



# THE DIXIE NEWS

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

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## President's Message

Betty Ferguson  
[bettywithviolets@gmail.com](mailto:bettywithviolets@gmail.com)



Whew! Dixie family and friends!

THAT year is finally over. As I sit here at my computer, I wonder what changes may occur over the weeks between now and the time you're reading the newsletter. We've all talked about politics and that dratted mask-causing illness enough. Let's focus on something else that will probably occur between now and then. Something good. The first signs of SPRING!

Our rhizomes and tubers will be waking up. It's still a puzzle to me: how do they know spring is here? Our leaves and cuttings will root faster. And somehow our violets know to throw up masses of colorful blossoms for spring shows and sales--and just for the plain enjoyment of their servant growers.

A few years ago, I had been feeling guilty for spending money and time on my African violets, their cousins, show designs, travel, and conventions. Even though I hadn't shared my guilty thoughts with Mary Lou, at that year's Dixie convention she casually remarked, "I feel like I'm doing God's will by preserving His beauty." Mary Lou wasn't aware that God had just used her mouth and her words to speak to me, but He did.

When I read the first chapters of Genesis, God's wholesome pride in His creation, including plant life, is apparent. Besides being fruitful themselves and multiplying (Oh my!), what was His human creations' next assignment? Tending that gorgeous garden. Sounds like He was intent on them having fun. I don't plan to do any more fruitful

multiplying, myself, but tending the garden He has assigned me must be okey dokey with Him.

What African violets and other Gesneriads are you growing in your indoor or Deep South outdoor garden? *Dixie News* readers want to see your pictures and helpful hints for growers or designers. A full-length article isn't necessary; just a few sentences will do. A captioned picture will, too. Mary Lou accepts phone photos. You don't have to invest in a Nikon DSLR camera with expensive lens.

We want to hear about your club activities, as well. You don't need to be a State Director to send information. Some clubs are struggling to find program content and to find ways of staying in contact during these social distancing months. Your ideas may inspire a great Zoom meeting or lead to a successful show or sale. They may even save a club. After meeting with unexpectedly good success at our fall sale, my club is planning another pavilion in the park sale this spring. We all stayed safe. We enjoyed our togetherness and the extra bucks the sale brought in. And of course, we all brought home new plants to have fun tending in our indoor gardens.



Buckeye Northern Lights, by Kurt Jablonski

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Colonial Werrabee  
Photo by AVA of Australia

## DIXIE CONVENTION 2021

OCTOBER 13-16, 2021



**DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON,  
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE**



Rob's Jitter Bug

## AVSA CYBER CONVENTION MAY 30 – JUNE 6, 2021 Celebrating 75 Years DIAMOND CELEBRATION

AVSA recently announced its decision to transition the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention from an in-person event to an online, virtual event (Cyber Diamond Celebration). Since a virtual convention has many of the same challenges as an in-person event, its convention committee has requested volunteers to assist with the development and hosting of the convention. Here are the areas in which AVSA is seeking member volunteers:

- **Show Room.** Because show entries will be by members submitting photos of plants and designs, a few volunteers are needed to review, crop and upload files into the virtual showroom.

- **New Introductions.** AVSA will solicit photos of new hybrids from its many hybridizers. These photos and descriptions will require review and placement in the New Introduction gallery.
- **Sales Room.** A team of volunteers will work with the commercial growers to set up a virtual sales room.
- **Social.** Since one of the best parts of a convention is meeting and visiting with other attendees, a few volunteer “social butterflies” will get the party started and jump-start an online social hour.
- **Programs and Presentations.** Since conventions bring value to members through engaging educational seminars, speakers, topics and videography skills are needed.
- **Fundraising.** Conventions are AVSA’s primary source of generating operating revenue for the year and going virtual means volunteers are needed to assist in creating new, innovative online auctions and raffles.
- **Website and Technical.** A virtual convention will be built on the internet, which will require several dedicated, behind-the-scenes masters to construct a website for hosting the event.

If you would like to help, please send an email to [AVSA2021Convention@gmail.com](mailto:AVSA2021Convention@gmail.com) with your name, email address, phone number, and the area(s) of need in which you would like to participate. A Virtual kick-off meeting will be held in February with the convention team and various committees.

**SUPPORT AVSA.** AVSA especially needs the support of its individual members, its affiliates and commercial members at this time. Donations should be mailed to: AVSA Office, P.O. Box 22417, Beaumont, TX 77720. Online Donations are also accepted. Dixie encourages all Dixie affiliates and members to support AVSA. AVSA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

Donate online or by mail to: **AVSA Office, P.O. Box 22417, Beaumont TX 77720.**

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## 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 (AVM) filled with great growing information
- Regular columns include
  - For Beginners

- Question Box
- In Search of New Violets
- Gesneriad Advice
- Registration of new cultivars
- 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. Each issue contains commercial ads as well as an Index of Advertisers. Members have access to this information on AVSA’s website [www.AVSA.org](http://www.AVSA.org).

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. After judging, shows are open to the public. Informative presentations are made by experts in African violet culture. Commercial members also display their newest introductions and have booths where plants and plant-related products are sold.

Individual Membership in AVSA is \$30 per year. Send check with contact information to:



**LOUISIANA STATE  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**  
February 2021

by Becky McMeel

[lilmama55@hotmail.com](mailto:lilmama55@hotmail.com)

Hello Dixie members!  
Greetings from Louisiana!

According to the weather people, our southern "winter" is over... or what little we had. I don't think it was long enough to kill the bad green stuff in the yard or long enough to hurt the good. Guess we take the good with the bad. Clover, dollar weed, bugs, along with pretty annuals, it is!

December saw Sundowners meeting virtually to discuss dates for their 2021 Show and Plant sale. Looks like October 2 and 3, 2021 are the magic dates. Theme is "Violets Celebrate the 20's".

Club dues are overdue, so delinquent members were contacted. Of the 10 on the list, 4 have opted out, and the other 6 have rejoined. Is your club carrying members who aren't paid up? Maybe it is time to make the hard choice and let them go. Just as we remove leaves from our plants for their health and wellness, we must consider doing the same with club membership.

At our meeting, we participated in an ugly/pretty sweater contest and a favorite Christmas item showing. Members present had lots of fun and laughs at the sweater contest with lots of ooh's and ah's on the items shown. George Ramirez was the winner of the sweater contest. Photos are available on the Sundowners Face book page. Our meeting ended with wishes for a better 2021 by all in attendance.

Our January virtual meeting saw the club deciding on a virtual slide show in April 2021. Design theme is "Covid2020". It is optional.



Ugly/Pretty Sweater Contest

They also decided to have a "pop-up" plant sale later in the year since members have been growing to sell for a year and a half, since the annual garden sale at L.S.U. has once again been cancelled. Lots of stuff to sell and no room to store it! Is your club having plant sales of some sort?

The club will be updating their By-Laws in March. What about your club? It is a good idea to give them an update every now and then.

The program, by George, was a live demo on putting down leaves, and many questions were asked and answered. When is the last time your club did a demo of some sort, whether live or virtually? I hope you get ideas for your meetings, whether they are live or



virtual, from my article. There are so many topics to discuss and demonstrate, so get with the "program".



HAPPY GROWING!

Becky McMeel, Louisiana Director

**BECOME A DIXIE MEMBER  
DIXIE AVS DUES**

Individual	\$15.00 Yr
Individual Life	\$175.00
Affiliate Club	\$20.00 Yr.
Commercial	\$25.00 Yr.
Dual (2 at one address)	\$20.00 Yr.

Mail application (p.16) or a copy with check payable to Dixie AVS to:  
Johnnie Berry, Membership Secretary  
287 Fennel Way, SW  
Atlanta, GA 30331  
[johnniepearl@comcast.net](mailto:johnniepearl@comcast.net)

**WELCOME TO DIXIE!**

by Johnnie Berry,  
Treasurer and Membership Chair  
[johnniepearl@comcast.net](mailto:johnniepearl@comcast.net)

**New Members**

Karen Buchanan, Knoxville, TN  
Dr. Benjamin D. Batzer, St. Louis, MO

**Renewing Members**

Memphis African Violet Society, Memphis, TN  
Glenda's House of Violets, McDade, TX

**GEORGIA STATE  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

by Phillis Hinkle  
[pchinkle@bellsouth.net](mailto:pchinkle@bellsouth.net)

Greetings from  
The Peach State. . .  
and Happy New Year!!



The African Violet Club of Greater Atlanta continues to roll with the situation and make lemonade out of lemons.

Our December meeting was a version of our usual holiday meeting. As we zoomed, we enjoyed goodies that we would have shared with the group. We dressed in colorful holiday sweaters, lighted

necklaces, funny headwear, etc. There was also a time to share holiday memories and traditions as well as plants. We had a ball.

As we welcome 2021, we remain strong and active. Our membership has welcomed 3 new members. Zoom has made this possible. Our Yearbook is almost ready for distribution and exciting new programs are ahead. We will have some guest presenters which we are really looking forward to, thanks again to zoom.

Back by popular demand is our bi-monthly show and tell meeting. This meeting is a time to ask questions, field problems we're encountering, as well as showing off our plants. This meeting does not include business. We had to set a time limit because we found ourselves going on and on (as violet lovers, you know what I mean).

There would be nothing better than to see each other face to face and trade plants, but until that time comes, we will be smiling at each other on stage.

Wishing everyone good health and happy growing.

Phillis Hinkle, Georgia Director

**BECOME A MEMBER!  
(Membership Application on p. 16)**

Please send check payable to DAVS to  
Johnnie Berry, Membership Secretary  
287 Fennel Way, SW, Atlanta, GA 30331  
[johnniepearl@comcast.net](mailto:johnniepearl@comcast.net)

**ARKANSAS STATE  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

by Betty Ferguson  
[bettywithviolets@gmail.com](mailto:bettywithviolets@gmail.com)



The Central Arkansas AV Society continues to meet via Zoom. We had used up our Zoomable program ideas and turned to the AVSA's webinar offerings for our January meeting. The video chosen was, *Meet the Gesneriad Family - A Guide to Easy Growing*. While some of the AVSA educational media products are reasonably priced, this downloadable MP4 file is free and is yours to keep and add to your Gesneriad library.

I found this video perfect for new growers and is filled with factual information for experienced growers as well. Sample facts: Growers should add dolomite lime

to Primulina soil mix. Not all Sinningias produce tubers; some have scented leaves.

<https://avsa.imiscloud.com/ItemDetail?iProductCode=GS-Webinar-01&Category=MEDIA-ED&WebsiteKey=600b0803-3fcc-4064-8c6f-07754ffac965>



Emerald Lace

## FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Bobbi Johannsen  
[Bobbioiolet@bellsouth.net](mailto:Bobbioiolet@bellsouth.net)

The Covid crisis continues but we are all SO READY for it to be over! Florida, true to form, is definitely more open than many other states. It is truly a strange time when there is SUCH a short list of upcoming Spring events on the AVSA website ...but I was happy that 2 of them were in Florida! Since then, however, those shows have been cancelled...so sad. We were really looking forward to a bit of quasi-normalcy! We wish the best of luck to the others on the list and hope those events are able to happen.

In the meantime, we have a couple of clubs that continue to meet in some fashion. The Fantasy African Violet Club in Spring Hill, FL, has been meeting in person most months. First Lakeland AVS is still having their monthly meetings. Central Florida AVS has not been able to meet due to their meeting location being closed since last March.

Tampa AVS has two types of meetings, via zoom AND in person, so they have many options. Their aim has been to alternate between Zoom and in-person meetings. Their meeting place in Tampa is no longer available so they've been having only one meeting per month – the third Friday morning. At the January Zoom meeting, Kathy Spissman shared her expertise about the “other” gesneriads. Since all Hillsborough County libraries are not available for meetings, the group meets every other month at the home of Mary Lou Harden. Mary Lou says the overwhelming majority of members prefer the in-person meetings (with masks and distancing) because there's always a huge plant raffle!



Recent meeting of Heart of Jacksonville

I do not have any information on other clubs here in Florida that are meeting at this time, EXCEPT for my own club, the Heart of Jacksonville AVS. We use Zoom for our monthly board meetings and have been meeting in person since September at our regular venue, the Garden Club of Jacksonville, albeit in a much larger room than usual. We are able to REALLY social distance, and have taken all kinds of precautions...Anyone can join in on our member meetings as we Facebook live them each month.

We have tried to keep our programs interesting, but really miss the hands-on ones. We hope to get back to them soon, but started the year with a fun way to enjoy Gesneriads....by drawing/coloring them!!! We are so blessed to have many talented people in our group, and one of them is Emi Kimbrough, pictured here. She is a local artist and teacher for the Art League of Jacksonville, and has shown work in multiple galleries, as well as in a solo exhibition at the Silver Cow, a Jacksonville bar and cafe that showcases local talent. She asked members to submit photos of their plants, picked 4 of them and, graciously, sketched them for us to fill in with



color. We provided these, along with colored pencils at the meeting, and she explained how to shade in the areas using different techniques. This is all on our page as a Facebook live session on Jan 17, in case anyone wants to hear her instruction. In fact, you can view the entire meeting!

Emi finished shading in 2 of these drawings, and they are shown here for your enjoyment. We want to share her talent with all of our friends, and give you a small ray of sunshine at this unsettled time, so these sketches are included in this newsletter. We hope you enjoy them. Feel free to unleash your inner artist!





hoping to have one for you this month, but time just did not allow.

Now that we will be soon approaching spring, we can all get outside again and enjoy the things that we like to do. I wish you all the best in the New Year. Personally I am glad to put 2020 behind me and start off this year with a bang.

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Cajun's Ethereal Fairy  
Hybridized by Belinda Thibodeaux  
Photo and grown by Johnnie Berry

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## REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT January 2021

by Robbie McMeel  
[rmcmeel@bellsouth.net](mailto:rmcmeel@bellsouth.net)

First, I would like to apologize to the membership for not being very diligent in my duties as Vice President. With my past health issues, which I am pleased to say are hopefully all behind me now, and with the passing of my father, I was left with the family business, that I have closed down because of the serious downturn of the oilfield. I have been very busy closing it down and now I hope to be fully retired by the summer.

It will really be a hard job to follow in the footsteps of our President, Betty Ferguson, who as Vice President, provided us with many awesome articles and her "Get to Know Your Members and Officers" interviews. My plans are to hopefully now provide you with a series of interviews with our Vendors and Hybridizers. I was

## ROSETTES AVAILABLE

**BALTIMORE AFRICAN VIOLET CLUB BEST FANTASY ROSETTE.** The Baltimore African Violet Club is offering a rosette for the **Best Fantasy** in any MAAVS or AVSA affiliate show. Send request and a check for \$5 made out to Carolyn Epstein at  
Carolyn Epstein  
14317 Yosemite Court  
Rockville, MD 20853.  
[inky4ever@aol.com](mailto:inky4ever@aol.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](mailto: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.

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# PLANT INTELLIGENCE

## Allelopathy

by Betty Ferguson  
[bettywithviolets@gmail.com](mailto:bettywithviolets@gmail.com)

Have you wondered why almost nothing grows under your bird feeder with sunflower seed? You're dealing with a case of allelopathy--chemical warfare between plants.

In my previous plant intelligence articles, I've touched on plant allelopathy. Some plants poison animals that eat them or other plants in their space. Because I find the study so fascinating and because research on allelopathy within the Gesneriad family is still needed, I decided to dedicate this article to plant warfare and sometimes plant affection.

Competition among plants has been divided into two different biological methods. Plants compete by hogging up shared or limited resources—water, space, light, or nutrients. They also compete in terms of chemical interactions.

The term allelopathy is formed from two Latin words. "*Allelon*", meaning "another" and "*pathos*", which means suffering. "Allelopathy...means any effect that a plant transmits to another directly or indirectly through production of different metabolism compounds, causing either a positive or negative effect on the other organism. These compounds are called allelochemicals."

(<https://allyouneedisbiology.wordpress.com/2015/05/25/communication-plants-allelopathy/>)

James Campbell, writing for "The UC Marin Master Gardener Column," describes it like this, "Allelopathy is a survival mechanism that allows certain plants to better compete with nearby plants by affecting their nutrient uptake, root development, or seed sprouting." He adds, "Allelopathic plants don't just not play well with others; they kill others."

To put it simply, allelopathy is a natural chemical self-defense mechanism that prevents other plants or trees from growing too close. Asocial is the psychological term for a person who prefers to keep to themselves. Some plants prefer to social distance as well, sometimes to the point of being flat out antisocial—hostile and antagonistic toward others.

The victim plant may be able to defend itself and degrade the effect of the compounds so that it manages to survive. (You probably recall the effect of kryptonite on Superman.) Leaves may become yellowed, growth may be stunted, and seeds may fail to germinate. Or the attacked plant may become so weakened that it withers and dies.

Different parts of plants—stems, bark, flowers, pollen, leaves, leaf litter and leaf mulch, rhizomes, bulbs and roots may produce allelochemicals. The biochemical agents can affect both neighboring plants and successive plants growing in the same soil. For plant chemistry to reach and affect other plants, the substances must be distributed in the air or along the ground.

Plants release allelochemicals in four primary ways:

- **Leaching.** The plant releases its toxins onto others when it rains or by fog and mist.
- **Decomposition.** The plant drops its leaves or branches or roots die. Moisture or microorganisms may assist with decomposition and in the release of the allelochemicals. This is the most common method of allelopathy.



- **Volatilization.** Volatilization is the conversion of a liquid chemical into a vapor, which escapes into the atmosphere. The chemicals

are released by stomata, which are the structures that allow the exchange of gas and transpiration.

- **Exudation.** The plant exudates its biochemical saps, gums, latex, or resin through its roots into the soil.

While there are many scientific studies on plant allelopathy, the plants studied tend to be limited to those significant to agriculture, particularly in weed control. For some crops, allelopathy is proving to be a safe alternative to artificial herbicides, such as glyphosate. Some of the focus crops are corn, wheat, rice, sorghum, and sunflowers. Outside of agricultural crops, most of what is known about bioweaponry among plants comes from observation and trial and error.



An elderberry sprout invading my garden with intentions of murdering my squash.

Black walnut trees are probably the best known of the allelopathic brutes. Nightshade family plants (tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, potatoes) are particularly susceptible to juglone, which is in all parts of the tree.

Broccoli can be allelopathic to subsequently planted broccoli or any other crops in the brassica family. Other toxic plants include elderberry (Yikes, a huge patch borders the south side of my garden.), goldenrod, Johnson grass, oats, sweet potato, mulberry (and a mulberry tree grows in the center of my garden), cucumber, forsythia, cedar, rosemary, ragweed.

Although some allelopathic plants are cruel to others, those same plants may allow or even enable certain species to thrive in their presence. Surprisingly, black walnut trees play well with rex begonias, beets, carrot, corn, cherry, catalpa, Virginia creeper, and woods violets.

We don't generally grow any of the known allelopathic plants with our Gesneriads. I found no studies on allelopathy in greenhouse plants and certainly none pertaining specifically to Gesneriads. I believe even simple research would prove useful to growers who branch out from Saintpaulias to the other Gesneriads or even further to other tropical plants grown in the same vicinity, such as shared matting.



The elderberry trees allow purple deadnettle to flourish. Chickweed thrives elsewhere but not under the elderberries.

A journal describing both growing conditions and surrounding plants of the grower's mysterious, failure-to-thrive plants might give clues. The researcher should move neighboring plants to a different location while controlling other variables and note any changes.

A simple observational research project for home growers could be to identify companion plants in photographs showing Gesneriads grown in their native setting. This would help rule out allelopathic competitors. However, tasking a teen in need of a science fair project would be the easiest approach to studying chemical warfare effects on or by Gesneriads.

**COPY DEADLINE  
FOR MAY ISSUE  
April 15**

**MRSSTREPSTREPS SUPPLIES HAS  
WHAT YOU NEED**



Check out my eBay Store for more supplies:

<http://www.ebay.com/str/mrsstrepstrepplantsandsupplies>



Also check out the other Gesneriad plants-- Kohlerias, Primulinas, Streptocarpus, plus more. Check back often as I list more plants about every 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> day.

Let me know you are **A DIXIE MEMBER** – and **get a refund of \$3.00 on your entire order!**

**Questions:** Kathy Spissman 770-939-5289 or [mrsstrepstrep@comcast.net](mailto:mrsstrepstrep@comcast.net)



Remembering the good times!

## THE OTHER GESNERIADS

### 'TIS THE SEASON FOR GETTING YOUR GESNERIADS GROWING

by Carol Schreck\*

If you're new to the world of gesneriads, you'll quickly learn that this is a very large plant family! You'll also soon find out that gesneriads have three different root systems. Although all gesneriads have fibrous roots, some produce scaly rhizomes, some produce tubers while others are simply fibrous rooted. Some gesneriads are grown specifically because of their tubers which many people find quite attractive. The rhizomatous and tuberous varieties take a seasonal rest during which the plant dies back but sprouts again after a period of dormancy. So, let's get going with our growing!

**Rhizomes.** If you have rhizomes of achimenes, gloxinia, kohleria or smithiantha which have been dormant for the winter, it's time to bring them out of storage and



started into growth. If your cultural conditions were good last year, your plants should have produced many new rhizomes. Carefully sift through the soil and sort them out. You can pot up some of them and share the extras with other growers.

When planting rhizomes, use a coarse, porous soil mix such as two parts peat, one part perlite and one part vermiculite. Don't plant the rhizomes too deep – only about half an inch below the top of the soil. Place the rhizomes on their sides, horizontally, never vertically. For achimenes, plant about four rhizomes in a four or five-inch pot. For the others, plant one rhizome to a pot.

**Tubers.** Sinningia and chrysothemis tubers will be breaking dormancy soon. If you stored them in last year's pot, just remove some of the top soil and replace it with



fresh soil. Be careful not to damage or break off the feeder roots of the tubers. Often the tubers will send up more than one shoot of new growth. Let these grow

to about a half inch in height, then remove all but the best shoot. Cut the others off cleanly as close to the tuber as possible. By letting all of the plant's strength concentrate on one crown, the result will be a beautiful plant with pot-hugging foliage. The shoots (or crowns) you remove will root, manufacture tubers of their own, and produce good plants for sales or sharing with friends. Just put them down in moist soil, provide good humidity, warmth and light to propagate them.

**Cuttings.** Take cuttings now of your trailing gesneriads such as *Aeschynanthus*, *Codonanthe*, *Columnnea*, *Episcia* and *Nematanthus*. If the winter growing conditions have not been good to your plants, take tip cuttings about four inches long.



**Seeds.** This IS the season! Seedlings from seed planted now will make the best progress and develop into better plants. An excellent planting media for sowing seeds is four parts fine vermiculite, two parts milled sphagnum moss, one part perlite and one-half part charcoal, slightly moistened. This is also a good media for rooting your cuttings. Gesneriad seeds are, for the most part, very tiny. Never cover the seeds with soil. To keep humidity high, place a cover loosely over the seed pot. I like to insert the pot into a Ziplock bag and close it. Set the pot in a warm place. Germination should occur in about ten days if the seed is viable. However, don't be too impatient! I have had some seeds take over a month to germinate!



Ma's Midnight Spell  
by Olive Ma at  
The Violet Barn

Another bit of advice regarding seeds – don't plant all of your seeds at once. Often the packet will contain more seed and thus more seedlings than you have space to grow to maturity. And, if something goes wrong with your seed propagation efforts, you can always try again if you have saved some of the seeds.

Seedlings need warmth, light and moisture. Never neglect these needs, but never go overboard and over supply their needs either. Under the ends of the fluorescent tubes is a good spot for your seedlings.

A good source for gesneriad seeds is the Seed Fund featured and sponsored by The Gesneriad Society, Inc., in its quarterly publication *Gesneriads*. The best sources for plants in the gesneriad family are many commercial growers/vendors listed in *Gesneriads* as well as the *African Violet Magazine*.

\*Reprinted from *The Florida Connection*.

## Upcoming Events

**April 10-11, 2021 – Spring Plant Festival**, Botanical Gardens at University of South Florida, 4202 East Fowler Avenue, Tampa, FL 33620.

**April 22 – May 2, 2021 - Florida State Fair, Tampa, FL**

**May 30 – June 6, 2021 - AVSA Annual Convention & Show (Virtual)**

**July 2, 2021 – Gesneriad Society Unjudged Virtual Show.** Entries submitted between May 1 and May 31, 2021. Show Schedule, Rules and all information at [GesneriadSociety.org](http://GesneriadSociety.org).

**October 2-3, 2021 - Sundowners African Violet Club Show and Sale**, Baton Rouge Garden Center on Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA. Theme: "Violets Celebrate the 20's"

**October 13-16, 2021 - DIXIE AVS Annual Convention & Show**, Double Tree by Hilton, Murfreesboro, TN.

### PUBLICATION DEADLINES

**February Issue – January 15**  
**May Issue – April 15**  
**August – July 15**  
**November – October 15**

## DIXIE AVS Affiliates Report

January 2021

By Robbie McMeel

I hope that all of our members are doing fine and staying safe through these trying times. Let us pray that the vaccine for this nasty virus works for all. I know that Becky and I are doing our best to stay home and out of public gatherings to keep our exposure to a minimum.

As affiliates chair, my job has been very easy this past year. I know that because of the pandemic, all clubs have had to cancel their shows. I know that we are all just “chomping” at the bit to get things going again. I know that we miss all of our friends and showing off all our plants that we have all worked so hard on and selling of all of our extras. Hopefully everyone is growing some Dixie registered plants to put in the shows, when we are able to kick off the shows again. Hopefully this fall!!!!

One request for the state directors is to try to contact ALL OF THE CLUBS IN YOUR STATE that are not members of Dixie and do your best to recruit them. I know that these are trying times for all members and clubs. We need to do our best to expand our membership throughout.

I have not received any requests for ribbons for shows, but am looking forward to shipping them out again. I will be glad, as I know that all of you will be too, at the time that we can travel to shows again and meet with all of our friends. We truly miss all of our friends from all over the country that we have made through growing violets.

Let us keep reminding our members that there are a lot of Dixie registered plants out there that are still in circulation and we need to continue to grow them for the Dixie Collection Classes. As mentioned before, a list of all Dixie Registered Plants is on the Dixie Website. [Let us please keep Dixie in our shows.](#)

Respectfully, and keep up the good growing!

Robbie McMeel



Sentimental Journey  
by  
Lyndon Lyon  
Greenhouses

## Who, Me? Make a deSIGN? Yes, You!

by Mary Lou Harden

Hey, folks – it’s NOT that hard! There’s an old proverb that says “You’re never too old to learn!” So, it’s time to accept the challenge and say “YES, I WILL enter the Design Division!” To get you started, here are some tips which I’ve learned over the years.



1. **Study the Show Schedule.** Hopefully the schedule will have been written by someone who does design and has a good imagination.
2. **Select class titles that pique your imagination.** It helps if ideas immediately pop into your mind. Sometimes these initial ideas can be incorporated into the design and sometimes not, but they can be very helpful.
3. If the design will be staged in a niche, make sure you **know the exact size of the niche.**
4. Also, note whether there are **any requirements** such as use of a specific color or inclusion of an accessory.
5. **Select a container** which could be a ceramic dish or a piece of driftwood, sea shell, or other. Keep in mind, though, that the container is not to be the focus of your design so avoid using anything that would be considered ornate.
6. **Gather your mechanics** (not the car types!). Design mechanics will include items such as needlepoint or oasis, floral tape, scissors,

clippers, wire, glue and glue gun.

7. **Assemble your plant and other material.** If using fresh-cut plant material, use only material that is in good, fresh condition. Select materials that will complement the other items used and will unify the arrangement. You'll need materials for the line of the design and also for transition between the line and other elements of the design.
8. **Begin by placing your line material,** which should come within about an inch from the top of the niche. However, keep in mind that at some point you'll want to add a base under your design to help unify it and give it visual stability. I often use a base made from colored cardstock or a thin mirror which only minimally alter the height of the line material. However, if you were to use a ceramic tile or marble square or piece of wood, you'll need to consider how it will affect the height of the arrangement.
9. Next, **add your transition or subordinate material,** placing the thickest and largest parts of the plant material at the base of your design, which will give not only visual but actual balance to the overall design.
10. If making a cut-blossom arrangement, **decide on placement of the blooms** which should be in sufficient quantity and color to easily identify your design's focal point.
11. **Always use a background draping** of your niche. You can use a fabric or colored cardstock. Use a color that will complement the color of your blossoms. For most designs, use a solid color rather than something patterned.
12. **Study your design.** One of the benefits of creating your design a few days before a show, is your ability to critique it. By looking at your design every day, you may conclude that a piece of your transition material needs to be removed or placed in a different spot or direction.

Buckeye  
Cranberry  
Sparkler



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Baby's Breath



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From the Editor. . .Mary Lou Harden  
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Dear Dixie Members,

I'm sending you New Year's greetings, as well as good wishes, prayers and virtual hugs. I believe I hear unanimous consent from all our Dixie members and friends that we WILL have a wonderful 2021! I'm planning on it and believing it to be so!

All of my African violets and other gesneriads are looking great and growing nicely. I had thought that with the lockdowns I would be able to get ALL of my plants repotted. For some reason, that hasn't happened. I did get most of my Episcias and columneas repotted but now they're telling me it's time to repot them again!

You'll notice in the Coming Events column that we have a few plant sales, shows and conventions on the schedule. We're hopeful that all of these will happen—safely, of course!

My thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue of *The Dixie News*. As I have stated many times, I can't do it alone! I know you'll enjoy reading the news from our directors. It's good to hear what other clubs are doing.

So, continue to stay safe and stay well. Let's all pray that we'll soon be able to resume our in-person meetings, plant sales, shows and conventions.



Edge of Darkness  
by Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses

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Using pesticides? “Check the product label. Be sure the product is labeled for use on African violets or at least house plants, and for the specific problem you wish to control. Even when the active ingredient is the same, concentrations, solvents, carriers, and other factors may not be the same, and this can make a great difference in a product’s effect.”

AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges, p.28

