

GROWING AFRICAN VIOLETS

Believe it or not, African violets are easy plants to grow if you keep a few tips in mind.

Inadequate light produces plants with lots of foliage but no flowers. However, don't overdo a good thing. Too much light produces sun-scalded plants with a pale, bleached appearance. Except for November through February, avoid direct sunlight. Violets do well under florescent lights. Their flowers seem particularly brilliant and 10 to 14 hours of light per day ensures good blooming.

Regular fertilizing every 2-4 weeks encourages heavy flowering. Violets bloom best in pots that are slightly small. They prefer a commercial soil mix prepared specifically for African violets or one consisting of equal parts of sand, loam, and peat moss.

Keep the soil moist, but not soaking wet. Allow plants to become almost dry before re-watering. Over watering causes crown or root rot. Use water that is room temperature-cold water spots the leaves. To prevent spotting, keep the plant out of the sun, if the foliage is wet.

Average house temperatures are suitable for African violets as long as the temperature at night does not fall much below 60 degrees F. Chilling may prevent flowering. It can also cause the leaves to curl down around the edges and become pale green. It may even kill the plant.

Unlike many other houseplants, violets rarely benefit from an outdoor vacation in the summer. They do best by remaining indoors in a north window where they receive plenty of bright light, but no direct sunlight.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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