



# 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.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org](http://www.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org))  
Mary Lou Harden, Editor ([mlhard@verizon.net](mailto:mlhard@verizon.net))

November 2023  
Vol. 71, No. 4

## President's Message

By Betty Ferguson



Hello Dixie Family,

Happy Thanksgiving,  
Merry Christmas, and a blessed New Year to each  
of you!

After awkward Zoom meetings or no meetings at all, local clubs are again meeting and holding or planning shows! Be sure send your club's activities to Mary Lou so we can rejoice with you. And be sure to read Robbie's Dixie Convention Report. It was a success! Congratulations to all winners! Robbie listed the top winners in his report, but every red and blue ribbon counts as a win.

Thank you to everyone who helped make our mini-convention/show at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens the success it was. We especially thank Robbie and Becky McMeel, Michael Jackson, and the Birmingham Early Birds club for all their work. Becky was like a little bumble bee running to and fro tending to staging and setting up her own designs. Little mumbles sometimes emanated from her direction—"Oh, sh!!" And "Well, d@mn!- - but it all came together beautifully, and she never actually lost her cool.

This convention, although abbreviated, presented us with an opportunity for a warm time

of friendship. I love Dixie! Our members are warm, accepting, helpful, sharing, and encouraging. I got to know some of you so much better than at larger, more rushed conventions.

Phillis Hinkle, our Judges Chairman, pulled together two panels of judges and allowed each panel portions of horticulture—both African violets and other gesneriads—to judge. Thank you, Phillis, fellow judges and clerks. And thanks to all who brought food. The pimientos sandwiches were tops. We didn't have a fridge, so non-refrigerated snacks were necessary. And the raffle! So many pretty and useful things to win. I could hardly keep myself out of the sales room and did a lousy job of adhering to my budgeted allowance. Do I have buyer's remorse? No way! Is it fair to say our vendors were just about our favorite people there?

Three of our regular convention attendees were unable to attend this convention due to health reasons—Laura Walker, Carolee Carter, and Mary Lou Harden. Please pray for their quick and complete recoveries.

Our only real disappointment and surprise was the low turn-out of the community, but I learned we were competing with three at-home ball games and Disney on Ice.

In our board meeting, we asked Robbie, Becky and Michael if they will be willing to be in charge of next year's convention. They will! And our officers and board of directors are already planning next year's convention again at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. We'll apply to the Gardens for an early September date to try to avoid other society shows. We're planning ways to keep our next convention as economical as possible. (continued, p.2)

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*President's Message, continued from p.1*

At our general meeting, the following members were approved as our 2025-26 slate of officers:

President, Robbie McMeel  
 Vice President, Becky McMeel  
 Recording Secretary, Phillis Hinkle  
 Corresponding Secretary, Jo Schrimsher  
 Treasurer, Johnnie Berry

Welcome aboard to our new officers and thanks for continuing, Johnnie. The new slate of officers will be installed at our 2024 convention.

Now is the right time to start planning to attend and assist with our 2024 convention. I'm looking forward to seeing you there.

Betty

### FROM THE ROVING REPORTER

by Bobbi Johannsen

[bobbibiz@bellsouth.net](mailto:bobbibiz@bellsouth.net)

### COVERAGE OF DIXIE'S 2023 ANNUAL CONVENTION AND SHOW

October 20-21, 2023



*'It's A  
Garden  
Affair'*

*Birmingham Botanical Gardens*

2612 Lane Park Road  
 Birmingham, AL 35223

It was with much curiosity that I signed up for the Dixie show in Birmingham, October 19 - 21, 2023, and dragged my partner in crime, Sandi Mynatt, also from the Heart of Jacksonville, FL club, along with me!

It was the first show since Covid, which is enough of a hurdle, but we also tried a different 'ala carte'

### DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP! (Membership Application on p. 19)

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)

format. Imagine...the show was not held in a hotel! The Birmingham Botanical Gardens was a GREAT choice of location. There were many plant minded people in the vicinity, AND it was lovely weather. We had **20** registered with **14** people entering exhibits. We had a total of **119** exhibits and earned the AVSA Blue Show award, the highest honor.

We were given a choice of several hotels nearby, of varying costs. I don't think anyone selected the Grand Bohemian at over \$300 per night--someday I HOPE to be able to afford that! It turned out that many of us did stay at the same hotel, so we still ran into each other, at breakfast, etc. We got together for dinner whenever we could.

The show room was large enough for our meeting, although we may have been able to use some of their other public rooms . With Kathy Spissman as our vendor and sale plants offered by the Early Bird AV club (some from Lyndon Lyons) we had more than enough variety. A raffle was held, a hospitality spread was laid out and show awards were given. I cannot say enough about the people who, like us, wanted to see this succeed! Robbie and Becky McMeel did a fantastic job of getting the ball rolling, even though the date was not decided until late and volunteers were few. Mike Jackson (show co-chair) and his Early Bird Club really pulled together to fill in the duties. Phyllis Hinkle rounded up and instructed the 2 panels of judges, as she does so well. Greg and Marian Zoller distributed the awards that had been waiting for so long. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that donated to the awards fund for the last 3 years!! (Make your donations for next year!!)

Wayne Geeslin had many fabulous varieties to drool over, as usual. Many others brought worthy entries and there were many other Gesneriads. There were some NICE designs as well. The only things missing were some of the faces that we look forward to seeing at these get togethers. Everyone agreed that we should do this again next year. If you know of a good location with similar options, please let us know! Either way, watch for next year's fall date and plan to join us. If history repeats itself, you don't want to

miss eating dinner with TWO college football teams at Golden Corral next time!



Cajun's Oh My Darling  
New Introduction by Belinda Thibodeaux



Eternal Orbit  
Best in Show Horticulture  
by Wayne Geeslin

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#### REMINDER TO ALL AFFILIATES

Please update your club's or council's information, including upcoming shows and plant sales, on AVSA's website:

[www.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org](http://www.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org)



## JOIN THE AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA

An AVSA membership offers the following benefits:

- Six full-color issues annually of the African Violet Magazine (AVM) filled with great growing information
- Regular columns include
  - In Search of New Violets
  - A featured Gesneriad
  - Registration of new cultivars
  - 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.**



AVSA 2024  
CONVENTION  
April 21-28, 2024  
DoubleTree by Hilton  
2100 S. Priest Drive  
Tempe, AZ 85282

### 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.19**) 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,

This fall has been busy and beautiful. Fall tree colors are gorgeous right now.

Checking in on the Rome Study Group, they are busy growing out leaves. Johnnie Berry sent many leaves to the group. They are hoping to have plants to sell in the spring at the Garden Center event. They were not able to participate this year. Their group is small but stable.

The African Violet Club of Greater Atlanta had a show and sale September 23. The show itself and plant sales were very successful. We received the Green Standard Show Award. Thank you to our judges Michael Jackson, Bobbi Johanssen, and Cathy Carter. They have been judging for us and we always enjoy having them.

We are looking forward to 2024 which will be our club's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We can't wait to celebrate.

It was great to see many of you in Birmingham for Dixie. The show was beautiful. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make it successful in such a short time.

Happy Holidays to everyone. See you next year!

Phillis Hinkle

### **DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!** (Membership Application on p. 19)

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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

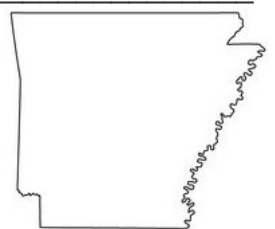
Sandi Mynatt, Jacksonville, FL  
Maurine Flynn, Snellville, GA

### Renewals

Brenda Brasfield  
Norma Flynn  
John Kruegel

## ARKANSAS STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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



Central Arkansas African Violet Society held our fall show on October 6-7. We had 84 horticulture exhibits and five design exhibits with nine of our active members contributing. We have 25 active to occasionally active members total. Our last founding member has moved out of the area to be closer to family. We made a video to present her a plaque, which we mailed to her. One of our relatively new but regular members drives from North Arkansas, around 170 miles one way, and gets a hotel room for meetings.



Three of our CAAVS Best in Show winners. Left to right—Alice Brown, Diane Riley, Debbie Tait. This was Debbie's first show, and her Episcia 'Chocolate Cream' won Best Gesneriad.

We have a brand-new president, Diane Riley, and a new secretary, Debbie Tait. The club is excited about their leadership. Diane was very involved in assisting at the AVSA Convention in Little Rock, and this is her second CAAVS show to participate in. Her trailer, 'Ramblin' Lace', won Best in Show.

We have beautifully designed new club tee shirts, too! The library we were meeting at often cancelled our meetings to give the room to other patrons. This left our vice president having to look for alternative meeting places. She found us a perfect and permanent place at an Episcopal church. Our new club room has tables and even had vases of flowers on each cloth-covered table at our first meeting. We're collecting a donation for the church to be presented at the end of the year.

Due to Thanksgiving falling on our regular meeting weekend, we'll skip our November meeting and will have a Christmas party at a barbeque restaurant in lieu of our December meeting. Then it will be back to business in January when I'll present a program on pest control.

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## FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Carolee Carter  
[caroleeviolets@gmail.com](mailto:caroleeviolets@gmail.com)



### African Violet Council of Florida

The African Violet Council of Florida (AVCF) held its fall meeting by Zoom on Sept. 30. Guest speaker was Stephen Covolo-Hudson who explained how he hybridizes his lovely Steffano African violets and Streptocarpus. We were amazed at the reach of Facebook publicity. One guest got up at the crack of dawn in Australia to attend!

Following Stephen's presentation, a General Assembly was held. A proposal for a judge's school was made. A nominating committee was selected to nominate candidates for a new slate of officers to serve the upcoming 2024-2025 term of office.

### Blooming Violets of Marion County

The Blooming Violets of Marion County started meeting again in August after their summer hiatus with a refresher on violets in general, programs on gesneriads and trailers, and we have a fun "Dawg" Show planned for the November meeting. What's a DAWG Show you say? Well, we encourage our members to enter plants in crazy categories like Swaying Palm Trees (an AV with a long neck), Physical Fitness Buff or Reject (an AV reaching for the sky or falling to the floor), or Too Big for Its Britches or My Pants Are Falling Off (An AV that is either under- or over-potted) to name 3 of 10 categories. Laura and Carolee will judge the entries with prizes given out for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Best in Show! Should be fun! Our members are very enthusiastic, and we hope to entice more in the area to attend our meetings.

### Bloomin' Violets & Gesneriads of Palm Beach

We are getting ready for our Mounts sale this Nov. 4th and 5th. starting at 9 am 'till 4 pm. This will be at Mounts Botanical Gardens in West Palm Beach. We will have Violets, Gesneriads and Tropical plants for sale. Please come if you can, and everyone is sure to find the plant they can't live without.

### Central Florida African Violet Society

The Central Florida AVS (Orlando) is continuing its courses to introduce newcomers to the African violet world. In September, we held a 'hands-on' workshop on creating a dish garden. Members were encouraged to use the plants and dishes provided to create their own dish garden under the expertise of Vice President and designer extraordinaire, Elvie Blakely.

In October, Treasurer Tammy Cambre gave a short demonstration of 'form' repotting. The new club members were amazed at how easy it is to repot using this method. Thanks to



Tammy's vacation travels, we had an unusually exciting meeting where club members were able to purchase new plants from the Optimara greenhouse. We all really needed more plants!

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

First Lakeland African Violet Society had a successful sale October 14th. We are currently working on our spring show. I hope everyone is doing good.

### **Heart of Jacksonville AVS**

Following our June summer social, the board of the Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society stayed busy during the summer weeks before our September start of our membership season. Zoom board meetings (including on the Fourth of July!) took place regularly and productive special meetings on Technology were held as well as programs that were added to the calendar. A well-attended social gathering, "Violet Repot and Refresh," took place at the end of July so that members could toss around soil, get some mentoring, and sustain friendships. Since the chosen date coincided with President Bobbi Johannsen's birthday, a surprise party was added



to the fun. Everyone worked on their plant collection, shared a lovely lunch, cards and gifts were opened -- and four hours later happy violet enthusiasts cleaned up and departed. Feedback from membership was extremely positive!

September's first meeting of the year focused on renewing dues and featured a Project Plant Program on Trailing African Violets. Combining video, slides and narration on care and best practices, each member also received a 5-month, 4-inch potted variety of trailer to nurture toward entry into the club Display and Sale in April 2024. Over the coming months, additional follow-up will take place, and growers may ask questions, repot their trailer and continue to learn more about this kind of AV.



October was busy with a general meeting and program on Artificial Light given by board member Sandi Mynatt. This topic is fundamental



to most AV lovers, and our members received great advice on the many lighting options on the market today. Later in the month, a soil mixing work party was held to create the inventory behind the number one requested member supply -- club soil. Many thanks to the volunteers who worked so hard. It's what keeps us rollin' along!

### **Tampa African Violet Society (TAVS)**

Tampa AVS is on the move! During the past two months, we have added five new members. Part of the reason for the new members is through advertising—Facebook, our website, our monthly newsletter and other electronic methods.

We have just concluded a highly successful plant sale at the University of South Florida Botanical Gardens. USF sponsors both a Spring and a Fall Plant Festival in which fifty to seventy vendors

from throughout the State participate, selling many different types of plants.

We've had some wonderful and informative Zoom night meetings. In September, we heard from Glenda Williams of McDade, TX, on growing African violet trailers and in October, Dale Martens of Sherrard, IL, shared with us some of her growing suggestions as well as the benefits of using HydraFiber.

For our in-person day meetings, two of our members gave programs that were not only informative but also humorous and entertaining. In September, Glenn Shelton's program was titled "Decapitation and Other Stuff People are Too Scared to Do." The October program by Tom Schaefer was titled "The Mad Chemist."

We'll now be focusing on our annual show, "Art Through the Ages," scheduled for February 23-24, 2024, in Temple Terrace (Tampa), Florida. Check out our Facebook page as well as our website for details:

[www.tampaafricanviolets.com](http://www.tampaafricanviolets.com).

## LOUISIANA DIRECTOR'S REPORT November 2023



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

Hello from the Bayou state! We woke up to temps in the 40's, dreary, windy, and blah! Mother Nature is at it again, y'all!

**Louisiana Lagniappe AVS** Louisiana Lagniappe has been busy preparing for, and having their annual show and sale! It was a truly "spooktacular" affair. Our panel of judges got it done with time to spare. Thank you to Betty Ferguson, Mike Jackson, and Danny Tidwell for a job well done!

Our BIS was Cajun's Yeah Baby, hybridized and shown by Belinda Thibodeaux. Best Design was a dish garden by Chris Brooks. Wilhelmina Allen won Horticulture Sweepstakes and Susie Smith won Design Sweepstakes. Congrats to all the winners! For more winners and pictures, visit the LLAVS Facebook page.



LLAVS Judges



LLAVS Best Design, Best Dish Garden

by  
Chris Brooks



LLAVS Best in Show, Cajun's Yeah Baby  
by Belinda Thibodeaux





LLAVS Awards Table

The club will meet in November and have their annual Christmas Social in December. Future plans are to sell at the LSU Spring Garden sale and possibly have a spring show instead of a fall show. We shall see!!

### Acadiana African Violet Society

by Chris Brooks

Acadiana African Violet Society had an enjoyable late summer and early fall. August saw a presentation on creating a lighted plant stand and tips on LED lighting. We had a member bring spider plants to share with the group and had a presentation on their care.

September was all about earth friendly peat moss alternatives and Primulina care. Members had the opportunity to take home some leaves to start Primulina, as well as samples of the peat moss alternatives.

In October we enjoyed a presentation by Dr. Jeff Smith on bloom development and talked about plants for the fall vegetable garden. We were able to share some trailer cuttings from Tropical World Nursery with all the members. Thank you, Tropical World and Mr. Bruce! At the end of October some of us visited and participated in our sister club's (Louisiana Lagniappe African Violet Society) annual show and sale.

November's meeting just passed. We had a fun time meeting at the home of member Thomas Gibbs to create our own self watering African violet planters. It was a great event and included a garden tour.



That's it for Louisiana! What is happening in your neck of the woods???

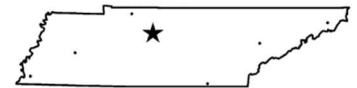
Till next time. . .Happy Growing! ☺

Becky McMeel, Louisiana Director

### TENNESSEE STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Marian Zoller

[marigregz@gmail.com](mailto:marigregz@gmail.com)



Hello fellow DAVS members.

There is nothing that will motivate you to improve your growing skills than seeing a violet show and attending a convention. Boy, was the DAVS Convention a motivator! It was a beautiful show in a beautiful facility. We are looking forward to returning to Birmingham in 2024. I'm hoping more of our Tennessee growers will attend. This year it was just myself and husband (Greg) and Karen Buchanan from Knoxville (who exhibited some beautiful winners).

The Memphis AVS had a violet sale in September and is planning a show on April 12 & 13, 2024. The theme will be Let the Good Times Roll. This

will be our first show since the dark days of Covid. Wish us luck.

MAVS has had some very interesting programs this past quarter. Mike Ramsey educated us on lighting and Brenda Brasfield and Geneva Stagg presented on Repotting and Preparing for Show.

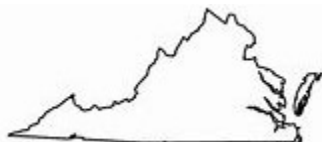
In September several members carpoled to Little Rock to see their show and sale. It was great fun. They are a great group and were very hospitable to us, first by serving us a good lunch and then by selling us plenty of plants. Thanks to Little Rock AVS. Hope you will come to Memphis in April and let us reciprocate.

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## VIRGINIA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Rich Follett

[richfoll@yahoo.com](mailto:richfoll@yahoo.com)



I have not had a great deal of opportunity to promote DAVS during 2023. My own affiliate club, the Shenandoah Saintpaulia Society, has yet to return to regular meetings after Covid-19. We hope to start back up in January, pending the location of a venue, as our old venue closed down. I did have a chance to try to drum up some interest by talking to folks at the AVSA convention in Atlanta, and will be doing some follow-up via email in January and February.

I will be attending (and judging for) MAAVS on the first weekend in November, and will promote DAVS there as much as I can. I am sorry I was not able to join you in Birmingham, but was certainly with you in spirit. I zeroed out my leave time from work last year when I had to have my knee replaced, and it is going to take all of my available personal days from this school year to attend the AVSA convention in Phoenix, which I must attend as 2nd VP. I look forward to being able to support DAVS in the future - will have a bit more available time, since I retire in May of 2024.

NK-Metelyk



## DIXIE AVS AFFILIATES REPORT Fourth Quarter 2023

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

As we transition into fall, we can all take a sigh of relief, as we do not need to bear the heat of summer until next year. This summer was unbearable for some regions. Now it should be more pleasurable to work outside and for club fall sales that are held in outdoor venues.

We have one submission this quarter for the Dixie Collection Awards:

Dixie African Violet Society  
Show Theme: "It's a Garden Affair"  
Show Chair: Robbie McMeel

Gold Rosette – Best Dixie Collection – Standard  
Karen Buchanan – Knoxville, TN  
Hunter's Muy Grande #1889, Hunter's Exit  
Wound #1882, Buckeye Nostalgia #1753  
Congratulations to Karen for her collection exhibited in the show.

NOTE: In the past, one needed to send in the show schedule to me along with the money for the ribbons. In order to help streamline this, any club that will have Dixie classes in their show can email me a copy of your schedule, this will help save your club postage fees and time to get it to the post office.

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.

If any affiliate has any questions or 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 and be safe in your travels,

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](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.

Brazos Belle



**NEWS FROM DAVS AWARDS COMMITTEE**

**Marian & Greg Zoller**

[marigregz@gmail.com](mailto:marigregz@gmail.com)

Greetings from the DAVS Awards Committee.

We had a great time at the Birmingham Convention. We were able to present cash awards to all the prize winners, perhaps not as much as in previous years, but at least it was something. We hope to be able to do better next year.

At the convention we received generous donations to the fund from the following attendees:

Bobbi Johannsen  
Heart of Jacksonville AVS  
Betty Ferguson  
Maurine Flynn  
Robbie McMeel  
Becky McMeel  
Mike Jackson

We do appreciate those donations. We hope that we can continue to add to the awards fund in the next few months. One thing to take note of: There were 77 Best of Class awards available. Of those 53 were returned due to no entries. That is a lot of opportunity just waiting for you to get some plants ready to enter next year.

As always, we ask for and welcome your donations to the awards fund. Please send checks to DAVS Awards at:

Marian and Greg Zoller  
4815 Oak Lane Cove  
Arlington, Tn. 38002

Sincerely,  
Marian and Greg Zoller



Roller Rink

## REPORT BY DAVS SHOW CHAIR

Robbie McMeel

[mcmeel@bellsouth.net](mailto:mcmeel@bellsouth.net)

Well, we did it. We had the DAVS show in Birmingham, AL, at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens on October 19th, 20th, & 21<sup>st</sup>. The show was a success. We had a few hiccups that appeared, but we were able to work them out with no problem. We had 20 DAVS members who registered for the show, which I thought was very good with our current situations and trying to get the DAVS Show/Convention going again.

The venues provided by the Birmingham Botanical Gardens were great. The show room was large and the room off to the side of the show room worked great for the plant sales room. The sales room did very well. We had Kathy Spissman and the local Birmingham club, Early Bird AVS that sold plants and supplies. We also had a few Dixie members that brought plants and leaves to sell also. In the sales room, we also had some raffle items donated by members that went very well too. Many thanks to all members who gave items for the raffle. There was a lot of room and tables to display all of the show plants and designs. There were 14 members who displayed plants and designs. There were 119 entries including plants and designs. The show received the AVSA "Blue Certificate" with a score of 98.5. Great job to all involved.

I would like to thank Michael Jackson and members of the Early Bird AVS who stepped up and did a wonderful job helping to get the show going in the short amount of time that we had.

At our annual meeting, held in the show room on Saturday morning, we discussed the show and if all involved would like to continue having the show in Birmingham because of its central location and all agreed. The local hotels were close to the venue and there were many eateries around this area and we even had the opportunity to get together and eat as a group a few of the nights. At the conclusion of the meeting Marian and Greg Zoller, Awards Chair couple, announced that they had the awards that are presented to the winners ready and that members could pick them up in the show room during the day.

## WINNERS AT THE SHOW ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Best AVSA Collection - Standard: Cajun's Freckleface Kid, Picasso, Buckeye Nostalgia; Best AVSA Collection – Semi/Mini: Jazz Bouquet, Eternal Orbit, Rob's Inner Orbit; Best in Show – Eternal Orbit; 2<sup>nd</sup> Best in Show – Buckeye Nostalgia; Best Standard – Buckeye Nostalgia; Best Variegated – Eternal Orbit; Best Semi-Miniature – Eternal Orbit; Best Miniature – Cajun's Lil Forever Blue; Best Chimera – Eternal Orbit; Best Dixie Registered – Buckeye Nostalgia; Best Vintage – Picasso; Runner-Up Sweepstakes – Horticulture,

**Wayne Geeslin from Sugarland, TX**

2<sup>nd</sup> Best AVSA Collection – Standard: Hunter's Kashmir, Cajun's Hot to Trot, Buckeye Nostalgia; Best DAVS Collection – Standard: Hunter's Muy Grande, Hunter's Exit Wound, Buckeye Nostalgia,

**Karen Buchanan from Knoxville, TN**

Best Trailer – Always Pink; Best Russian – N-Neytiri; Best Gesneriad – Omen; Gesneriad Collection – Blooming: Primulina 'Patina', Primulina tabacum, Primulina 'Betty'; Gesneriad Collection – Non-Blooming: Primulina 'Naine Argente', Primulina dryas 'Hisako'; Sweepstakes Horticulture,

**Bobbi Johannsen from Jacksonville, FL**

Best in Show – Design: Dish Garden "Springing from the Ground", Best Container Garden "Springing from the Ground",

**Phyllis Hinkle from Stone Mountain, GA**

2<sup>nd</sup> Best in Show – Design: Interpretive Plant Arrangement "Native Plants", Best Interpretive Plant Arrangement "Native Plants", Best Interpretive Flower Arrangement "A Garden Wedding"; Sweepstakes – Design,

**Betty Ferguson from Little Rock, AR**

Designs Sweepstakes Runner-Up

**Becky McMeel from Houma, LA**

Best Streptocarpus – 'Harlequin Lace'

**Maurine Flynn from Snellville, GA**

Best Education Exhibit; Award of Merit for Education Exhibit; AVSA and DAVS Information

**Brenda Posey from Bessemer, AL**



Ramblin' Right Along



**Honorable Mention Exhibitors:**

- Marian Zoller – Memphis, TN
- Greg Zoller – Memphis, TN
- Sandra Campbell – Clanton, AL
- Johnnie Berry – Atlanta, GA
- Kathy Spissman – Tucker, GA
- Michael Jackson – Fultondale, AL

**Many thanks for all of your exhibits that made the show a success.**

In closing, I would like to personally thank everyone on the front and behind the scenes who made the show a success -- without you the show would not have been possible. We have already started working on the show for next year that will hopefully be in September as we need to put in our request to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens early to get our preferred date. **Any member that would like to help with organizing the show please let me know.**

On another note, when traveling to a different area that you are not familiar with, do your map

work and do not rely on your GPS, mine gave me a wonderful tour of Birmingham that I was not expecting to see.

Robbie McMeel, Show Chairman

**DIXIE REGISTERED VARIETIES**

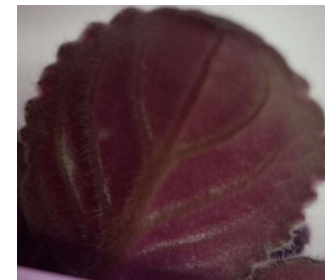
Becky McMeel, Plant Registration Chair  
[beckymcmeel@gmail.com](mailto:beckymcmeel@gmail.com)

This variety was registered August 10, 2023, by Leslie Boyd:

#1912-Comet's Sorceress (Leslie Boyd) Single blue sticktite pansy with white puff fantasy. Dark green serrated heart-shaped with cream variegation on leaf edges and red reverse.



Semiminiature.



These varieties were registered October 19, 2023, by Belinda Thibodeaux:

#1913 Cajun's Oh My Darling (B.Thibodeaux)



Single to semidouble lavender pansy, white puff fantasy, pencil thin dark purple edge. Variegated, medium green, cream and pink. Standard

#1914 Cajun's Yeah Baby! (B. Thibodeaux)  
 Semidouble to double dark blue star, pink puff and streaks fantasy. Variegated, medium green, cream and pink. Standard



## the other Gesneriads:

### Dividing Sinningia Tubers\* (or Propagation by Cutting Tubers into Pieces)

by Dale Martens  
[dalemartens@mchsi.com](mailto:dalemartens@mchsi.com)



What I'm about to say is from my own experiments and others may have had different experiences. You have to make sure there's a couple of different growth areas on the sinningia tuber. See the above photo showing two areas of new sprouts on one tuber. Cut between those with a sharp knife. Some people let a callous form



on the cut areas by leaving it out in the open on a shelf for a while, but I don't because often the little

sprouts wilt terribly, particularly on micro or mini Sinningias. I plant them immediately with moist perlite on the wound area.

What surprises me is how large those micro-miniature sinningia tubers can get! Often I see there are partial formations of tubers with sprouts, but checking them later, they haven't formed anything that can be separated except with a knife. So when there is a large bump area with a sprout, I can remove that if what is removed will be at least the size of a pea, and place it in very moist perlite in an enclosed container. I put moist perlite around the base of the sprout, too. The thing is, you need some of that old rough outer "skin" area in order for it to work. I'm not sure what that's called, but if it were a potato, I'd call it the peel. The roots come out of the top layer or "skin". So when you cut the tuber, make sure you get plenty of skin layer area on at least one side of the sprout, but it's best if there is skin surrounding the sprout.



In the past I've cut up a gigantic sinningia tuber to experiment. The roots came from the skin not from the starchy callous area. This last photo I included is a miniature sinningia and had no roots coming out of the starchy calloused area when I checked it a couple of months later. The roots were coming out on the side with the original outer skin intact.

I happen to love to eat raw potatoes without

putting salt on them, so I tasted a sinningia tuber. Not tasty at all. Not sweet either. I'm sure a lawyer would say I have to announce, "Don't try this at home" because you may have an allergic reaction! I taste various gesneriad nectar quite a bit out of curiosity, but wasn't allowed to announce that in my AV Magazine Gesneri-Advice column years ago because it was suggested someone might have an allergic reaction...and I agreed to omit that. Therefore, you're at your own peril eating tubers and tasting nectar!! I understand some gesneriads are considered hallucinogenic and some are used for medicinal purposes, so do think twice before smoking, eating, or tasting any of them. I happen to be allergic to a specific Nautilocalyx and broke out in blisters on my fingers. A friend in Sweden alerted me since she gave me seeds from her plant. She asked if I had any reaction to touching the plant and I said I got blisters. She did, too. I gave a friend Primulina tabacum and he got blisters."

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\*This article by Dale Martens was originally posted by the Minnesota Gesneriad Society and is published here with permission by the author. The Minnesota Gesneriad Society subsequently posted the following:

"BLOG NOTE: Don't eat your gesneriads. They are like mushrooms, really bad if you're not an expert."

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## A few convention tips & tricks

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

At last, it happened! That coveted, long yearned for Master Judge card came in the mail. It was a bit like turning 13, then 18 and 21. I didn't really feel any different that day than I did the day before though. So, I'm going to let you help me celebrate my special day by sharing with you some violet tips and tricks for conventions and shows I've learned along the way.

### **Adjusting plants purchased at the show to my environment.**

I like to joke, but I'm not stretching the truth at all when I tell you I literally salivated over Bobbi

Johannsen's Primulina 'Omen', which won Best Gesneriad at our Dixie convention last weekend. I did. My mouth still waters just thinking about that beauty. It was perfect in all its ways! And lucky for me, it was for sale. Now, I do quite well with Primulinas, but I want to keep that gorgeous hunk of green in the same perfect condition as I purchased it. I hit Kathy Spissman's vendor tables pretty heavy, too. She also exhibited enviable gesneriads and is a very knowledgeable grower.

My tricks for keeping my new plants in prime condition? Simply ask my plants' previous owners how they grew them and imitate their methods as much as my conditions allow, at least during the plants' adjustment period. The dry atmosphere of a show or sales room, days in boxes, and bumpy miles the plants may have traveled probably left our new plants as tired as we are when we arrive back at home after a convention. A Ziplock bag or a covered box allows for both a period of recuperation and isolation in case they bring disease or pests. I want to enjoy the flowers on the plants I bring home and allow myself a day or two to enjoy the color before I disbud. After that the plants can put their energy into healing from any trauma.

### **Tannin stains under fingernails.**

I went to our Dixie mini-convention with my fingernails looking like a farmer's or maybe a plumber's with tannin stains from digging in my gardens and repotting plants with my bare hands. And I forgot to take fingernail polish to try to hide the conspicuousness. I've tried using gloves, but I can't feel what I want to feel with gloves. Besides, tape for labeling my plants sticks to the gloves.



I've learned that a coat of clear nail polish under my fingernails helps with the staining and is easily removed along with the tannin. But I forgot to do that in my rush to get my plants and gardens ready for show and for leaving others at home for the better part of a week.

'Optimara Little Trio,' purchased from vendor Kathy Spissman, poses with stylish tannin stain hider.



At the show, Marian Zoller shared her trick with me. Black nail polish. Great idea. Her manicured dark red nails certainly hid any stains she might have been sporting. Joining in on the black nail polish conversation, Becky McMeel shared her trick of using black nail polish to hide dings on black painted material she uses in her designs. Black nail polish is on my shopping list!

Another way of preventing tannin-stained fingernails is to use coco coir instead of peat in our mixes. But coir is more expensive and sometimes comes laden with salt.

Back at home, I was still fretting over my farmer's fingernail look and did an online search for "tannin-stained fingernails." I didn't learn much from that particular quest, but I did learn that oxalic acid cleans a multitude of stains—tannin from wood and concrete, iron stains from (African Violet: Happy Cricket) crystals, stained sinks... I know oxalic acid is present in spinach and other leafy greens, so it must not be too toxic, but how could I get ahold



of some of the miracle stuff? An ad for Bar Keepers Friend kept popping up in my search, so I looked up the ingredients and found on Wikipedia, "The . . . product's primary active ingredient is oxalic acid." I use that miracle powder about every day in my kitchen to clean stains in my pots and pans. And now, *Voilà!* With the help of a soft toothbrush and Bar Keepers Friend, I have clean looking fingernails, too!

### **Preventing design flops.**

The pictures I have in my head for the show designs I plan to execute often don't cooperate in the rush of show deadlines. I have this 'thing' for using fresh plant material. Making a dress rehearsal design before leaving home using extra, disposable plants is a trick I need to incorporate more often myself.

Using dry materials is the smartest way of all and the easiest to pre-assemble or to assemble on the spot. In studying Mary Lou Harden's designs, I've noticed that she uses a lot of dried plant line material and wired ribbon. For our 2023 show Becky McMeel brought her impression of spring drama ready to quickly assemble. She used wire for her line material to suggest the commotion of a tornado and a bolt of lightning using silver duct tape. Her plant holder was a painted piece of PVC pipe.

If there is no judges' walk-through, if you can corner a judge, ask for their critique. I learned that our tallest judge at Birmingham could see the rubber band I thought was well hidden behind leaves in my design. Judges of all plant families tend to disdain the sight of perlite in aquariums, even other gesneriad terrariums. Do everything in your power to hide that glaring white stuff. One way is to taper your garden landscape down to the very bottom front of the terrarium glass. Adding a sprinkle of peat moss or worm compost over the top helps, too.

### **Labeling and design plant material cards.**

When I arrive at a show, I'm normally tired already and feeling a bit pressured. My brain seems unable to reach the depths of my memory to think of plant names for my design cards. Before leaving home, I list the plant materials I plan to use in a file I can access from my phone. Double checking to make sure my horticulture entries are labeled and labeled correctly saves headaches



for the entries chairman and myself. A label with the plant name taped on the bottom of a gesneriad bubble bowl or design terrarium or dish garden prevents NOID plants later.

### A Few More Tips.

When grooming, hold your plant up and view it from underneath. A marred leaf or a baby leaf can ruin your Best in Class or Best in Show chances or make the difference in a blue or red ribbon. And you already know what will happen if the judges spot a sucker on your violet.

If you're tempted to repot a plant right before the show, DON'T! Not unless you gently slip it into a clean pot. If at the last minute you discover the neck is of giraffe proportions or the plant is obviously not centered in the pot, just leave it at home. Freshly repotted plants tend to embarrass their owners. How do I know?

Set alarms on your phone to remind yourself to take a break to down some liquid. Dehydration is a set-up for post-convention sickness. And as your granny would advise, don't forget the fruit to keep them bowels moving.

Above all, have fun. (It's just a show and we--and judges--are human.) And start making your plans now to have a good time with us at next year's Dixie convention in Birmingham.

Phillis Hinkle's dish garden (below) won Best Design



## Upcoming Events

**February 23-24, 2024, Tampa African Violet Society Annual Show & Plant Sale, "Art Through The Ages."** Temple Terrace United Methodist Church, 5030 East Busch Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33617. Contact: Sandi Soto, Show Chair [ssoto4@tampabay.com](mailto:ssoto4@tampabay.com)

**April 12-13, 2024, Memphis African Violet Society Show & Plant Sale, "Let the Good Times Roll."** Contact: Marian Zoller at [marigregz@gmail.com](mailto:marigregz@gmail.com)

**April 13-14, 2024, Tampa African Violet Society, Plant Sale at Spring Plant Festival,** University of South Florida Botanical Gardens, 4202 E Fowler Ave, Tampa, FL 33620.

**April 30, 2024, African Violet Council of Florida Spring Meeting,** Orlando, FL, place TBD. Contact: Linda Price, President, 407-462-5923. [laprice41@yahoo.com](mailto:laprice41@yahoo.com)



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Cajun's Yeah Baby  
New Introduction by Belinda Thibodeaux



Best Gesneriad, Primulina 'Omen'  
by Bobbi Johannsen

Second-best  
Design

Best Plant  
Arrangement

by  
Betty Ferguson



Buckeye Nostalgia  
Best Standard, 2<sup>nd</sup> Best in Show  
by Wayne Geeslin



Attendees at 2023 Dixie convention



Always Pink  
Best Trailer  
by Wayne Geeslin

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

Hello, Dixie Members and Friends,

Thanks to all of you who have sent articles, photos and news items for this issue of *The Dixie News*. For those of us who missed the Birmingham convention and show, we now can see and realize what a beautiful and outstanding show that we missed! Wow! And now we know what to expect to see at the 2024 convention! During the months leading up to the 2023 convention, many of you were saying “I THINK we can—I THINK we can.” Now we’re all saying “We KNOW we can—We KNOW we can!”

As you know, this was Dixie’s first time having a show in a venue other than a hotel and as you have read in all the comments, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens was a perfect setting for a show. Kudos to Robbie and Becky McMeel and to Michael Jackson, each of whom wore multiple hats and carried the heavy load. Please be sure to thank them for their tireless efforts.

Dixie needs the support of individual members and affiliated clubs. Take every opportunity to

promote Dixie in your club meetings and any time you’re talking to your violet and gesneriad friends.

Thanks to everyone who sent photos of the award-winning plants and designs – we’ve included quite a few in this issue. I know you’ll enjoy the coverage of this year’s convention and show by Bobbi Johannsen beginning on page 2. Also, for those who grow any of the tuberous varieties of gesneriads, you’ll find Dale Martens’ article beginning on page 14 very interesting.

Blessings to all Dixie members and friends during the Thanksgiving season, and throughout the Christmas and New Year holidays.

---

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