

Basics of African Violet Care
Bay State African Society
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History

- Discovered by European colonists in Africa in 1892
- Baron von Saint Paul discoverer
- The plants were given the botanical name "*Santpaulia ionantha*". The genus *Santpaulia* was named for the Baron and the species name, *ionantha*, Greek for "resembling a violet".
- 1894 introduced in the United States in New York
- Grown in greenhouses only.
- 1925 Armacost and Royston: The Original Ten.
- 1938, with the introduction of fluorescent light bulb, the popularity increased.
- 1940's, the African Violet Society (AVSA) was organized and incorporated
- 1946, the first national African violet show was held in Atlantic, Georgia



Origins of African Violets

- **East Usambara Mountains**
- **Most of them grow in damp, shady places**
- **Though their geography is tropical, most species reside in the mountains, at high altitudes, and under the cover of other plants.**
- **Found growing in crevices of rocks made of limestone and granite**
- **Temp 65-90 degrees/Humidity 70-80%**



Light Requirements

- **Moderate to bright, indirect indoor light**
- **Western or southern exposure is best**
- **Adjust blinds or use sheer curtains**
- **Rotate plant weekly ¼ turn**
- **Artificial lighting**
 - Blue light spectrum: photosynthesis**
 - Red light spectrum: blooming**
- **Mount lights 18-20 inches above tops of plants for standards**
- **Mount lights 10-12 inches for semi-miniatures**
- **Mount lights 8-10 inches for miniatures**
- **Lights should remain on at least 10 hours and no more than 16 hours**
- **Use timers**
- **AV need 8 hours of darkness to produce blooms**



Temperature

- **Rule of thumb: If you are comfortable so are your African violets**
- **Range 65-78 degrees**
- **Fluctuations in temperature of 10 degrees produces optimal flowering**
- **Colder temperatures are deadly**
- **Crown Rot common**

Humidity

- Humidity is vital the health of African violets
- 50 to 60 % humidity should be provided in the home
- Decreases in humidity leads to slow plant growth, and leaves will appear dry and shriveled
- Keep plants within close proximity
- Capillary matting
- Place containers of water around plants
- Humidifier using a warm-mist during the winter/Use of a fan



Fertilizers

- Fertilizer is not plant food
- 100 % water soluble
- Recommended fertilizers contain equal amounts of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K)
- Nitrogen: Growth and the development of green leaves & stems
- Phosphorus: Production of healthy roots, flower buds and blossoms
- Potassium: Necessary for accumulation of carbohydrates to aid in plant energy
- Soluble powders and concentrated liquids
- Use of 1/8 teaspoon each watering
- Leaching soil monthly



Soils

- Light and porous
- Commercial mix, Perlite, Vermiculite
- Equal parts of each
- Perlite: sterile, volcanic mineral aids in drainage and aeration
- Vermiculite: soft, spongy and aids in water retention
- Sphagnum peat moss: soil base, becomes acidic over time
- Soiless Potting Mixes for wick watering

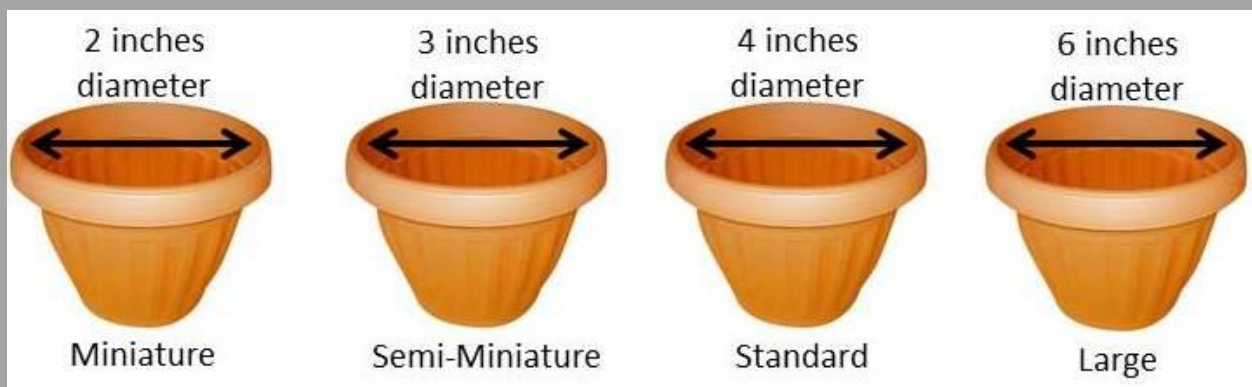
Soil Recipes

#1-1 cup sphagnum moss, 3 cups perlite, ¼ cup vermiculite (wick watering) 1 tablespoon dolomite limestone

#2- 1-part peat moss, 1-part soil, 1-part perlite, 1-part vermiculture (wick watering)

Repotting

- Repot every 6-12 months.
- Diameter of its leaves will be about three times the diameter of the pot. Example: if the diameter of your African Violet's leaves measure 12 inches, then it should be planted in a 4-inch pot.

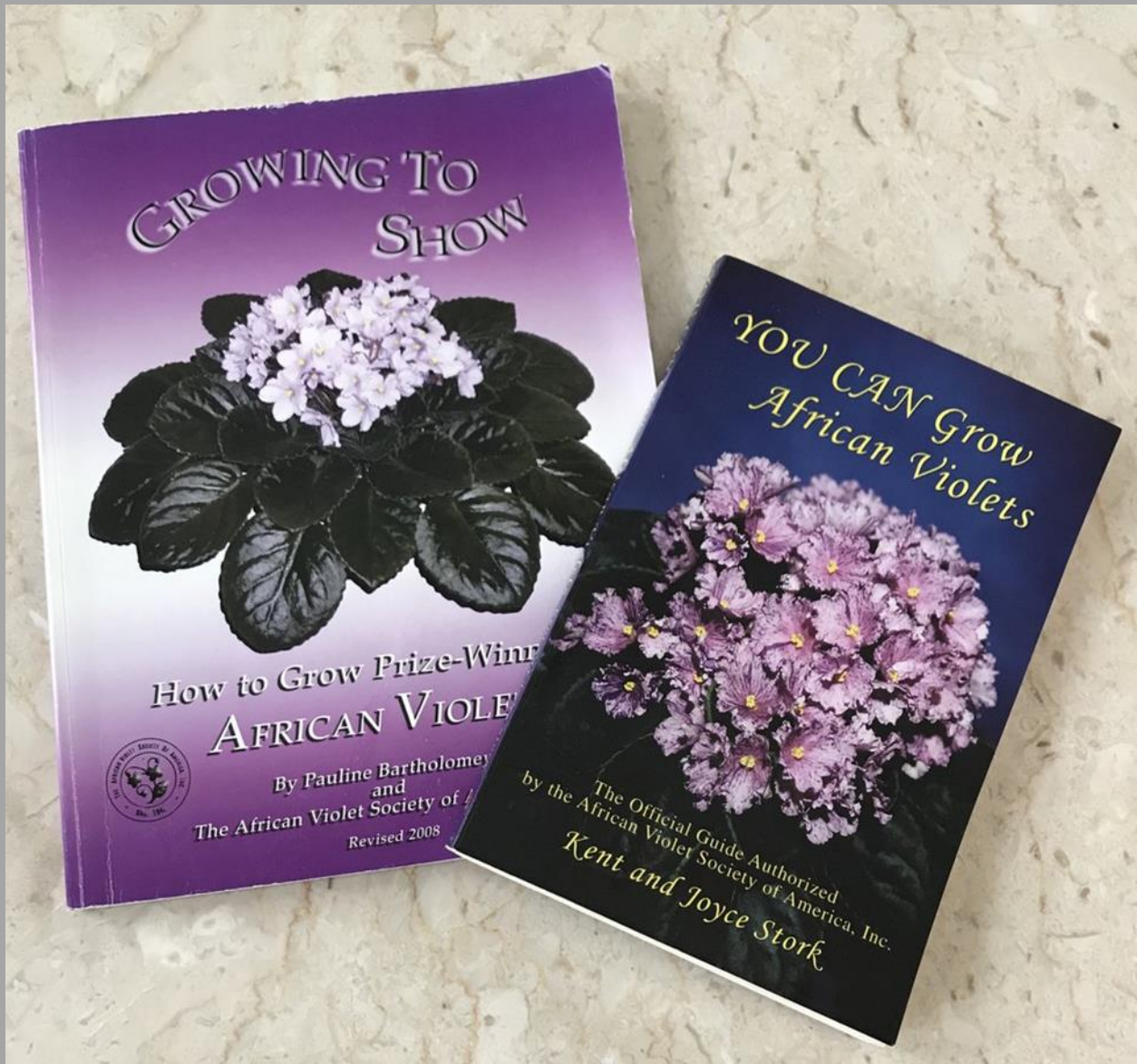


- Violet plants prefer to be potted in 1" increment pot size. For e.g. if your African Violet is in a 3" pot, then pot it up next time in a 4" pot.
- Too small pot you will start to see roots growing out from the top of the soil and through the drainage holes.

Demonstration of Repotting and Leaf Propagation



Questions?



I grow African violets plants for many reasons: perhaps to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience or even my abilities, for novelty or for nostalgia that ties them to my childhood, for relatives that have past and loved, to be the best I can be, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow to their own potential and for this, I am humbly honored and blessed.

-Christopher Paiva

