latest developments in the African violet world. Commercial members advertise and sell the latest and most popular violets and products. The September issue contains an insert which lists all commercial members so you can find one near you or write for their latest catalog or list. *(Some information formerly published in the AVM, such as the Commercial List, can now be found on the website, on the Magazine page, and is available for members only.)*

Discounted prices on all products sold in the AVSA Store.

AVSA holds annual conventions in various regions of the country. All members may participate in these exciting events which feature judged shows open to all registered AVSA members.

Commercial members also display their newest introductions and have booths where plants and plant-related products are sold. Informative presentations are made by experts in African violet culture.

AVSA maintains an extensive library of slide and video programs which are available to members at a nominal service charge. Individual Membership is \$30. Send check with contact information to:

AVSA
2375 North Street
Beaumont, TX 77702
Or register online at www.AVSA.org.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Johnnie Berry, Membership Chair & Treasurer
287 Fennel Way SW
Atlanta, GA 30331-4107
johnniepearl@comcast.net

Marian R. Yeager, Sarasota, FL

RENEWALS

Linda Price, Apopka, FL
River City AVS, Deltona, FL
Violet Gallery, York Springs, PA



PICTURES, PLEASE!

If you have pictures from last year's convention at Baton Rouge, LA, please e-mail copies to Laura Walker or bring copies with you to the

Clearwater convention. Laura maintains Dixie's history in a scrapbook, soon to be turned into digital format. Laura's e-mail address is: violetsofbc@windstream.net



SYMPATHY

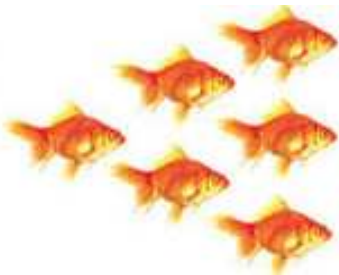
We were saddened to learn of the passing away of a long-time Dixie member and wonderful grower of African violets – Mina Menish of Brandon, FL. Mina was born in

Germany but just last year celebrated 60 years of living in the U.S. Many of us will remember Mina from the "Repotting for Dummies" presentation she and Lynne Wilson gave at local and state clubs, and also at Dixie's 2013 convention in Memphis. Mina was currently serving as First Vice President of Tampa AVS. She is sorely missed. We extend our condolences to her family.

Dare to be



different



OR. . .How to Express Yourself in Design

Bob L. Green

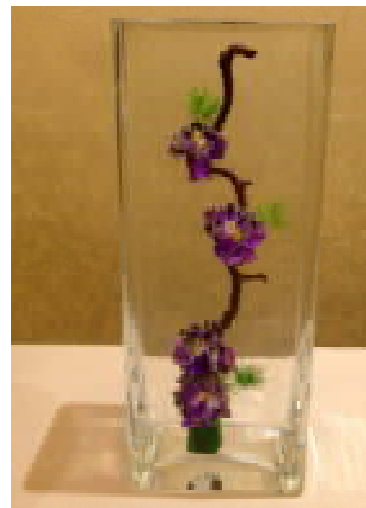
[I wrote this article for AVSA over 30 years ago, and AVSA published it in the *African Violet Magazine* in 1984. Through the years, I have "dared to be different" in my design work, winning multiple awards, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. This article remains pertinent today. There are only a few items that have changed. "Artistic plantings" became "plant arrangements" in 1986. To my knowledge, you can no longer buy double-knit fabrics, even though I have stock-piled quite a bit. I use a lot of poster board and artist board now, since there are so many colors and

textures available today. I haven't used a glue gun for years, since it became increasingly difficult for me to crawl around under tables to find electrical wall outlets. For many years I have used Oasis Liquid Adhesive to glue blossoms in designs.]

As a designer, one's purpose should be to create something of beauty that will elicit a positive feeling or response from the viewer – delight, amusement, a nostalgic feeling, astonishment, or a pleasant recognition of the designer's personal interpretation of a particular theme. And, creating that something of beauty is not like making a cake with a well tried and tested family recipe. Nor is it "a piece of cake." It is a very personal expression of one person's views and imagination, and it is not easy, but requires much thought and work to get it just right.

When working up a design, it is best to be flexible and experimental. Working with one's imagination and daring to be "different" or original is far more important than being technically perfect and correct. Therefore, I approach design work much in the same manner as an artist approaches painting. I express myself freely in the beginning without regard to the limitations of the traditional definitions of design principles and elements. It is my belief that we need not overly concern ourselves with the technicalities of the principles and elements of design, as they are more or less self-evident and will naturally be expressed and "fall into place" as we scrutinize and refine our designs.

There are three basic things I always keep in mind when working up a design. They are: Space, height and color. And, certainly, not always in that order! But, I'm getting ahead of myself.



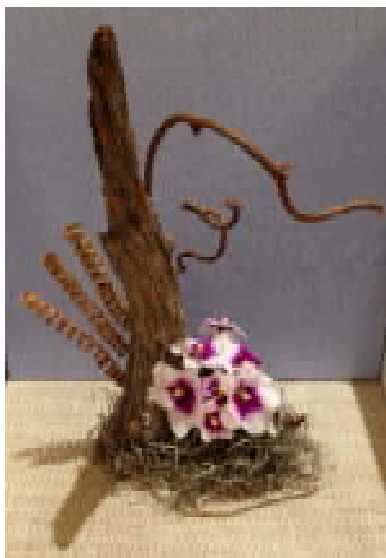
"Mississippi"

Underwater Design
By Paul Kroll
East Aurora, NY

2014 AVSA
Convention

The very beginning of any design is the show schedule. Let's discuss that briefly. One should always study the design classes of a schedule carefully. Then, select only those classes which ignite or spark your imagination at first reading. Dissect the class titles. Look up key words in the dictionary so you'll know all the meanings of the words. Don't ever force yourself to consider classes that don't spark your thoughts. Try to read something "different" into the class titles – then, develop that something "different" into your design. Dare to let your imagination and feelings run wild.

Before starting to work up a design at home, I recommend you set up a niche to work in. What I use is ½ inch Perma-R-Foam expanded polystyrene insulation board, cut to show schedule niche size specifications with an electric carving knife and put together with fern and corsage pins. You can get the insulation board at most building supply stores. It is inexpensive, stark white in color, and very lightweight. When not in use, it is easily disassembled, and easily stored for future use. Your backgrounds can be readily attached to the back of the insulation board niche at the top edge with corsage pins, pushed through the top edge of the background into the top of the niche.



"Dollywood"
by Judith Carter
Broken Arrow, OK
2014 AVSA
Convention

Once I have decided on a certain design class and set up my niche, the first thing I consider is my background color. This is probably backwards in some eyes, but it is the way I start. Since color, like music, has very strong emotional appeal and is the most compelling part of a design, I am very careful to select a background color that will give my design character

and cause it to be noticed – and a color that other competitors in the same class might not use. For example, in a class interpretive of Halloween, I would not use black, yellow or orange (since my fellow competitors might). Instead, I would probably use a gray or some shade of brown or rust. In choosing a background color, shy away from the colors of purple and orange – research has shown that they are the least liked colors by the majority of people, and that they evoke uneasy, disquieting feelings.

You should always use a background with your design if the show schedule permits. If you don't, then your finished design (like a beautiful painting without a frame) will lack a certain amount of distinction which you could have readily given it. Besides, other competitors may choose not to use a background and use the niche as is – then, your design and theirs will have a certain similarity.

I make my backgrounds from common poster board, covered with fabric. Did you know that poster board has two different sides? One side is slick and shiny and the other side is dull or matte finished. When covering the poster board with your background fabric, it is better to cover the dull side. The reason for this is so your fabric will absorb light rather than reflect it. With some fabrics, especially double-knits, if against the slick side of the poster board, light swirls might be created in your background should a spotlight be directed on your design in the showroom. This, then, would create a distraction in your design that you had not planned on.

Fabrics I recommend for covering backgrounds are: Double-knits, lightweight wools, and some polyesters. These are all fairly wrinkle and crease resistant, and are easy to tape to poster board. Unless you are a very experienced designer, you should always use solid-colored fabrics, as they will not conflict with your designs. You should also cover a piece of poster board with the same fabric to go in the bottom of the niche, under your arrangement or artistic planting, thus unifying your total design.

White poster board should always be used. A colored poster board is dyed and if just one drop of water hits it, the dye will bleed through to your fabric.

You must plan ahead as to how you will fasten your background in your assigned niche at a show. Always take along some masking tape, nylon filament tape,

duct tape and corsage pins. In convention shows, you never really know whether the niches will be wood, plastic or heavy cardboard. In your own local shows of course, you should know. If you know the niches will be against a wall, you can leave about six extra inches of fabric extending freely from one end of your background board – then, when you place the board in the niche in the showroom, the six extra inches can be draped over the top of the niche and will hold your background upright. The base board will secure the bottom of the background, once it is weighted down with your arrangement or artistic planting.

The second thing I consider in working up a design is how to accomplish height. This, of course, is accomplished with what we commonly refer to as line material. It can be a number of things, from driftwood and dried twigs to various kinds of live plant materials. At its highest point, your line material should come to within one and a half to two inches of the top of the niche. If any more than two inches of space is left at the top of your line material, your design will not appear to adequately fill the niche. You can generally disregard the space on either side of your design so long as the total design appears to be proportionate top to bottom and is strategically placed in the niche – of course, no part of your arrangement or artistic planting should touch any part of the niche or extend beyond it from the front or the top.



“Antebellum”

by Candace Baldwin
Phoenix, AZ

2014 AVSA
Convention

The stability or balance of a design begins with the selection of the line material. Just

how you will stabilize or balance your arrangement or artistic planting is a practical matter and must be done in a practical way. You must analyze the relationship of container to plant materials to finished design – thinking that relationship through just as a builder

does, for you are actually the builder of an arrangement or artistic planting. Like the placing of the builder’s cornerstone, the placement of your very first piece of line material is of utmost importance to achieving stability or balance.

Mechanics used to help stabilize your design should be chosen for their usefulness – use anything at your disposal that will do the job required.

Line material is the foundation or “skeleton” of any design. It creates the visual path along which the viewer’s eyes are led. It is direction. It is also the support or holder for the African violet blossoms in an arrangement and an extension of the African violet plant in an artistic planting.

Next, I consider the color of African violet blossoms I will use. You should consider colors which will stand out in front of your background, and you should use enough blossoms to capture the viewer’s eyes immediately. Don’t limit your color choices to only those blossom colors on plants that you have in your immediate possession, as you can get blossoms and blooming plants from other sources. There is no requirement that you possess the blossoms and plants for any specified length of time before entering your design in a show, such as is the requirement for horticulture specimen entries.



When working up a design at home, I always use silk flowers and I recommend you do the same. Why use up all your real blossoms when you might need them later for a show? There are many silk flowers on the market now that, once disassembled, look remarkably like African violet blossoms. You could also use plastic flowers but I have found them difficult to work with and they do not possess the fragility of African violet blossoms as do the silk flowers. I clip the silk flowers from their main stems, leaving about an inch of the pedicel. Then, I secure these to wooden floral picks with floral tape (the same way I do fresh blossoms in finished designs.

I have found that the best way to treat blossoms that will be used in a finished design is to leave them on

the plant until ready to put in the arrangement the morning of a show. I water the plants with six drops of SUPERthrive to a gallon of warm water the night before I will cut the blossoms. I always take the entire plant with me to the show and cut and assemble the blossoms the morning of judging. I do the same with my plants I use in artistic planting classes. If African violet plants are placed in an artistic planting the night before judging, the leaves and bloom stalks tend to lean, especially if the plant is tilted in the planting. And, this leaning disrupts the flow of a planting's lines.

In artistic plantings, to prepare a plant for placement in the planting, I remove the plant from its pot, crumble off enough of the soil so that the rootball fits snugly into a plastic sandwich bag, then slip the foot part of a nylon stocking around the plastic-encased rootball and secure it around the trunk of the plant. The nylon stocking tones down any glare created from light hitting the plastic bag.

When placing blossoms in an arrangement, place them as they would naturally grow – do not flatten them out or press them too closely together. I have learned from experience that the blossoms from the patented African violets – Optimaras, Ballets, etc. – retain their freshness better and longer than other varieties.

The use of transition material in a design is not always necessary – but it is safer to use it than to leave it out. Transition material is used primarily as filler material to give a design depth and dimension, while at the same time serving to cover up or camouflage mechanics such as water picks and pinholders. Experienced designers are able to omit transition material entirely, without harming their designs.

If you don't already have one, buy yourself a hot glue gun. It is indispensable in doing design work for gluing line materials together, gluing water picks to plant material, and, if very carefully done, for gluing fresh-cut violet blossoms to line materials. And, always take your glue gun with you to a show. You never know when something might get broken and have to be repaired – often at the very last minute when assembling your finished design in the niches in the showroom.

As you work up your design at home, develop one idea (picture) only. If you don't, you will find that your design will become unmanageable and you will not be

able to sustain smooth eye movement through the design. Also, don't forsake your original idea – but continue to rework and refine it. Experiment by adding here and subtracting there. Set up your practice niche and design in an area of your home where you will be forced to look at it constantly. When you have completely taxed your imagination, become thoroughly exasperated and are ready to toss out your work, take a break for several days and completely ignore your design. Then, after several days of totally ignoring your design, re-analyze what you have already done. You will find that it is now much easier to resolve the problems you had with the design earlier, and you will be better equipped mentally to make everything “fall into place.”



Picasso

Christel Collier
photo

To my knowledge, there are no books which deal specifically with African violet designs. However, there are many excellent books on artistic design in general. Of those many books, there are four which I highly recommend to any serious or aspiring African violet designer. They are: *The Complete Flower Arranger* by Amilie Adler Ascher. This book, the most elementary of the four, deals with every aspect of floral design. The author describes the best floral materials and accessories to use, explains tricks that make flower arrangement techniques easier, and shows how just about anyone can create designs with little or no previous experience. *The Art of Flower Arranging*, by Marian Aaronson. In this, her first book, the author shows how rewarding it is for the designer to progress from the basic to the more creative aspects of designing; and how design, once appreciated, is the key to self-expression and interpretation of ideas. *Design with Plant Material* by Marian Aaronson. The author takes us a step further to even more creative and freer styles in designing in this, her second book. She shows that there is no limit to the possibilities of something new and challenging in designing, and that it need never become repetitive. And, *Flowers in the Modern Manner* by Marian Aaronson. In this, her third and latest book, and my favorite, the author shows us her beautiful designs in color, and then explains with the aid of an artist's line drawings just how the designs were arrived at, piece by piece.

LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS of a Novice

Sandra Kerns (kernss@tampabay.rr.com)

Back in May 2014, Mina Menish, then matriarch of the Tampa African Violet Society (TAVS), called me one evening to request that at our December meeting I do a presentation focusing on my first year as a novice in TAVS. I agreed because deep inside of me I knew it wasn't polite to refuse a request by Mina, but as soon as my conversation with Mina ended, I went into a panic. What was I going to tell a group of people who could easily write the encyclopedia on African Violets? After a few moments of great anxiety, I gathered my thoughts and remembered that my task was to speak as a novice. I convinced myself the task was possible since novices often do look at a new world through a different lens. So, on the evening of December 4, 2014, I gave the members of TAVS a brief peek at the lens I had been looking through for a little over a year. Through my lens the Tampa African Violet Society has adopted the traditions of the Southern front porch.



While the Southern front porch may be virtually extinct today, I contend its traditions are alive and well at TAVS.

One similarity TAVS has with the Southern front porch is its adherence to the custom of greeting others. Porch dwellers were compelled to greet a passerby whether it was a stranger or someone they knew. As a matter of fact, it was considered extremely rude not to wave or say hello to all who passed by.

The very first night I attended a TAVS meeting I arrived early, so I sat in my car waiting for others to arrive. Right about the time the doors to the meeting place were opened, a car pulled up alongside mine and a woman stepped out of her car just as I was stepping out of mine. She gave me a big smile, introduced herself as Anita Adlin, and welcomed me to the meeting. Not only did she walk inside with me, but when I found a seat at a table, she made sure to sit by me and keep me company throughout the meeting. To this day, Anita's warm reception remains very vivid in my memory.

Not only does TAVS adhere to the custom of greeting others, but like the Southern front porch it is a place where people share knowledge. Because sharing knowledge is very much a part of TAVS, it didn't take me long to view the members of this club as the Brain Trust of African Violets. At every meeting TAVS has a mini-class. The first meeting I attended Mina taught a class on propagation. Little did I know that propagation merely included taking a healthy leaf, cutting the stem at an angle, sticking the stem in some soil, placing it in the proper environment and in about thirteen weeks there would be many baby plants.

Also, when I joined TAVS I had no clue how to compose a container garden until Therese Lynam had a class on container gardens. She



brought to our meeting all the ingredients needed and composed the garden while providing meticulous details. I would never have even considered entering a container garden into the TAVS annual show if it had not been for Therese's class. However, mini-classes are not the only way that I have learned from this Brain Trust. When I volunteered to clerk at the African Violet Council of Florida's 2013 annual show, I was lucky to be on a team with Jim Boyer. He was functioning as a judge and encouraged me to ask questions as judging took place. His expertise and patience enabled me to learn a great deal about how African Violets are judged. Jim taught me what's expected by judges to award a blue ribbon, but most importantly he convinced me that a plant does not have to be perfect to be exhibited.

The third aspect of the Southern front porch that TAVS mimics is the creating of intimacy between friends and family. Just the



nature of the Southern front porch kept members of the community aware of each other. At TAVS, members know when members' birthdays occur, when members are ill, and when family members are ill or pass away. Consequently, if I want to send a card to a member or even an email, I always have everyone's contact information at my fingertips. This ease of

communication is possible because of the TAVS yearbook that is distributed to all members on a yearly basis. Such intimacy cannot be under-estimated. It clearly helps the members of this club to be successful growers.

Another peek through my lens reveals that TAVS, like the Southern front porch, is a place where people can mix and mingle. The front porch was always a comfortable spot where people could relax, sip a cold drink, talk with a friend, or eat a summer supper. At all TAVS meetings, we are privileged to participate in the act of social eating, and here we have the opportunity to mix and mingle. During these dinners the members of TAVS are able to gather and talk. At one such dinner I was bemoaning the fact that the days were extremely cloudy and short and expressed my concern as to whether or not my plants would be in bloom and ready for the TAVS annual show. Lynne Wilson immediately suggested that I put the plants under a reading lamp in the evenings. That seems like such a simple solution, but it's not one I would have thought of at the time.

At another meeting Sheryl Herold and I were having a conversation during dinner and she shared with me that some of her African violets have been in her family for years. Mixing and mingling can inform members in ways never expected. I appreciate learning the connection that members have to African violets and to discover that for many members, growing violets is not just a passing fancy.

Southern front porch sitting was not just about mixing and mingling but often about storytelling. Likewise, many TAVS meetings are an ideal space for storytellers. Here TAVS members can find enthusiastic listeners, in particular novices. At one evening meeting Mary Lou Harden shared a story about a former novice who was reluctant to exhibit in an upcoming annual show. As the story goes, Mary Lou convinced the novice to let her examine the novice's plants and let her know which of her plants were worthy of exhibiting. As it turned out, every plant the novice shared with Mary Lou was show worthy. There certainly were parts of this story that I could relate to because I, too, wanted to exhibit but was reluctant. One small story can have a great impact, and this story really gave me the courage to exhibit at the 2014 annual show.

The Southern front porch was not only known for sharing anecdotes, but it was additionally known for being extremely informative. It often served as the daily, local newspaper. In like manner, TAVS has its own local newspaper, "The Petal." Every edition enables members to catch up on the latest African violet happenings. Members are constantly kept

apprised of upcoming events relevant to the African violet community. Local plant festivals, annual shows sponsored by AVSA, DAVS, AVCF, and Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society are published regularly.

While the Southern front porch and TAVS are similar in keeping others informed, they additionally and importantly share a connection to nature. For example, Southern front porches were surrounded by beautiful hydrangeas with blue blooms, elegant crape myrtles with bright pink blooms, and lush trees that provided shade. On the TAVS front porch, members are surrounded by nature with the beautiful blooming plants that members like Nancy Kast, Jerry Kast, Lynne Wilson, Mary Lou Harden and many other members bring to meetings. These plants have blooms of blue, white, purple, pink, and coral.

I rather like the lens that I've been looking through this past year. I am proud to be a dweller of the TAVS front porch—a place where people reach beyond themselves to give to others.

Information about Southern front porches obtained from *Swinging in Place: Porch Life in Southern Culture* by Jocelyn Hazelwood Donlon. The University of North Carolina Press (October 31, 2000).

PRESENTATIONS AT CLEARWATER CONVENTION

"Designing Intriguing Container Gardens"
by Phyllis King, Seminole, FL

"Growing Award Winning Violets"
by Thad Scaggs, Spring Hill, FL

"A Tune Up for Your African Violet Club"
Panel Discussion: Carolee Carter, Ocala, FL,
Sharon Gartner, Jacksonville, FL, and
Gladys Cook Schneider, Tampa, FL



Cajun's Simply Elegant
Kurt Jablonski



NEWS FROM LOUISIANA

by Louisiana Director
Becky McMeel

Sundowner's African Violet Society will host their Annual Show and Plant Sale on Saturday, March 28th from 2 pm till 5 p.m. and Sunday, March 29th from 11 am till 3 pm at the Baton Rouge Garden Center. Theme for this year's show is "Violets - Gems of the Flower World". Show Chair is George Ramirez.

Sundowner's African Violet Society has a page on Facebook through which we post pictures from our shows and information about our upcoming activities. We have been averaging 35-40 + hits a week. It is a great way to advertise the club and events to any violet lover/grower out there. If you have a techie in your group, perhaps a Facebook page will benefit your club, too!

Here is a picture of the club at our monthly meeting held at Belinda Thibodeaux's home. Member and State Director Becky McMeel is holding a Russian violet named AE It's Raining, being grown by our hostess. Pictured are: Back row (l-r): Robbie McMeel President, Laura Moser Past President, George Ramirez Show Chairman, and Wilhelmina Allen Treasurer.

Front Row (l-r): Lee Jaunet and Sallie Barlow club members, Becky McMeel Recording Secretary, Shannon Breaux club member and Belinda Thibodeaux Corresponding Secretary. Absent from picture are Susie Smith Vice President and Trudy Blanchard, member.



NEWS FROM TENNESSEE



by Tennessee
Directors Marian and Greg Zoller

Welcome from Tennessee. Members of Memphis AVS have been busy this fall. We have had several interesting programs at our monthly meetings, including subjects such as African violet hybridizing and judging Gesneriads. Our local members have also presented talks on a variety of topics.

We had a fall plant sale on November 1 to generate some money for the club. We were especially happy to see several who came all the way from Little Rock and loaded up their car with plants. We think this was made possible thanks to Christine Bailes, one of our newest members, who set up a Facebook page for the club. We are so happy to see the new members getting so involved. Please visit us on Facebook.

For fun and funds we also had a Chinese Auction that everyone enjoys. In November we support the church where we meet by bringing canned goods for their Thanksgiving baskets to give to the poor. The church is so good to us and we like to support their project whenever we can.

In December the MAVS members and guests enjoyed a pot luck meal. It was followed by a "wild" game of dirty Santa (gift exchange).

We would love to have visitors, so come by any 3rd Saturday at 1pm. We meet at Central Christian Church, 531 S. McLean Blvd, Memphis.



xColtrichantha 'Midget'
Christel Collier photo

FROM THE DAVS AWARDS DESK
Marian & Greg Zoller



HELLO...
Is
Anybody
Out
There???

Time is getting short! The convention is almost upon us and we badly need your help in building up the awards fund. Since the last issue we

have received only one contribution to the fund.

Please consider sending a late Christmas gift to DAVS Awards. We want to be able to return it to you at the 2015 convention. We want it to be the best convention ever, so please consider sending in a contribution and asking your club to do the same.

We would like to thank Bloomin' Violets and Gesneriads of Palm Beach for their generous award donation.

Please send your checks to:

DAVS Awards
c/o Marian and Greg Zoller
4815 Oak Lane Cove N.
Arlington, TN 38002
901/372-0283
marigregz@gmail.com

Thanks! . . .and we look forward to seeing you in Florida!

**DEADLINE FOR MAY ISSUE:
APRIL 15, 2015**

BECOME A MEMBER!

(Membership Application on p.21)

Please send check payable to DAVS to
Johnnie Berry, Membership Secretary
287 Fennel Way, SW, Atlanta, GA 30331
johnniepearl@comcast.net



Exercise!

Practice!



Sue Hoffmann
DAVS Judges' Chair

Both are somewhat dreaded words, yet both make us stronger and better at what we do. How does this pertain to African violet judges?

Exercise: First, make sure to keep current with your Judges Handbook to keep your judging skills honed. Before you are scheduled to judge, take some time to scan the book. Second, study the show schedule in advance. See how classes are divided, read the designs and get a feel for the show theme. Above all, read the Shows & Judges column in the African Violet Magazine. Bill Foster discusses questions and/or problems that have occurred and explains how they should be handled. He also reinforces rules from the Judges Handbook that were either not understood or just ignored by judges. Often there are changes to the Handbook that should be copied into your own book. It is important to keep a current copy of the Judges Handbook with all additions and corrections that have been noted in Bill's column. This will help tremendously when you are taking your next Judges' test. I failed to add changes one year and missed two questions because I copied the unedited sentence from the book. My bad and definitely my fault!

Practice: Do you practice what you preach? Have you "judged" your own collection? Do you grow the type plants you are judging? I've learned so much about species plants – the easy bloomers and those that are very shy bloomers. Do you grow trailers? No two are the same. They grow in shapes and should be judged for shape, not symmetry. I had a blue-ribbon trailer marked to a red in one show and found the comment, "Beautiful plant, but it is a triangle." Isn't a triangle a shape? Do you have experience with Vintage varieties? Many of the older varieties just plain grow "open". They wouldn't have overlapping leaves regardless of what you try.

If you volunteer to judge Design, you should enter designs in shows. The more you practice creating designs, the better you will be at judging designs. Much like playing a violin; you don't learn to make

music by looking at the instrument. You learn by playing it – practicing!



Episcia 'Tiger Stripe'

Every African violet judge should gain a working knowledge about other members of the Gesneriad family. Grow some streptocarpus, primulinas,

columnneas or kohlerias. To see some amazing symmetry, try a *Petrocosmea rosettifolia*. Know about tuberous and rhizomatous growing habits. If you have an opportunity, go to a Gesneriad show and take a Gesneriad judging school. If you want experience judging the Other Gesneriads, let the Judges Chairman know you wish to learn and see if you can be put with experienced Gesneriad judges. Believe it or not – Gesneriad judges must turn in a sheet **every year** listing how many shows they've judged and classes/programs they've given to maintain their active status. That's actually like turning in a practice record. I guess the music teacher will be with me forever?



Primulina dryas 'Hisako'

Remember, judging African violets is your skill. Exercise and practice help perfect your skill, plus you can have a lot of fun doing it, too!

What's There To Do in Clearwater Besides Violets and Seeing Friends, You Ask?

Carolee Carter



Now that the holidays are a memory and your New Year's Resolutions are being kept, I hope you have been checking your "To Do" list and have discovered that a decision needs to be made about attending the annual Dixie Show and Convention that is scheduled

for April 15-18 in Clearwater Florida.

Clearwater? Why would I want to go to Clearwater? Should I travel early in the week? Extend my stay over the Easter weekend and avoid the travel crowds? Is there anything in the Clearwater area to lure me to do that? Well, let me tell you that there is so much to do that you might find yourself slipping out of the hotel during convention to see everything on your list!

First of all, a big plus is that it will be WARMER in Clearwater than areas from which some of you might be traveling! Clearwater is located just north of St. Petersburg and west of Tampa, so there's a LOT of temptations from each of these cities. So, let's take a look at how many will whet your appetites to start making those travel plans:

➤ **If you like the arts and culture, here are a few options that are well worth your time:**

- The **Dali Museum** (www.thedali.org) in St Petersburg houses one of the world's largest collections by the legendary Salvador Dali. The building itself is an amazing piece of architecture. And while you're there, check out the **Pier** (www.stpetepier.com) nearby for some great shops, boutiques, galleries and the winery.
- **Chihuly Collection** (<http://www.moreanartscenter.org/content.php?id=90>) at the Morean Arts Center has a stunning permanent collection of the world-renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly.
- **Museum of Fine Arts** in St Petersburg (www.fine-arts.org) is one of the jewels of the Southeast with works by Cezanne, Monet, Gauguin, Renoir and many more.
- **Henry B. Plant Museum** (www.plantmuseum.com) in Tampa is not to be missed. The railroad magnate built the most astonishing hotel in the swamps of what would be known as Tampa that attracted the rich and famous from around the world. With its Moorish architecture, opulent furnishings and spectacular tropical gardens, you shouldn't miss visiting this treasure.
- **Ybor City** is a Tampa National Landmark Historic District (www.ybor.org) that's more commonly known as Tampa's Latin Quarter and is a feast for the senses. It was a cigar-manufacturing center where you can still see the craft of hand-rolling cigars as well as delight in the aromas of Cuban coffee and Latin music.
- The **Tampa Bay History Center** (www.tampabayhistorycenter.org) is a Smithsonian affiliate and focuses on 12,000 years of Florida history.

➤ **There are more than a dozen stunning talcum-powder-soft white sand beaches with the beautiful clear turquoise water in both Clearwater and St. Petersburg that are tempting treats for an hour or two of soaking up the rays. Other water-related treats include:**

- **Captain Memo's Pirate Cruises** (www.captainmemo.com)
- **Dolphin Racer Speedboat Adventure** (www.DolphinRacer.com)
- And, just north of Clearwater is **Tarpon Springs**, a working seaport and shopping district that feels like a Grecian fishing village (<http://www.spongedocks.net/things-to-do.htm>). Go for a sponge diving exhibition and cruise from their dock! The downtown area is a showcase of historic homes from the Victorian era. And don't miss the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral with its Byzantine architecture and paintings by George Inness, Jr.
- The **Florida Aquarium** (www.flaquarium.org) in downtown Tampa is not to be missed either and offers a Wild Dolphin Cruise on Tampa Bay. And, the **Clearwater Marine Aquarium** (www.seewinter.com) is where you can see Winter, the famous tailless dolphin that starred in the movie Dolphin Tale.
- If you want to see a true "Old Florida" pink grand hotel, then visit or spend a night at the **Don CeSar Hotel** in St. Petersburg (<http://www.loewshotels.com/don-cesar/>). Its beach is wide and the outdoor bar and grill tempting!

➤ **Would seeing animals or gardens be more of a treat for you? Then, don't miss the spectacular Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa (www.lowryparkzo.com) that is named the #1 Zoo in the U.S. by Parents magazine. Or:**

- **The Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary** (www.bigcathabitat.org) is touted as the most exciting, interactive, educational animal adventure in the State of Florida.
- **The Big Cat Rescue** sanctuary on 55 acres is equally beautiful with tours daily (www.bigcatrescue.org).
- The **Sunken Gardens** (<http://www.stpete.org/sunken/>) in St. Petersburg is a botanical paradise with meandering paths, waterfalls and they claim to have 50,000 tropical plants and flowers.

➤ **What if you like excitement with thrills or gaming adventures? Or, shopping and dining? Then,**

- **Busch Gardens** is right up your alley (www.buschgardens.com). This fun park combines world-class thrill rides and Broadway-style live entertainment.
- The **Seminole Hard Rock Casino** in Tampa (www.seminolehardrocktampa.com) also awaits your money, boasting over 190,000 square feet of non-stop gaming action.
- Some who visit with their spouses may want to wander off for a morning or afternoon of **Golf**. If so, check out the places listed here (<http://www.golfink.com/golf-courses/city.aspx?dest=Clearwater+FL>).
- And shopping? Well there's **Largo Mall** (www.largomall.com) with over 70 stores, and the **Hyde Park Village** (www.hydeparkvillage.com) in Tampa to name just two areas.
- There are many fine restaurants in the Clearwater, St. Pete and Tampa areas, but one that truly stands out as a jewel is **Bern's Steak House** (www.bernssteakhouse.com). A visit takes you on a gastronomic adventure that defines Bern's not as a meal but as an experience. It has one of the largest wine collections in the world, an internationally famous dessert room and offers wine cellar and kitchen tours. And they do serve more than just steak!

Well, that's it! And, it's only a partial list! Have I whetted your appetite enough to pull out that Dixie registration form and make your travel plans? Seriously, you'll have trouble cramming all that there is to do here PLUS enjoy visiting with friends and participating in the show agenda. I promise!



Optimara Seurat

Know Your Dixie Awards Chairmen:

Betty Ferguson



Marian

&

Greg Zoller



Greg Zoller:

"I was along that fateful day at the mall when Marian walked through the first show, and I imagine I probably said, "Oh, go ahead and buy it. It's only a couple of bucks." And I guess I have facilitated the addiction all these years by saying the same thing. Anyway I guess I got started that same day, although only on the fringes."

If you won a Dixie award last year, or if you contributed to the awards fund, Marian and Greg Zoller were the ones to stuff that money into an envelope, label it, and make sure it got to the right winner. And they'll do it again this year. Marian also serves as Dixie's Tennessee State Director. And you may know them as the couple who excels in growing other gesneriads, especially Achimenes.

This Memphis couple has been an active part of the Dixie African Violet Society for about 20 years. They've been a part of one another's lives for 37. According to Marian, the two met on a blind date and fell in love immediately. Knowing when he'd found a good thing, and not being a man to waste time, Greg proposed 3 months later. But when he did, he told his sweetheart that he had good news and bad news. The bad news was he had quit his job and the good news was he wanted Marian to marry him. Of course, as you know, she said, "Yes!" They were married three months later, and they've lived happily ever after in Memphis.

I almost didn't believe Marian when she told me she truly started school in a one-room school at Possum Holler, Tennessee. She walked a quarter or a third of

a mile to catch a ride to school with her brother's teacher. From the second to eighth grades, she attended Little Lot School, where each teacher taught two or three grades in one room. The girls had their own outhouse and the boys had theirs. Recess time didn't need to be supervised.

Both of her parents taught school. After they married and the kids came along, her daddy farmed her granddaddy's 300 plus acre farm and her mama was a housewife. Community income was from farming or the shoe factory, and moonshine stills abounded.

Marian describes herself as a shy child. She grew up with two brothers, one with cerebral palsy, and a sister. She recalls sitting on her granddaddy's lap while listening to The Grand Ole Opry. Her teen years were difficult because their mother was ill.

A positive teen memory involves dancing in the school gym to records the kids brought from home. She went on to graduate from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville with a B.S. in Food Science and Nutrition. She served her Dietetic Internship at the University of Oregon, and returned to Tennessee for her career as a Clinical Dietitian.

Greg, on the other hand, began life in Pierre, the state capitol of South Dakota, although that capitol's population was only nine or ten thousand. Back then the Pierre kids spent most of their days outside since TV didn't come along until Greg was about twelve. An only child, he played baseball in the summertime and spent some of his summers with his grandparents near the Black Hills, where they trout fished. His father worked as the comptroller for the State Game, Fish, and Parks Department. His mother was a secretary/office manager for city and state offices.

Rural South Dakota missed the party, Greg said, while young people in the big cities were smoking and going to Woodstock. Greg spent his free time hunting and fishing and bowling every chance he got and playing golf during the four or five months weather allowed. In the winter he and his dad did a lot of ice fishing.

Greg started working when he was 14 at the local theater. "The Sound of Music" came out the summer he managed the little theater. He could play most of the parts from memory by that fall. He was a band student and was selected to join the Pierre City Band at 15. He was paid \$100 a season and says he

supposes he can put professional musician on his resume. While in college he worked with the South Dakota highway department checking and revising the detailed county road maps and driving every highway, dirt road, and section line trail in the county and recording mileages to each curve or bridge. He spent his last two college summers as a patrolman at Custer State Park in the Black Hills. Upon earning a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, he moved to East Tennessee to work the copper/iron mines. His work has been in chemical plants, most of them with hazardous raw materials and/or products.

Both Marian and Greg have retired now, and both are Master Gardeners. They have a large, immensely fascinating yard and a house that's just as impressive. During the growing months, Marian tends to the yard—watering and pulling weeds, and Greg tends their two vegetable plots at the local community garden. In good years they share much of their produce.

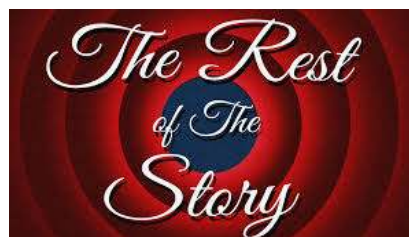
Not surprising for growers who favor gesneriads, neither lists a favorite African violet. Marian lists *Primulinas* as her favorite other Gesneriad. She also enjoys growing flowers for cutting -- azaleas, irises and dahlias, but her very favorite plant is the hydrangea. Greg's favorites are iris, followed by *Achimenes*, tulips, and tomatoes—at least on a good year, he added. The couple grows a very wide variety of *Achimenes*, and they are a good source for purchasing rhizomes.

Marian's favorite part of growing African violets is showing. Her least enjoyable part is repotting. Greg's least favorite is getting ready for the show. His favorite part is when the show is over.

Marian has served as Treasurer and Secretary for the Memphis African Violet Society and currently functions as State Director of Tennessee for Dixie. She and Greg are Co-chairmen of the DAVS awards committee. Greg helps in the labor department wherever the show is. He has served on the board of directors for the Memphis Master Gardeners. For several years the couple shared the position of Chairmen of the Craft area for the Master Gardener's spring event. That position got Greg into painting rocks. He says Marian doesn't complain about all the rocks laying around the house with pictures of flowers, birds, and such things on them.

Now, Greg bowls weekly and Marian is involved with her church. In addition to attending Dixie and other plant shows and conventions, the Zollers travel annually to the National Bowling Tournament. A special interest for Marian is visiting gardens wherever they travel.

This couple stands out as being one of the few to have mastered their happily-ever-after goal. If you get an opportunity to visit their beautiful home and immaculate flower garden surrounding it, I'm sure you'll agree that only a couple who works and plays together could create such beauty.



In her article **Overcoming a Sea of Fear** published in our last newsletter, author Bobbi

Johannsen of Heart of Jacksonville (FL) AVS, failed to name the "Publicity Princess Extraordinaire" and we thought you should know who this person is. It's none other than Sharon Gartner, now President of Heart of Jacksonville (FL) AVS. Congratulations, Sharon, on a job well done!



DAVS COLLECTIONS ROSETTES AVAILABLE FOR SHOW AWARDS

by Al Armstrong,
Affiliate Awards Chair

The DAVS Collections are important to exhibitors and to the show. It is important that the DAVS Collections Score Sheets be carefully and fully completed by all responsible parties.

To avoid delay in returning the DAVS Collections Score Sheets to the Affiliate Awards Chairman, the judges of the DAVS Collections should handle the DAVS Score Sheets in the same manner as the AVSA Collections Score Sheets. The judges should seal the DAVS Collections Score Sheets inside the pre-addressed envelope included with the packet and give it to the Show Chairman for return. This will prevent any unusual delays, loss of score sheets or complications that have arisen in the past. This will also ensure that your collections results will be published in The Dixie News.

To request the DAVS Collections Rosettes, please send one copy of your Show Schedule, along with \$10 shipping and handling fee for both the Standard and Semiminiature/Miniature Collections Rosettes and the following information: Name of Club, Show Chair, complete address including the 9-digit zip code, to:

Al Armstrong, Affiliate Awards Chair
1313 Gardenia Drive
Metairie, LA 70005-1152
aalgen@bellsouth.net

OTHER ROSETTES AVAILABLE

BALTIMORE AFRICAN VIOLET CLUB BEST FANTASY ROSETTE. To order this rosette for an AVSA-judged show, send your request along with check for \$5 to:

The Baltimore African Violet Club
JoAnne Baker-Pruner (410) 315-8513
125 Dalesway Drive
Pasadena, MD 21122-4057
E-mail: jpbaker@coldwellbankermove.com

OPTIMARA BEST OF SHOW ROSETTE FOR OPTIMARA & RHAPSODIE. To order this rosette and a sample kit of Optimara products, send your request to:

Optimara
Attn: Best of Show Rosette
P.O. Box 78565
Nashville, TN 37207
sales@optimara.com

Include your name, name of the AVSA-affiliated club holding the show, dates of the show, your complete address (NO P.O. Boxes), and daytime phone number.



Bottle Gardens Made Simple

Betty Ferguson

*"Do you believe everything
you read?" (My Mother)*

The simplest way to make a bottle garden unfortunately still requires planning and time.

The first step is to check out your local Hobby Lobby, Michael's, Wal-Mart, Target, and any other stores like Pier I Imports in your area in search of a transparent bottle that you can almost, but not quite (rules, you know) get a hand into. That way, you have a wee bit more working area than a soda pop bottle size opening allows. (No, it's not cheating. The rule simply says "too small for a hand to enter.")

The next step then if you plan on entering your bottle garden in a show is to pray that your judging team includes some big-handed men, not tiny-handed, tight-fisted women.

Immediately after this, if you didn't have the foresight to do it already, sit down with your seed catalogues. The Gesneriad and the Begonia Society's seed funds offer a grand source of potential material for you. (Burpee and Stokes are not recommended due to their propensity for utilizing such big words as "whopper" and "huge" and "extremely large.") Pay particular attention to "P", which the Gesneriad Seed Fund Key translates to mean "petite", and to the description, "micro-mini." Remember -- you need at least one blooming African violet. If you're lucky, you may find seed for *Saintpaulia magungensis* var. *minima*. Or if you plan yet a few more months in advance, you can let your favorite Pittman mini go to seed. Order up a bunch of varieties of seed, just in case some don't germinate and because it's not possible to limit yourself to only what you need when seed shopping any more than it is when you plant shop.

While waiting on your mail (wo)man to appear with all of your envelopes of seed, prepare your bottle garden soil mix. Try really hard not to use perlite because it shines like, well, perlite, and it will distract from your pretty natural design and blossoms. Using a funnel to avoid depositing dirt all over the insides of your bottle, add your slightly moist soil. Dry mix will poof and settle all over the bottle sides regardless of whether you use a funnel or not. Try cleaning *that* off for fun sometime when you're bored and have lots of extra time, but not with a show on the horizon.

When those little envelopes with those tee-teensy little seed do arrive neatly folded in a Zig Zag paper, don a surgical mask to keep from breathing or sneezing on them, and do not let your parakeet out for exercise. If you do, there's no telling what you may wind up with planted where. Now, try carefully dropping those microscopic jewels precisely where you want them to grow in your bottle. Mist the soil, cover the bottle loosely, gently place it on your light stand, and hope for the best while enjoying old issues of *The Dixie News* or rooting for your favorite *Dancing with the Stars* couple.

If you're not quite that adventurous a gambler (or big a fool), or you really need a blue ribbon to keep your judge's certificate, there are other methods, but most require much, much more patience, and sometimes cuss words spontaneously occur.

You can (1) plant those seed you ordered before you finished reading this article in your favorite seed starter mix in a plastic tote or the equivalent. Or you can (2) peruse Rob's Violet Barn website and place an order for container garden plants—and standards and streptocarpus and hoyas and ... Or (3) use miniatures you've managed to keep alive from last year's Dixie Convention. Or (4) change your mind and do a dish garden or underwater design instead. If you're a glutton for punishment, you should persevere and complete your bottle garden properly.

Make sure to find a very long chopstick or bamboo stake. That's the only tool you'll need—or be able to use—with a bottle garden.

Using that chopstick, gingerly scratch up tall mountains and deep valleys and creek beds in your soil mix.

At this point you might as well hide your eyes and grab one of the little plants you've destined for abuse. I'm not about to tell you which one to start with—your tree, your bush, your violet, your moss. No matter which one you choose, it's going to land upside down anyhow with its face in the dirt and its roots in the air, and I don't want to be the subject of your cuss words. Now that you have one in hand, open your eyes and force it through that opening, which is not only too small for your hand but also too small for the plant.

You'd probably better go turn up *Dancing with the Stars* to try to drown out the words you're about to utter, if the tirade hasn't already begun, because the next step is flipping the plant back over and whacking all the soil off the leaves and the sides of the bottle (if you can reach the sides) with your chopstick.

Now try digging a little hole for the roots without upsetting your mountains and valleys. Poke the poor plant around until you get it in the hole and force it to stand up straight. Cover its now bare and injured roots and re-build your mountains.

Drop your next plant into the bottle, but make sure your tongue is held securely between your bottom and top teeth, because the soil from this plant is going to cascade right down on top of the plant you just got situated. Follow this procedure until all of your plants are in the bottle and your garden strongly resembles your favorite green veggie blender drink.

Apologize to your family for the string of loud words that managed to escape, words even your husband and teens have never mastered. Throw the @&#\$ bottle of green slime onto a shelf. Say a prayer of repentance for yourself and a blessing for a miracle over the bottle. And never believe anything you read saying bottle gardens are simple.

AVSA JUDGING SCHOOL

Dixie AVS and the African Violet Council of Florida are jointly sponsoring an AVSA Judging School on Wednesday, April 15, 2015, at the Holiday Inn Hotel, St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport, 3535 Ulmerton Road, Clearwater, FL. The school is being held in advance of the Dixie AVS 2015 Convention and Show.

Sue Hoffmann, a Dixie Director for the State of Virginia, as well as Dixie's Judges' Chair, will teach the school.

Judging School & Audit: 9 am to 1 pm
Lunch on your own
Judging School Test: 2 pm to 4 pm

Judging School Enrollment Form (Deadline is March 31, 2015)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____

Zip+4 _____

Phone _____

Audit fee \$8 _____ Test fee \$10 _____

Student Judge _____ Advanced Judge _____

Make check payable to:

Dixie African Violet Society

Send to: Lynne Wilson

645 Hudson Avenue,

Tampa, FL 33606

813-251-1581

(Be sure to Mark-Judging School)

PUBLICATION DEADLINES

February issue – January 15

May issue – April 15

August issue – July 15

November issue – October 15



Sinningia bullata
AVA of Australia photo

Making Your African Violets Flower

There are a number of reasons for African violets refusing to flower. Although the most frequently quoted reason is “lack of light”, that is by no means the only possible reason. Consider the following, all of which are equally important.

The Reasons

1. It is unreasonable to expect a plant that is not healthy to flower abundantly, so consider the health of the plant. If it is wilting, or has yellowed or lack-luster leaves, don't expect much from it in the way of flowers.
2. If there are any infestations or diseases in the African violet, the result may well be reduced flowering.
3. If the plant is not growing strongly it will not flower. Flowers are produced from the leaf axils (the bit where the leaves meet the main stem). If no new leaves are coming, there is nowhere from which flowers can come.
4. If a rosette variety of African violet should be allowed to produce lots of side-shoots (suckers), it will often stop flowering. All African violets except the trailing types should have one central growing point with all the leaves and flowers radiating out like the spokes of a wheel. If the growing point is damaged or removed, the plant will stop flowering until it has grown another crown.
5. If you have not repotted your plant in the last twelve months, it may continue to flower to

6. some extent, but is unlikely to do as well as plants that receive regular attention.
6. If you have not applied any fertilizer to your plant, it cannot continue to be healthy and flowering.
7. If you have consistently used only a fertilizer with high nitrogen content, your plant will produce strong leaf growth at the expense of heavy flowering.
8. If the plant has suffered from being too dry too often, the tiny root hairs that draw moisture and fertilizer from the potting mix will die and the plant will not flower.
9. If the growing conditions are not satisfactory, the plant will not flower well. That means appropriate light, temperature and humidity.

Sound complicated? Not really. A person who hasn't satisfactory food, clothing and shelter won't thrive either. Pot growing produces unnatural conditions for plants, and, where in the ground they may fend for themselves to some extent, in a pot you need to give them a helping hand. So here is what to do.

Wilting, yellow “off-color” African violet plants can be caused by poor watering practices, insect infestation, too little fertilizer, potting mix that holds too much water or is otherwise unsatisfactory. Plants that seem otherwise healthy but have a plethora of leaves growing in an untidy pattern choking the production of flowers just need a little grooming.

What to Do

1. Repot your plant. This will stimulate growth. Do it in the warmer months of the year, preferably spring. When repotting, remove all crowns except the center one, and outside leaves that are old, tired or unlikely to produce flowers. Remember that flowers will come from the axils of newly grown leaves. Break the old potting mix away from the roots. Trim the roots so that the African violet can be replanted in a squat pot no wider than 100 mm (4 inches) across. Any bare stem where leaves have been removed should be scraped gently to expose green tissue. Repot in a clean pot with the bottom leaves level with the new potting mix. Best results will be achieved if African violets are repotted each year.
2. Keep your African violets evenly damp and fertilized to get satisfactory growth. The easy way to do this is by wick-watering. For a plant that has been repotted, use plain water for the first few weeks. After that, appropriate liquid fertilizer should be used, diluted in the water each time the plant is watered, or in the wick-watering reservoir. Fertilizers high in

phosphorus promote flowering and should be preferred. There are many suitable African violet fertilizers on the market.

3. Examine your African violets regularly for any signs of pests or disease. Common problems are thrips (in the flowers), mites (too small to be seen by the naked eye, they destroy the center of the plant), and soil mealy bugs (slow moving creatures which infest the root system, where they suck the sap of the plant). If thrips are present in the flowers, remove all flowers and buds and keep them removed for a month or two to break the thrips cycle. Plants suffering from mites or mealy bugs are better destroyed. A leaf may be taken for propagation. Disinfect and wash well before planting.
4. African violets are grown as indoor plants because they thrive in conditions similar to those enjoyed by most people. Temperatures of 18-25 degrees C. (65-77 degrees F.) are ideal, but a much wider range than that can be endured. Humidity of at least 55% is satisfactory, but for reasonably short periods the plants can survive much lower. For adequate light, use the brightest position you can find in your home, just short of afternoon direct sun. Within 450 mm (18 inches) of a window is satisfactory. A lace curtain, venetian blinds or similar can be used to break up direct sun, so that the plants are not scorched.

*Used with permission by African Violet Association of Australia



Buffalo Hunt
AVA of Australia Photo

**DIXIE AFRICAN VIOLET
SOCIETY
2015 CONVENTION
APRIL 15-18**

COMING EVENTS

February 27-28, 2015 – “Storybook Violets,” AVSA Judged Show & Sale, Tampa AVS, Hillsborough County Farm Bureau, 100 S Mulrennan Road, Valrico, FL. Friday hours Noon – 5 pm (Sales opens at 9 am). Saturday hours 9 am – 3 pm. Info: Mary Lou Harden, mlhard@verizon.net.

March 6-7, 2015 – AVSA Judged Show & Sale, Central Florida AVS, Beardall Senior Center, 800 Delaney Ave., Orlando, FL 32801. Friday hours Noon – 4 pm (Sales opens at 10 am). Saturday hours 10 am – 4 pm. Info: Linda Price, laprice@yahoo.com.

March 14-15, 2015 – African Violet Show and Plant Sale, Fantasy AVC, Partner’s Club of Oak Hill Hospital, 11375 Cortez Blvd., Brooksville, FL. Saturday hours 11 am – 5 pm. Sunday hours Noon – 3 pm. Info: Toni Weidman, ctweidman@msn.com or Thad Scaggs, tascaggs@tampabay.rr.com.

March 27-28, 2015 – AVSA Judged Show & Sale, Heart of Jacksonville AVS, San Jose Church of Christ, 6233 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32217. Friday hours Noon – 5 pm. Saturday hours 10 am – 4 pm. Info: Sharon Gartner, sharon@jacksonvilleviolets.org.

March 28-29, 2015 – AVSA Judged Show & Sale, Sundowner’s, Baton Rouge Garden Center, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA, “Violets – Gems of the Flower World.”

April 11, 2015 – African Violet Display & Sale, 10 am – 3 pm, Early Bird Violet Club, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 2612 Lane Park Road, Birmingham, AL 35223. Info: Brenda Posey (205) 822-2257 or Gwen Johnson (205) 991-5335.

April 15, 2015 – Judging School co-sponsored by the African Violet Council of Florida and Dixie AVS, Holiday Inn St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport, 3535 Ulmerton Road, Clearwater, FL 33762. Sue Hoffmann, teacher.

April 15-18, 2015 – “OZsome Violets” or “Dixie in the Land of OZ,” Annual Convention & Show, Dixie AVS, Holiday Inn St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport, 3535 Ulmerton Road, Clearwater, FL 33762. Info: www.davs.org.

May 24-31, 2015 – “Violets Love Jazz, Blues & Barbecue,” AVSA Annual Convention & Show, Holiday Inn KCI Airport & KCI Expo Center, 11728 N Ambassador Drive, Kansas City, MO 64153. Show & Sales open to the public (\$5 admission), May 29-30, 2015, 9 am – 4 pm. Info: www.avsa.org.

June 30-July 4, 2015 – Gesneriad Society Annual Convention, Marriott Oakland City Center, 1001 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94607.

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From the Editor. . . Mary Lou Harden
mlhard@verizon.net

I hope you've completed and mailed your registration form for the convention, selected your meals and made your hotel reservations. We promise to have wonderful weather for you during the convention - unlike the extremely cold weather we've had during the past couple weeks. At 6 am this morning, it was 39° in Tampa! However, for some of you that may sound pretty good. And, unlike some of our Northern Dixie members, we haven't had snow!

Also. . . please get your registration in for the Judging School which Sue Hoffmann will teach on Wednesday, April 15.

Check out all the places to visit during convention week listed and described in Carolee Carter's article on page 12 of this issue. Clearwater and Tampa Bay have lots of good things to do.

I hope you'll enjoy and appreciate the article on page 8 by Sandra Kerns of Tampa AVS. She writes from a novice's perspective and, as you will see, is very creative.

In looking through past issues of the *African Violet Magazine*, I came across an article Bob Green had written a few years ago, but one I thought covered everything from A to Z regarding design and asked if I could reprint in this issue. Bob agreed, and designers especially will find it helpful.

And I know you'll find Betty Ferguson's article on Marian & Greg Zoller most interesting.

I'm looking forward to seeing you in Clearwater in April!

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