

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

August 2017 - No. 42

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Our calendar:

August 29, 2017.

International orders must be placed by this date for shipment week of September 4.

September 15-16, 2017.

Ohio State AVS Show & Sale.

Held at the Kingwood Center in Mansfield. For more info, visit:

www.osavs.org

May 25-26, 2018.

AVSA/AVSC Convention Show.

In Buffalo, New York, at the Adams Mark Hotel. Jointly held national conventions of African Violet Societies of America and Canada!

Mark your calendar! This is *the* event of a lifetime. Exhibitors and vendors from across North America will be there. We will have showplants, display, and sales booth. For more info: www.avsa.org or www.avsc.ca

Free stuff and how to get it!

2018 AVSA Show awards.

Best Robinson collections
1st place: \$200
2nd place: \$100

Write a review.

Write a review before ordering, good or bad, we'd like to know. Get a free plant added to order.

Contact us:

email. comments@violetbarn.com

mail. POB 9, Naples, NY 14512

'Wild' Saintpaulias in Our Home



plant.

We grow hundreds of varieties of African violets and, like most of our customers, are most excited by the new and different. Being in business, having to produce and sell them for a living, means most everything we grow is for sale, in the glasshouse or under lights, never with us long enough to be enjoyed as a "house"

Every now and then, though, we'll indulge ourselves and grow an old favorite just for the fun of it. The African violet (Saintpaulia) species are a perfect choice. Being native to East Africa, they'll feel pampered when grown indoors as houseplants. They are generally undemanding, tolerant of some neglect, and quite comfortable growing in a window. Unlike modern hybrids, that grow best single-crowned (or multicrowned if trailing), species violets can grow well either way... "naturally".

Many will bloom with less than ideal light. Many also tolerate, even prefer, cooler temperatures. This can make an otherwise less than desirable location for growing other violets, just fine for species. We have a few such locations, one being the restroom in our work area. It has one small, partly obstructed, east-facing window that can get a bit chilly in the winter. *S. pendula v kizarae*, shown at right above, seems quite happy there. Though it barely bloomed in winter, it's done nothing but bloom for the other 9 months of the year. The photo at left is *S. magungensis*, from a few years ago, grown in a west-facing window. There are many others, and all grow as well--these just happened to be our "fun" plants.

This month's questions:

I've recently noticed a white, crystalline, substance on the surface of my streptocarpus leaves. I don't think it's powdery mildew. It's not a powder, but is very fine and granular. We live in Minnesota and they are grown in a screened porch to our cabin. Because they're on the porch, plants are kept very moist.

If these are soft, and not hard or granular, this may be mealy bug. Check around the stems, especially near the leaf axils and around the base of the plant, for more obvious masses. Also inspect the inside of the pot and the root ball for egg masses--it will look like confectioner's sugar. We'll assume this isn't the case.

You keep your plants wet, and it's likely that night and day temperatures vary greatly on your porch. It's quite possible that this might simply be hard water deposits left behind when your plant "sweats"--much like the salt-stains on a sweat-soaked t-shirt.

I live in an area where we have very alkaline water and wondered if the plants I've recently ordered would do better with more acidic water. If so, what is the best pH? I have litmus papers and can adjust the water with a bit of lemon juice as I've done successfully with my microgreens.

Ideally, look for a pH between 6.7 and 7.0 (slightly acid to neutral). Peat-based potting mixes and most fertilizers typically a slightly acidic, so the using slightly alkaline water may not present a problem. If you're measuring the pH, be sure to test soil moistened

phone. 585-374-8592
Mon. thru Sat., 12-5 pm ET

Our shop and glasshouse at:
7209 County Road 12
Naples, New York 14512
Open Tuesday-Saturday 12-5 pm

For those attending the 2018
AVSA/AVSC convention, we are a
2 hour drive from Buffalo.

with your water and fertilizer.

We currently use filtered, softened, reverse-osmosis water or water recycled from our AC unit (on a hot day it can produce 90 gallons)--basically, distilled water. For years, however, we used very alkaline water drawn from a well. Very hard and high in pH. We corrected (lowered) the pH by adding distilled vinegar to our water. Lemon juice should do the same. This won't remove the "hardness" (fine calcium carbonate sediment) from the water, though. Over time, these salts can accumulate in the soil and plants can suffer from this--foliage can become brittle and centers and leaf tips can be burned or browned. If you replot your plants regularly, and freshen the soil, this won't be a huge issue.

Are you a member?

Consider joining the African Violet Society of America. Sign up through our website and get a free plant! For more information, visit www.avsa.org

Has your collection grown far beyond violets? Consider joining the Gesneriad Society. For more info: www.gesneriadsociety.org

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