



# THE DIXIE NEWS

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## President's Message

Betty Ferguson



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Hi again, Dixie Friends!

I've been singing "Dixie!" But I'm substituting "the Land of Cotton" for "the warmth of Florida." I wonder if some of my indoor plants are expecting or yearning for an early spring like I am. I have blooms on my violets and several of my orchids. A lemon tree is covered in sweet-smelling flowers, and some of my indoor bonsai trees that dropped their leaves in the fall are showing green buds. I'm ready to move some of them back outside and make room in my house, but they'll have to wait until April. By the time you're reading this, spring will be about to pop in the Deep South though.

And so will local shows and sales. You may be busy separating and repotting baby violets for your sale and counting the weeks before time to stop disbudding. My previous article for *The Dixie News* was on burnout, but shows and sales never fail to get me geared up and excited about my plants again.

**Don't forget!** It's time to send Johnnie Berry our Dixie membership dues. You'll find her address in this and other issues of *The Dixie News*.

In November, we held a Dixie general membership Zoom meeting. It was exciting to "see" each of you who participated, and we did have good participation and a quorum—22 members and two guests. Mary Beth Bryant kindly hosted the Zoom meeting for us. You can find the meeting minutes on our Dixie website at [www.davs.org/](http://www.davs.org/). Thanks to Ken Barbi for keeping our website up to date and attractive.

I expected someone else to write the President's message for this issue, and we even appointed a nominating committee at our meeting. However, Mary Lou who is our parliamentarian, is holding us to our by-laws. They state that the nominating committee is elected in odd-numbered years, and the election takes place at the annual meeting in even-numbered years. As a result, to get Dixie back on track, you'll have the same slate of officers until 2024.

At our meeting we discussed options for making our future conventions more economical and accessible for all members. Robbie McMeel will probably tell you more, but he and Becky are working with Michael Jackson to find a central spot for a fall Dixie convention. This will likely include holding our convention in a setting other than a hotel due to the expense and requirements

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hotel conventions present. Rather than burdening the local club with most of the responsibility, we will all need to do our part to make the convention a success.

At our membership meeting we also voted on and adopted changes to our by-laws which Mary Lou proposed and published in the August and November issues of *The Dixie News*.

I look forward to seeing photos and reading news of your club's spring events in our newsletter.

Warm wishes for the rest of winter.

P.S. If you're yearning for new plants in the dead of winter, try the Gesneriad Society's seed fund.

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Streptocarpus  
Roulette Azur

# JOIN US!

## 2023 AVSA CONVENTION

### Sheraton Atlanta Hotel

165 Courtland St. NE, Atlanta, GA 30303

## MAY 28 – JUNE 4, 2023

SHOW AND SALESROOM OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:  
FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.,  
AND SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 9 A.M. - 3 P.M.



## 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.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org](http://www.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.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 \$35 per year. Register online or send check with contact information to:

AVSA  
P.O. Box 22417  
Beaumont, TX 77720

**Last, but not least, SUPPORT AVSA.** AVSA needs the support of its individual members, its affiliates and commercial members. **Donations can be made online or mailed to:** AVSA Office, P.O. Box 22417, Beaumont, TX 77720. 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.**



### 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.20**) 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)



# GEORGIA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



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

Greetings from the Peach State,

We survived the Christmas COLD!! The verdict is still out on some of our outdoor plants and shrubs. Our fingers are crossed.

Our club ended the year on a positive note. I installed new officers for the next 2 years, we celebrated the 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday of Laveta Hilton, enjoyed a fabulous buffet of holiday goodies, and had a rousing game of "Violet Bingo". Laveta created this game and we have so much fun playing for leaves and plants as prizes.



We had a disappointment related to our project plants ordered from the Violet Barn. We had ordered Opera Doc, a miniature trailer, hybridized by former member Sarah McGaha. Within days of the arrival of the plants Violet Barn notified us that the INSV had been found in their plants. A decision had to be made. Most opted not to take a plant or destroyed it. Some did take a plant and isolated it. Those who took a plant say they look fine so far. This has been a good learning experience. Sue Myers has provided several

resources with good information about this serious threat to our plant collections.



The birthday celebrity –  
Laveta Hilton



New Officers, Greater Atlanta AVC

Finishing on an up note, we have 6 members that are new or renewing Dixie memberships. I'm hoping to have more join Dixie.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone soon in Atlanta at the AVSA convention in May/June.



Bewitching Blue

# WELCOME TO DIXIE!

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

## New Members

Suzanne (Sue) Myers, Clarksville, GA  
Linda Greiss, Jefferson, GA  
Tede Flemming, Atlanta, GA  
Don Dressel, Marietta, GA

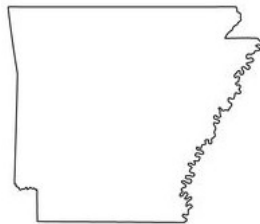
## Renewals

AVC of Georgia  
Johnnie Berry  
Karen Buchanan  
Phillis Hinkle

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## ARKANSAS STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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



The Little Rock club continues to gain new members, thanks to our shows and sales and Facebook. Interesting programs and snacks, raffle plants and friendly members play a leading role, too. Like bees returning to the hive, we gather from a wide circumference. One of our new members is a 21-year-old man who works in landscaping.

Rather than a December meeting, we met at our favorite barbeque joint for a Christmas party. The daring ones among us participated in Dirty Santa hoping to trade off, well interesting, things for a desirable gift and hoping not to take home one of the interesting things.

Renee Conklin, who specializes in the other gesneriads, presented our January program and passed out zip bags with leaves, cuttings, and plantlets. Thirteen members and a guest who joined participated. We voted on a theme for our fall show, choosing, "African Violets Coast to Coast." We have scheduled a sale just before

Mother's Day in the pavilion in the park where folks from the community have learned to find us.



January meeting in our library setting. Renee had lots of gesneriad leaves, cuttings and small plants to pass out.





The Raffle table

## FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Carolee Carter  
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2022 is gone, and our Florida affiliates are looking forward to rejuvenating our African violets in preparation for shows and sales! A few local shows have already been scheduled, but many of us are thrilled that the national AVSA convention will be in Atlanta this year, which is within driving distance!

### African Violet Council of Florida

African Violet Council of Florida: Date and location of our Spring meeting is pending approval. Stay tuned!

### Blooming Violets of Marion County

We (BVMC) had an excellent wrap up to the 2022 year! In November, the club took a field trip to Harmony Foliage Farm where members were awed to see violets, other gesneriads and begonias growing from a leaf through to a mature, sellable stage. Harmony is closed to the public, but President Laura Perdomo's

wholesale license allowed the group to arrange this special field trip.



In November, Vice President Carolee Carter gave a very informative presentation on pests.

In December, spirits were high with our fun Holiday Party, with delicious dishes prepared by the members.



January saw some challenges with our regular meeting space no longer available to clubs, so we will continue our year now at the Sheriff's Substation on SR 200. In January, members got hands-on practice with repotting and separating a mini as well as a standard African violet. Our raffle table overflows monthly, with January's highlight being a small plant of 'Ann', donated by member Dani Wyatt.



### **Bloomin' Violets & Gesneriads of Palm Beach**

We had a successful sale at Mounts Botanical Gardens in the fall and got four new members! Our club is still trying to attract new people who are interested in growing plants while still keeping things interesting for the older members.

### **Central Florida African Violet Society**

A new year has begun with the Central Florida African Violet Society. We have started having our face-to-face meetings at Beardall Senior Center, 800 Delaney Ave., in beautiful Orlando. Our meetings are the 3rd Wednesday of each month, starting time 10:30 A.M.

Coming Event: Central Florida African Violet Society plant sale: March 3rd & 4th, 10 A.M., 4 P.M. daily. Selling beautiful African Violets, Gesneriads, and companion plants

### **First Lakeland African Violet Society**

First Lakeland African Violet Society is hard at work preparing for our annual show on February 10th and 11th at Christ Lutheran Church 2715 Lakeland Hills Blvd, Lakeland FL 33805. Plant sale is 9 - 4 each day. Show opens after judging at Noon on Friday. Contact Mary Jane Dilorenzo 863-637-1517 for more information.

### **Heart of Jacksonville AVS**

We start off the year with 2 sales events. On February 25th, we will have a few tables at the Garden Club of Jacksonville's Flea Market. We will mostly sell our discards, and proceeds from everything sold goes to the club. If the leftovers are not claimed, there is a charity designated to pick them up. It's a win-win for our club and our members! They were going to donate the items anyway, so what a great way to give back a bit to our group.

The very same day we will be participating at Duval County's "Day of Gardening" as a vendor. This is a fun, all day event with speakers, vendors and a bag lunch provided for a small fee. After that, on March 17, our very own Carol Hixenbaugh will be giving a presentation at Clay County's version at a multi-speaker, all day event entitled "Gardening as Therapy."

This leads in very nicely to our BIG event on the next weekend! Heart of Jacksonville AVS is going to have their annual Display and Sale on Friday and Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>. Because it is our 30th anniversary as a club, the theme will be *Pearls of the Plant World*.





## Tampa African Violet Society (TAVS)

Spring is the busiest time of the year for members of Tampa African Violet Society. We have three major events beginning in early February.

First, we're getting ready for the Florida State Fair which runs from February 9–20 in Tampa. We'll be putting in a 10'x10' display, and our theme is "Violet Invasion" – which is the same theme for our show. This theme is based on Gasparilla Day, which is an event that takes place annually in Tampa and draws thousands of visitors. Each year on Gasparilla Day, a band of marauding pirates aboard the Jose Gasparilla, a replica pirate ship, arrive in Tampa Bay, stage an invasion of the City of Tampa and demand that the Mayor surrender the keys to the City. It's a great theme for the State Fair and for our annual African violet show.

Next is our annual show (it's our 47th!) on February 24-25 at the Temple Terrace United Methodist Church, 5030 East Busch Boulevard, Tampa. This year we've challenged each of our members to have at least 5 entries in the show – whether horticulture or design or a combination. We're hoping to have at least 150 entries! And we'll have plenty of member-grown plants for sale.

After the show, we'll have a rest period (???) of about five weeks, and then we'll participate in the Spring Plant Festival at the Botanical Gardens at University of South Florida. This is a 2-day event, and there are usually between 50 and 70 participating vendors from throughout the State of Florida. It's always well attended, and it's a great way for us to spread the word about the wonderful world of African violets!



Buckeye  
Cranberry  
Sparkler

## LOUISIANA DIRECTOR'S REPORT February 2023



by Becky McMeel  
[beckymcmeel@gmail.com](mailto:beckymcmeel@gmail.com)

Boy, the W's are getting wackier by the day, huh? Weather and world events make you scratch your head in disbelief! What is up with THAT! But there is one thing I am sure we can all agree upon. Violets! When seeking solace from all the craziness, our potted lovelies can calm our nerves and soothe our souls!

Another way to relax is by attending the AVSA National Convention in Atlanta from May 28<sup>th</sup> through June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Make your reservations now to come visit with your violet friends!!! Go to the AVSA web site for more info.

### Louisiana Lagniappe AVS

LLAVS has been meeting in person. In October, members met, shared leaves and plants, ate brown bagged lunches, and enjoyed a presentation by host George Ramirez on Culture of African Violets. He also shared his regimen of potting, repotting, care, and watering



October meeting





October meeting – Shopping for Plants

At the November meeting, the club elected officers for the 2023-2025 term. President is Wil Allen. Vice-President is Mary Jo Pohlig. Treasurer is D.J. Blanco. Corresponding Secretary is Dana Teepel. Recording Secretary is Becky McMeel. Past President is Laura Moser. Congratulations to all.

Members also enjoyed a presentation by Chris Brooks with Acadiana AVS on INSV (impatience necrotic spot virus). Several of his plants began looking quite poorly so he tested them for INSV and they tested positive. He believes one of the sellers he deals with may have the virus. Our host, Wil Allen, had Chris test several plants she noticed weren't growing like they should be. They tested positive.



What to do if your plants test positive for INSV? Bag them up and throw them away as it is HIGHLY contagious. For more information, look up INSV.



We must ALL be vigilant in keeping our plants safe from pests and diseases. When bringing home new plants or receiving an order from a commercial vendor- ISOLATE and watch them for 2 weeks before adding them to your collection.

Positive result

LLAVS met in Mandeville for their holiday pot luck social. Although attendance was small, a good food and conversation was enjoyed by all.

Future events for LLA VS include The LSU Spring Garden Sale at the Coliseum in Baton Rouge in March, 2023. The AVSA Convention is in May/June, in Atlanta, and their Annual Show and sale is in October, 2023. The show theme is "Violet Spooktacular".

### ACADIANA AVS

The Acadiana African Violet Society has had an active late fall and early winter. We have had programs on basic grooming, African Violet trailer care (guest presenter: Wilhelmina Allen, LLA VS), INSV symptoms and testing, and custom mixing African Violet soil. We hosted our Christmas party with a potluck style spread of holiday treats.



Most excitedly, we began our first foray into growing show quality plants by starting a project

plant. Our members have all started leaves of "Bob Serbin" and will be going through the process of growing a violet all the way from setting leaves to showing a plant in a "mini show". We are hoping to all learn a lot and get rid of some of the nervousness of growing a plant for show, so that we will be ready for a true show in the future.

At our February meeting we will be planning for an informational booth at a local garden festival. If you are interested in seeing what we are up to or joining us at our next meeting in person or by Facebook live, please check out our Facebook page and group by searching for Acadiana African Violet Society.



Project Plant, Bob Serbin

Let us all remember to be kind to our violets! Remember this one word...Vigilance! Just as with our human and pet friends, violets need good care, too!

Happy Growing, Y'all!



Lyon's  
Lavender  
Magic

## DIXIE AVS AFFILIATES REPORT First Quarter 2023

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

I hope that everyone has had a happy holiday season and was able to enjoy company with all of your loved ones and friends. Soon we will get this crazy winter behind us and start gearing up for our spring shows. We have all been growing and grooming our plants to get them ready for the upcoming shows and will soon be able to show off all of our hard work and again meet with old friends and meet new ones. I hope that we will have a great showing of Dixie Registered Plants in the collections. If you don't have the Dixie Ribbons, please contact me, so that a set can be sent to your show chairs. Cost of the ribbons is \$10.00 per set and this is only to cover the postage to get them to you.

Dixie has rosettes for Best and 2<sup>nd</sup> Best Standard Collection and Best and 2<sup>nd</sup> Best Collection in the Semi/Miniature Collection. In the future, please try to grow Dixie Collections for both. There are a lot of great Dixie registered plants to choose from. To find out what they are, go to Dixie's website and there is a PDF file with all of the Dixie registered plants. If you are unable to get this list on the website, please let me know and I will be more than happy to get you a list in the mail. If there is any plant that you would like to show in a Dixie class and it has not been registered with Dixie, please contact me and we will see what can be done with getting the plant registered.

To anyone who grows any of the Buckeye violets, I contacted Pat Hancock and she has given us permission to register one of her hybrids—Buckeye Exotic Dancer--that had not yet been registered with Dixie. We did this in response to a request by a member in an affiliate club who was growing the plant and wanted to enter it in a Dixie Collection Class.



If any affiliate has questions regarding any of the registered varieties or any suggestions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

**Let's keep Dixie in all of our shows!**

Respectfully, and keep up the good growing!

Robbie McMeel, DAVS Affiliates Chair

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## 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 payable to

Baltimore African Violet Club  
Carolyn Epstein  
14317 Yosemite Court  
Rockville, MD 20853

**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.

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## What's All the pHuss about pH?

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

When I was a new grower of the fancier varieties of African violets and a new club member, I was given the 1:1:1 potting mix recipe--one part each of peat, perlite and vermiculite. Surprisingly, the best plants I've ever grown (according to my

memory) were in that simple mix. Maybe that was because I was still in the obsessive stage of a new grower and repotted often or my fertilizer provided the nutrients my violets needed. But now I find it amazing my plants prospered at all given that my water is some of the softest in the country, and I didn't know to add a buffering product to control the acidity of the peat.

Quality potting mixes are formulated to suit the needs of most plants and remove much of the guesswork out of stabilizing our mixes. Commercial mixes are normally formulated to a pH of 6.2 to 6.8, which is about perfect for our African violets and our other gesneriads. Our community or well water, however, may present a difficult variable.

pH is said to be an abbreviation for "power of hydrogen" or "potential of hydrogen." But the "p" is actually short for the German word for power, *potenz*, and H is the element symbol for hydrogen. Danish biochemist Søren Peter Lauritz Sørensen first described pH in 1909.

pH is a measure of the relative amount of free hydrogen and hydroxyl ions in something, such as water, rocks, or soil. Water that has more free hydrogen ions is acidic, whereas water that has more free hydroxyl ions is basic (alkaline).

If that left your eyes crossing and your brain feeling fuzzy, to spare you further scientific garble, the Safer Brand website simplifies pH like this: "pH is a measurement tool used to determine the concentration, or amount, of hydrogen in a solution or area." I always thought pH was simply a measure of how much calcium water or soil has or doesn't have. If I studied about hydrogen and pH in college science classes, my mind must have been on the boys in the class instead. But as we'll see, calcium does play a role in stabilizing the pH.

To jiggle your memory, the range of pH extends from zero to 14. A pH value of 7 is neutral, because pure water has a pH value of exactly 7, which is considered neutral. Numbers 1-6 are acidic and numbers above 7 are alkaline. The pH of stomach acid on the scale is 1; battery acid is 0. Liquid drain cleaner (lye) is 14; bleach is 13. pH is reported in "logarithmic units" meaning each number represents a 10-fold change in the acidity or basicness of the water. For example,

water or a soil component with a pH of five is ten times more acidic than one having a pH of six and 100 times more acidic than a pH of 7.

pH can be affected by chemicals in the water. Acidic/soft water has fewer minerals, principally calcium and magnesium, but has more sodium. Though safe to drink, acidic water may lead to corrosion and leaching of minerals from metal pipes, fittings, solder, and faucets. Hard water, which is more alkaline and contains more base minerals, can cause mineral build-up in pipes and appliances and in our trays.

The word **Alkalinity** is often confused with the word **Alkaline**. Alkaline is a word used to describe the higher end, above 7, of the pH spectrum of water, whereas Alkalinity describes the water's ability to neutralize/buffer acid. The degree of alkalinity is mostly dependent on the soil or rocks it passes through. Alkalinity measures the amount of calcium and/or magnesium ions in your water or soil.

Here's how the Bay Area Koi Ponds website explains the difference. "Think of Alkalinity as the steering wheel for your pond's pH, the higher the alkalinity the more firm the wheel is being gripped making it that much harder for the pH to change course." Alkalinity buffers against rapid pH changes often found with acid water. Alkalinity accomplishes this by absorbing hydrogen ions when the water is acid and releasing them when the water becomes basic.

The words **Alkalinity** and **Hardness** are similar in meaning and frequently used interchangeably, but they measure different parameters. To keep it simple for this article, we'll use the following common definition. Hardness generally refers to the difficulty of water to produce lather with soap and to the tendency of water to cause mineral build-up in pipes.

The US Environmental Protection Agency considers soft water to contain less than 60 mg of calcium carbonate per liter of water (mg/L) and hard water to contain 150 to 300 mg/L.

Water naturally picks up minerals and chemicals from the environment including the air and as it travels to rivers and lakes. Rainwater seems like it would be the ideal water for our African violets. After all, rain waters plants in their natural setting.

Normal rainfall has a pH of about 5.6. It is acidic due to carbon dioxide gas in the atmosphere which reacts with the rainwater to form carbonic acid thus bringing down the natural pH of the pure water. Calcium carbonate from soil dust and other gases or run-off from our roofs may combine with rain increasing or decreasing the acidity level.

In 2002, the pH of rainwater across almost all the area served by Dixie members was 4.7 or 4.8 due to manufacturing, vehicles and heavy equipment, and electric power generators. The pH decreased further in the Northeast to 4.3 and even 4.1. In less industrialized areas, including parts of Texas and the less populated areas of the Midwest and the Northwest, the pH was as high as 6.3. Rain with a pH between 4.2 and 4.4 is considered "acid rain." As Americans have become more conscientious and air quality has improved, the pH of rainwater is believed to have also improved.

Some growers report success with rainwater when their potting medium is within the 6.5 to 6.8 pH range preferred by African violets, and their fertilizer provides the nutrients necessary to stabilize the pH. For plant pH problems, RO or distilled water may likewise seem like a perfect solution, but the pure water does not provide the macro- and micronutrients plants need. Without the minerals to buffer the acidity of soilless mediums, nutrient deficiency or toxicity occurs, and the pH may be unstable.

Deficiency, of course, is a lack of nutrients, and toxicity results from too much of a nutrient or an imbalance. With deficiency of a necessary nutrient young leaves may look bleached and older leaves may turn yellow green and die. Brown edges may occur on leaves. Stems and roots tend to be stunted, and flowering may not occur. Symptoms of toxicity are similar even if they have differing causes. The similarity of symptoms makes it difficult for growers to determine what is causing a nutrition problem. Extra calcium, as opposed to an acid pH, is rarely a problem for plants.

Micronutrient toxicity syndrome occurs over time because of the accumulation of excessive levels of micronutrients in the plant tissue. Horticulture specialist, Troy Buechel with ProMix, explains, "If your pH is running below 5.5 in your growing



media, sometimes plants take up more amounts [of a nutrient] because it's more soluble."

Some fertilizers further acidify soil mixes causing the pH to decrease further if our water or growing media is not sufficiently buffered. Periodic flushing with plain water and repotting will help prevent the build-up of salts and nutrients in the soil of potted plants, but once toxicity occurs in the plant tissue, it cannot be undone.



The degree of alkalinity is mostly dependent on the soil or rocks it passes through. Limestone formations provide considerable calcium and other base minerals in the water. Rocks of the southeast area of the United States are more likely to be granite, shale, and sandstone. The runoff of our rainwater is generally soft with little calcium. In addition, areas with high rainfall, which includes most of the area of Dixie, have fewer minerals to buffer our water because the rain washes them away. Drier areas tend to have higher alkalinity because the minerals are retained in the soil.



The ocean contains roughly 420 parts per million (ppm) of calcium. Calcium levels between 30 and 60 ppm are considered optimum for most plants. When I checked with my rural water department, I learned that the calcium level of our water is so low,  $\pm 6$  ppm, that it borders on being oligotrophic, meaning it can barely support

animal and plant life. My faucet water, however, consistently measures at a perfect 7. According to Douglas Cox of the Plant and Soil Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, "Water with high alkalinity (i.e., high levels of bicarbonates or carbonates) always has a pH value 7 or above, but water with high pH doesn't

always have high alkalinity." **CalMag to the rescue!**

pH. is important and we need to be testing our soil and water pH on a regular basis, but African violet growers should also learn about the alkalinity of our water. Your water provider can probably provide your calcium level. It may be given in mg/L, which is the same as ppm. Aquarium and hardware stores sell inexpensive tests to determine water pH levels, alkalinity and hardness. While not precise, the self-tests will provide sufficient information to give you a good idea of your water quality. Your state cooperative extension service will do professional water testing for you, probably with a reasonable fee.



So now we know, our pHocus should really be on alkalinity, not on pH.

## DIXIE REGISTERED VARIETIES

Becky McMeel, Plant Registration Chair  
[beckymcmeel@gmail.com](mailto:beckymcmeel@gmail.com)

These varieties were registered on January 27, 2023, by Belinda Thibodeaux and Pat Hancock:

### #1902- Cajun's Plum Crazy

(B. Thibodeaux)  
Double medium purple star.  
White ruffled edge. Green Standard.



### #1903-Cajun's Pandemic Blues

(B. Thibodeaux)  
Double white star, purple markings. Variable thin green edge. Variegated green and white foliage. Standard

**#1904 Buckeye Exotic Dancer (P. Hancock)**

Semidouble-double purple two-tone ruffled pansy. Variable lighter to white edge. Variegated dark green, cream and pink plain glossy foliage. Large.



Sinningia 'Li'l Georgie'  
by Kathy Spissman



Cajun's Plum Crazy



Columnnea 'Firebird'



Cajun's Pandemic Blues

**COPY DEADLINE  
FOR MAY ISSUE  
APRIL 15**

**TIPS FOR GOOD PLANT SYMMETRY**

Turn a plant regularly to promote good symmetry. If a leaf starts growing out of position, gradually, gently move it to its proper place, holding it there with a round plastic toothpick or a plant stake. Leaf supports may be used under the foliage to train the plant to grow flat. When a plant enters a show, all picks, props and supports must be removed.

*AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges*, p. 19.



# Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus (INSV)

by Ken Barbi  
Annapolis, MD

[kenbarbi@verizon.net](mailto:kenbarbi@verizon.net)

(As of December 12, 2022)



INSV infected African violet  
courtesy of Dr. Minh Bui

Several members have reported receiving African violets from commercial sources that are infected with the Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus (INSV) in the Fall of 2022 in the Mid-Atlantic states and Florida.

This virus has been diagnosed in African violets and other gesneriads, and has **no cure**. It is transmitted by the notorious **THRIPS**. It has wiped out entire greenhouse stocks of several commercial growers, and destroyed entire members' collections. Its symptoms mimic other common problems we have faced over the years such as mites, poor culture, water spots, leaf mottling, etc.



INSV infected African violet leaf  
courtesy of Dr. Minh Bui

INSV infected African violet  
from "The Violet Voice"

The problem is something we all need to know about, particularly how to combat the virus. The only positive way to determine if your suspect plants have INSV is to perform a test. Test kits are available from Agdia. Once you determine a **single plant** in your collection has the virus, you can be sure all your plants are at risk if you have thrips which carry the virus. **Destruction of infected plants** is the only cure, and control of thrips is the key to prevention. You can't propagate INSV away – it will live in every offspring. Seal the bag you put it in, and don't compost it. African violets aside, INSV needs to be dealt with responsibly because of the major damage it can cause to crops. It can wipe out entire fields of crops, and we don't want to play any part of that. Even if you don't have trips, contaminated tools and surfaces can also spread INSV. **Some members are destroying their entire collection.**

So now you say, I have tried everything to kill those little bugs. Science has come to the rescue in the form of an insecticide called **Avid**. There are other products as the chart (p.22) from AVSA shows (included here on page 23). I thought it important enough to bring it to your attention. If you want more detail, there is a fine collection of research from the University of Massachusetts, Texas A&M, and Colorado State Cooperative Extension On-Line. Search the Internet for "Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus" for articles. But **ACT NOW** to save your collection.

**DON'T FORGET TO  
RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!  
(Membership Application on p. 20)**

Please send check payable to DAVS to  
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Lovely Rainbow



# the other Gesneriads: PRIMULINA linearicalyx

by Mary Lou Harden  
[mlhard@verizon.net](mailto:mlhard@verizon.net)



Here's a photo of one of my favorite Primulinas – linearicalyx. As you can see, its foliage is very different from that of an African violet, and that is one of the reasons I was attracted to this plant. When treated with care, it will give you many beautiful light blue/lavender bell-shaped blooms. If you're not familiar with Primulinas, here's what the Gesneriad Reference Page tells us about them:

*“Primulina was once a minor genus with a single species, P. tabacum. This is a small soft-leaved plant with interesting and attractive flowers, with leaves that many people thought smelled of cured tobacco.*

*”Then botanists investigated the genus Chirita, which had long been known to need revision and discovered that many of the Chirita species appeared to be closely allied to P. tabacum and should be in the same genus. Since the “Primulina” name had publication priority, it meant that all those allied species had their names changed to Primulina. The rest were changed to Microchirita, Henckelia or other names.*

*“There are now upwards of 100 species within Primulina. Even though it is the largest of the ex-Chirita genera, Primulina is not the most widespread, being found only in the limestone areas of western and southern China and northern Vietnam. Guangxi province is particularly rich in species with about half of all known species. All species are perennial herbs and many have rather leathery patterned leaves and/or attractive flowers making them ideal for cultivation. Over 30 species are currently known in cultivation, and many hybrids are available in cultivation and in commerce.”*

Primulinas are wonderful indoor plants. Many varieties have distinctive patterned foliage which makes them interesting even without flowers. Although they prefer warm temperatures, they will tolerate cool nights. They can tolerate a wide temperature range, from a low of 45 up to about 85 degrees. And although they prefer humidity of 50% or higher, they will tolerate lower humidity.

They don't do well when overwatered. As a matter of fact, they seem to be resistant to drought. If wick watering, the planting medium must be very light. Use about one-half each of perlite and soilless mix. I use lukewarm water when watering. And every time I water, I use a small amount of 20-20-20 fertilizer, about 1/4 teaspoon per gallon of water.

They grow and bloom best when given the proper light. If growing in natural light, I suggest an East-facing window as the morning sun is not so hot. The plant will tell you if it's getting too much light – the leaves may start turning downward and they may develop a reddish tint. Alternatively, if the leaves seem to be reaching upward, they probably are asking for more light. Most of my violets and other gesneriads are grown on plant stands under either fluorescent bulbs or LEDs. The top of the plant is about 5 to 8 inches from the light source and lights are on about 12 hours per day.

Like most plants in the gesneriad family, Primulinas like new digs at least once a year. When repotting, increase the pot size gradually, say from a 3” pot to a 4” pot. Also, they seem to like less soil, so I usually pot them up into squatty or shallow pots.

With any indoor plants, you need to be observant as they are also susceptible to mealybugs, some mites, and powdery mildew.

If you're not currently growing any Primulinas, please check out pictures of many of them on the Gesneriad Reference Page and then arrange to include them in your plant collection.

## Upcoming Events

**February 10-11, 2023 – First Lakeland AVS, Lakeland, FL, AV Show & Sale, “Violets are Tea-rrific!”** Friday, February 10—Sales 9:00am-4:00pm; Show 12 Noon-4:00pm; Saturday, February 11, Sales & Show 9:00am-3:00pm. Christ Lutheran Church, 2715 Lakeland Hills Boulevard, Lakeland, FL 33805. Information: Mary Jane DiLorenzo, [mjdilo92@gmail.com](mailto:mjdilo92@gmail.com).

**February 24-25, 2023 – Tampa AVS, Tampa, FL, AV Show & Sale, “Violet Invasion.”** Show Hours: Friday, February 24—Noon-5:00pm; Saturday, February 25—9:00am-3:00pm. Plant Sales Hours: Friday, February 24—9:00am-5:00pm; Saturday, February 25—9:00am-3:00pm. Temple Terrace United Methodist Church, 5030 East Busch Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33617. Information: Celeste Christman, Show Chair, [CelesteChristman@c21be.com](mailto:CelesteChristman@c21be.com).

**March 4-5, 2023, Spring Branch AVC, Houston, TX. Spring Show & Sale,** Judson Robin, Jr., Community Center, 2020 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX. Information: Teresa Kaminski at [tckaminski@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tckaminski@sbcglobal.net).

**March 17-18, 2023, First AVS of Denton, First Nighter AVS of Dallas and Alpha AVS of Dallas, African violet show, “Flower Power! Violets Remember the Sixties,** First Presbyterian Church, 1114 W. University, Denton, TX 76201. Information: Janet Castiglione at [jmcvioletpcas@gmail.com](mailto:jmcvioletpcas@gmail.com)

**March 18, 2023, First Austin AVS, Austin, TX, Spring Show and Plant Sale,** Austin Area Garden Center, Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220

Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX. Information: Susan Kautz at [gizzmo@austin.rr.com](mailto:gizzmo@austin.rr.com).

**March 24-25, 2023, Heart of Jacksonville AVS, Jacksonville, FL, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual African violet Display and Sale,** San Jose Church of Christ, 6233 San Jose Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32247. Information: Bobbi Johannsen at [bobbi@jacksonvilleviolets.org](mailto:bobbi@jacksonvilleviolets.org).

### SIGNS OF SOIL MEALYBUGS

Plants look wilted and peaked. Plants stop blooming. Heavy infestations cause plants to be stunted and leaves may turn yellow. If soil mealybugs are suspected, look for an infestation in the soil and on the new roots. A white, waxy material may be seen floating on top of the water in the reservoir, and insects may be seen along wicks.

**Control:** Isolate plants. Since community watering systems help soil mealybugs spread, the use of individual saucers is a good preventive measure. Foliar sprays will not control this pest. Growers must use a drench.

*AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges, p.27.*

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#### PUBLICATION DEADLINES

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

From the Editor. . .Mary Lou Harden  
[mlhard@verizon.net](mailto:mlhard@verizon.net)

A new year! And that means many opportunities to not only grow and enjoy the beautiful and unique plants with which we've been blessed, but also the opportunities we'll have to share the joys of growing African violets and their cousins with other people! One of the greatest benefits of meeting in person with like-minded folk is being able to share our passion. So, be grateful and take advantage of **your** opportunities!

We're happy to see that many of our African violet and Gesneriad clubs and councils are having shows and plant sales. Be sure to check the list

on page 17 and plan to attend the shows that are in your area. I know you'll come away with renewed enthusiasm and desire to grow better plants – and you will probably also return home with a few new varieties!

Robbie McMeel is standing in as interim Convention Director and he's been busy trying to work out details for a fall convention and show, so stay tuned! Hopefully he will soon be able to give us some details.

Thanks to everyone who has furnished articles, photos and news for this issue. This is truly a team effort and EVERY member of the team is important!

Best wishes to all for your beautiful and successful shows!

---

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**INSECTICIDE CHART**  
**(See INSV article on p.15)**

Pesticide	Kills	Label recommended applications	Vol. of Product needed to make 1 gallon of spray sol'n, per Label directions [1]	Target conc'n of Active in Spray Solution (%) [1][2]	Cost of Product [3]	Cost to make 1 gallon of spray solution (\$) [1]	Product Volume
<b>Abamectin</b> , same as <b>Avid</b> (2% Avermectins, Liquid)	cyclamen mites, leafminers, <b>thrips</b> , aphids [4]	3 times, 7 days apart	0.08 oz, 2.37 ml	0.0013 [4]	\$93.20 per quart	\$0.23	1 quart, 960 ml
<b>Conserve SC</b> (11.6% Spinosad, Liquid)	<b>thrips</b> and many other insects [5]	5 times per season (max); reapp'n. 5 days (min)	0.10 oz, 2.96 ml	0.0181 [5]	\$183.75 per quart	\$0.57	1 quart, 960 ml
<b>Akari 5SC</b> (5% Fenpyroximate, Liquid)	cyclamen mites. Suppresses mealybugs [6]	3 times, 5 - 7 days apart	0.24 oz, 7.2 ml	0.0093 [6]	\$166.50 per quart	\$1.25	1 quart, 960 ml
<b>Dominion 2L</b> (21.4% Imidacloprid, Liquid)	<b>thrips</b> , aphids, fungus gnats, mealy bugs [7]	Begin foliar app's prior to high pest populations and reapply as needed.	0.015 oz, 0.45 ml	0.0025 [7]	\$27.95 per 27.5 oz bottle	\$0.02	27.5 oz, 825 ml
<b>Mantra 1G</b> (1% Imidacloprid, Granules)	<b>thrips</b> , aphids, fungus gnats, mealy bugs [8]	Apply 1/4 - 1/3 level teasp per 3.5 - 5 inch pot. As needed.	Granules	Granules [8]	\$46.00 per 5 lb jug	\$0.02 per 3 1/2 " pot	5 lb, 2270g

1. When the label suggested two acceptable rates, the higher rate (2X) was used to obtain these numbers.  
2. Target % concentration of spray solution = [Volume (ml) of Product specified on Label for 1 gallon of Spray solution] X [% Active in Product] / 3840 ml.  
3. Prices as of Nov, 2012. The products were purchased at Hummert, except for Dominion 2L, bought online at domyownpestcontrol.com.  
4. Nufarm Abamectin Specimen Label: <http://www.cdms.net/LDat/ld9OR002.pdf>.  
5. Dow Conserve SC Specimen Label: <http://www.cdms.net/ldat/ld24P002.pdf>.  
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