



# 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))

August 2021  
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## President's Message

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



A happy hello to our Dixie Family and Friends!

Aren't smiles beautiful? And hugs—aren't they luscious? And real-life club meetings! I had missed meeting and seeing my friends. I even missed the snacks. I presented the program at my club meeting yesterday. Demonstrations were so much easier in person than with Zoom.

Mary Lou heard from Genelle Armstrong that Genelle had surgery to repair a 90% artery blockage. Genelle, I know I can speak for all of Dixie. We're so glad you came out of that ordeal safe and your recovery is going well. I hope you're better than ever by now.

Dixie needs State Representatives for the states of Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. Heck, we need members in those states! If you are a member in one or know someone who is, please contact me.

Did you attend the AVSA Cyber Diamond Celebration? And the Gesneriad convention? Speakers and photos were great, weren't they?

I was checking the new AVSA website and noticed a judging school is scheduled in Houston for Saturday, August 14, 2021. (Look under Events.) We need judges! If you're not one yet and can possibly attend, do consider taking the class.

Speaking of new websites, some months ago our Dixie webmaster, Ken Barbi, updated ours. (DAVS.org) Please send Ken your club's show info and photos. ([kenbarbi@verizon.net](mailto:kenbarbi@verizon.net)). Beth Baker manages our Dixie

African Violet Society Facebook page. Thank you to Ken and Beth. Let's also help Beth keep our Facebook page exciting and inviting for possible new members and for our own enjoyment by posting Dixie and local club info, pictures and growing information.

I hope to see you soon online if not at a local show.

Betty Ferguson, Dixie President



Rozovaia Akvard by Pamela van Durme  
Tampa, AVS (AVSA 2021 Convention)



**DIXIE CONVENTION 2022  
OCTOBER 12-15, 2022**

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

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### AFRICAN VIOLET DISPLAY AND PLANT SALE

Sponsored by  
**AFRICAN VIOLET COUNCIL OF  
FLORIDA**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2021  
9:00 am to 4:00 pm**

**Christ Lutheran Church  
2715 Lakeland Hills Boulevard  
Lakeland, FL 33805**

**Information: Mary Jane DiLorenzo  
863-647-1517**

## WHAT TIME IS IT? IT'S TIME TO

- ♣ Get ready for our 2022 Convention and Show!  
Put the dates on your calendar!
- ♣ Tell your club members about Dixie and especially  
tell them about our convention! And yes, please  
encourage your club members to become members  
of Dixie AVS so they will get ALL the benefits!
- ♣ Begin selecting the plants you want to show. This  
is probably the perfect time to begin repotting  
your plants, some which have no doubt been  
neglected during the past few months!.
- ♣ Check out our website: DAVS.org. Our Webmaster,  
Ken Barbi, keeps our website fresh and up to date  
with new plant registrations and educational articles.

And remember -- Dixie is here to serve you — our wonderful members! The contact information of our officers and directors is published in the newsletter, so don't hesitate to contact one of us for information or help with a plant issue or problem.

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### JOIN THE AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA

**An AVSA membership offers the following  
benefits:**

- Six full-color issues annually (64 pages each) of the African Violet Magazine (AVM) filled with great growing information
- Regular columns include
  - For Beginners
  - Question Box
  - In Search of New Violets
  - Gesneriad Advice
  - Registration of new cultivars
  - Thinking Small
  - Coming Events

The AVM gives members continuous information on the latest developments in the African violet world. Commercial members advertise and sell the latest and most popular violets and products. Each issue contains commercial ads as well as an Index of Advertisers. Members have access to this information on AVSA's website:

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

**Current News:** AVSA has reported the following statistics from its 2021 Cyber Convention:

- 204 Exhibits in the show with 54 Exhibitors from 3 Nations: 1 from Portugal, 4 from Canada, and 49 from USA.
- 36 Affiliate Clubs represented by exhibitors
- 362 photos of new introductions shared by 37 individual hybridizers (from Russia, Ukraine, Portugal, USA, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Kazakhstan)

It also reported that Susan Anderson was elected as AVSA's 40th president. Serving with her are 1st Vice President Mary Corondan, 2nd Vice President Glenda Williams, 3rd Vice President Sharon Shannon, Secretary Richard Follett, Treasurer Terri Post, and Immediate Past President Sue Ramser. Newly elected Directors serving through 2024 are: Scott Ammann, Kurt Jablonski, Patricia Matson, Leonard Re, and Danny Tidwell.

AVSA has also announced the appointment of Sophia Bennett as the 7th editor in the 75-year history of AVSA. Previous editors were **Alma Wright** - 1947 to September 1963; **Grace Foote** - December 1963 to December 1984 (Grace remained as "Editor Emeritus" through 1996); **Jane Birge** - January 1985 to May 1994; **Sara Wilson** - July to December 1994; **Ruth Rumsey** - January 1995 to December 2017; **Teresa Odle** - January 2018 to June 2021.

**Last, but not least, SUPPORT AVSA.** AVSA especially needs the support of its individual members, its affiliates and commercial members at this time. Donations should be mailed to: AVSA Office, P.O. Box 22417, Beaumont, TX 77720. Online Donations are also accepted. Dixie encourages all Dixie affiliates and members to support AVSA. AVSA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

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

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

AVSA  
P.O. Box 22417  
Beaumont, TX 77720

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.



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

by Becky McMeel

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

Greetings from the Bayou State!

I don't know about you, but we are just about ready to invest in swamp buggy lawnmowers down here! Rain, rain, and, oh, rain! Enough already! Crazy weather...crazy world...crazy times! One sane thing we can count on is our violets, and thank goodness for them!!

Sundowners met, in June, at the home of Becky and Robbie McMeel for a members-only plant sale and

brown bag lunch social. We were so excited to see each other -- pictures went by the wayside.....so any pictures you see are from prior meetings. There were lots of hugs and hugs and hugs to go around! Has your club started in-person meetings yet?



Sweet memories of Sundowners at the 2019 AVSA Convention

The July meeting saw the club voting on a new name. Sundowners will now be known as Louisiana Lagniappe African Violet Society. The name change will be implemented starting in November, 2021.

Their 2021 Show and Plant sale is still on and will be October 9-10, 2021, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Theme is "Violets Celebrate the 20's". Members are grooming, growing, potting, designing, and will, no doubt, have another magnificent show! The public is chomping at the bit to get out and about, and here's hoping they attend the violet show!

Pictured here is club President Laura Moser showing members how to break down a violet.



The meeting will see the club preparing and sale. The August program will be a mock plant judging and will be an excellent opportunity for members, both new and experienced, to test their knowledge of African violets.

Following is a photo of the Awards table at the Sundowners' 2019 show.

Here is hoping your club has begun to meet in person and planning your next show.

Happy Growing!  
Becky McMeel, Louisiana Director



Awards Table at Sundowner's 2019 Show

**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.18**) 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,



Yes, the peaches are in and they are really good this year. Good, like when the juice runs down your chin as you stand over the sink eating it.

Our violets are looking good as well. We will be showing them off at our virtual show in September. We decided to do another virtual show this year because of the uncertainty of the virus situation.

We are planning to be together for in-person meetings beginning in October. We have missed seeing each other, buying plants and leaves, and in-person programs. Our zoom programs have been good, but it's nothing like in person. We will continue to have some zoom meetings. This is still a work in progress. Over the past year and a half we have been joined by several new members who will only be able to continue through zoom. We want to be able to involve these members.

I hope this finds everyone well and enjoying your plants. Looking forward to seeing everyone soon.

Phillis Hinkle, Georgia Director

## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

### (Membership Application on p. 17)

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

## ARKANSAS STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

Central Arkansas African Violet Society has enjoyed two in-person meetings. Glenda Robertson graciously hosted both meetings in her home as our previous location is no longer available. From this point on, we'll be able to meet in a local library.

Our June program was on dealing with African violets with necks. July's was on the retention and movement of water through the soil and on drainage.

Our business has involved planning for an October club show. We appear to have lost some members during the shutdown and want to woo them back.



## FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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



Hello!

Things **WERE** starting to look up after such a long, dry spell, with a few events actually taking place and several more being planned. We are looking forward to the African Violet Council of Florida's Display and Sale in Lakeland, FL on Oct 2, 2021. Look for our flyer elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope this uptick continues, and, in the meantime, offer an excerpt from an international violet publication, *The Russian Almanac*. Here is the Russian Almanac story...

A while back, Vladimir Kalgin of Moscow (from *Dom Fialki* - House of Violets, a store in Moscow) had an idea to produce an African Violet Almanac, honoring Russian/Ukrainian hybridizers for all their beautiful varieties, as well as showcasing some of their beauties. He wanted the growers to know more about them and what their hybridizing goals were.

He collected information, and, in 2010, published his first Almanac with articles about 10 Russian/Ukrainian hybridizers and 5 from the US. It was 80 pages long, but nothing like this had been attempted before, and it was very well received.

Ten years later, he decided to publish another issue, this time to include profiles of Russian/Ukrainian clubs. There were more articles about local hybridizers (45 of them this time) as well as 15 from the US. But this time, he included profiles of Russian/Ukrainian clubs. He wanted to give a bigger picture (both sides) of the African violet world. He also decided to invite a few individuals and clubs from the US to contribute. He invited Dale Martens, and a Russian friend, Elena Mischenkoff of Tallahassee, FL. At this point the volume was getting pretty large (300 pages+), but, thanks to Elena, the Jacksonville club was also invited, and I put together our "saga". It is included as an attachment, in Russian and English, for your enjoyment.

Bewitching  
Blue



## DIXIE AVS AFFILIATES REPORT

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2021

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

As I have not received any requests for ribbons for shows, my report is very short again this quarter. It appears that some clubs will be having their shows in the fall this year, so I should have something to report later this year. I know that our club will start meeting in person this month. Look forward to seeing everyone in person again and we are looking forward to our show in October.

On a more positive note, I have received permission from Ken Muzalewski, hybridizer of the Hunter series violets, to register some of his plants with DAVS. I know that a lot of members are now growing his plants, so now they can be registered in the Dixie Classes. Along with our other hybridizers, hopefully we will be able to fill these classes at our shows. Becky and I will be working on this very soon. If anyone has any questions regarding this, please feel free to contact me.

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

Respectfully and keep up the good growing,  
Robbie McMeel



Streptocarpus 'Salmon Sunset'  
Terry Jordan, AVSA 2021 Cyber Convention

## ROSETTES AVAILABLE

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

**OPTIMARA BEST OF SHOW ROSETTE FOR OPTIMARA & RHAPSODIE.** To order this rosette and a sample kit of Optimara products, send your request to:

Optimara  
Attn: Best of Show Rosette  
P.O. Box 78565  
Nashville, TN 37207  
[sales@optimara.com](mailto:sales@optimara.com)

Include your name, name of the AVSA-affiliated club holding the show, dates of the show, your complete address (NO P.O. Boxes), and daytime phone number.

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## PLANT INTELLIGENCE

### BACTERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

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

Germs! A terrifying threat to my generation. Much more frightening than the Russians. The Russians at least stayed home, but germs were all around, just waiting to attack. Despite our attempts to create and live in a sterile environment, most of us lived to learn that the microscopic world is necessary for our survival, and neither we, nor the plants that feed us and protect us and provide us beauty, would be able to survive in the sterile world we tried to create.

Research suggests that our efforts to cleanse our world of germs has led to health issues such as cancer and obesity. Tillage and chemicals have robbed our fields of the beneficial bacteria needed for plant and human health, leading to a proliferation of destructive bacteria. Our near sterile potting mixes, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides set up conditions for disease in our African violets and their cousins. The healthy exchanges and communications between plants and their helpers has been broken, leading to more disease and more chemicals.

*This series on the intelligence of plants has focused on communication and other exchanges between plants and the life around them. This last article in the series touches on the role of bacteria in the health of plants.*

There are millions of species of bacteria, and to my nurse mother's dismay, they are everywhere. But contrary to what she believed, for every malicious bacteria out there, there are thousands of beneficial ones—at least in a healthy environment.

Elaine R. Ingham in *Soil Biology Primer* describes bacteria as, "tiny one-celled organisms generally 4/100,000 of an inch wide." Dr. Ingham says, "A teaspoon of productive soil generally contains between 100 million and 1 billion bacteria."

Bacteria's small size allows them to grow, multiply, and flourish in stressful situations more readily than larger microorganisms, such as mycorrhizae. When harsh conditions are replaced with sufficient water, food, and environmental conditions, they can double in 15-30 minutes. The human genome is comprised of 23 pairs of linear chromosomes, but a single one-celled bacteria may contain up to 7500 chromosomes or, in the case of *Escherichia coli*, only a single circular chromosome.

We've already looked at the food web cycle and how plants use sunlight to manufacture sugars, which they distribute through their roots to the fungi



and to the aerobic bacteria that gather around the roots to feed. In exchange, Dr. Ingham says, these aerobic bacterial 'good guys' have three important functions. They function as an army to fight off the bad guys (disease causing anaerobic bacteria). They break down inorganic particles, transforming them into nutrients the plant can use. They also structure soil into a cottage cheese-like texture to hold oxygen and water and to protect against leaching of nutrients.

Larger organisms eat the bacteria and excrete the remains which also function to feed the plant with bio-available nutrients. Some soil scientists say soil is really a graveyard of dead bacteria. As these microorganisms feed the plant, the plant is able to capture more sugars from the sunlight to grow larger and produce more flowers and fruit.

Soil scientists are now aware of more than 40 essential nutrients needed for plant health. My bag of Better-Gro orchid fertilizer lists ten nutrients--nitrogen,

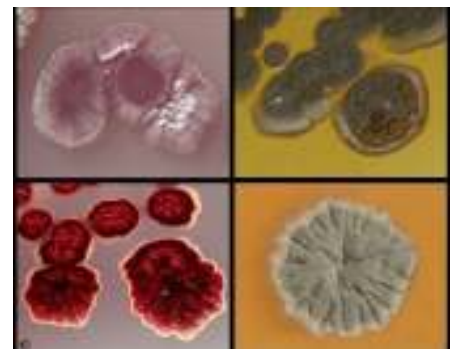


phosphate, potash and seven minor elements. "A plant requires all nutrients to a greater or lesser extent, and only it knows what it needs and when – the trick is having all those nutrients in a bio-available form in the soil at all times," Dr. Ingham says.

While many bacteria convert nitrogen from soil substrates, only nitrogen-fixing bacteria types convert atmospheric nitrogen into fixed nitrogen that plants can use. When protozoa and nematodes consume bacteria and fungi, the waste they excrete is ammonia which is also plant available nitrogen.

Vitamin B12, the only vitamin synthesized exclusively by microorganisms, is produced by soil microbes that live in symbiotic relationships with plant roots. Research shows that plants grown with organic fertilizers tend to contain higher concentrations of vitamins B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>12</sub> as compared with plants grown with inorganic fertilizers.

*Streptomyces* (actinomycetes) produce more than 50 different antibiotics to protect plants from pathogenic bacteria (Sylvia et al., 2005).



When farmers plow or till the soil, however, actinomycetes release "geosmin" as they die giving freshly turned soil its characteristic earthy smell.

All of this information is great for farmers who are changing their practices to no-till, cover crops, and reduced chemical application. It's helpful for backyard gardeners. But what can it do for African violet

growers and other container growers and our limitations? Soil and plant scientists acknowledge that there is still much for them to learn. We can hope that as more research is focused on container grown food to feed the world, more information of use to us will become available.

A start for brave, adventurous growers would be to reduce our use of chemicals (inorganic fertilizer, fungicides, insecticides, algaecide) to encourage the residence of nurturing and protective soil life.

Soil testing indicates that organic fertilizers both deliver more beneficial bacteria to the soil and feed existing microbes. Dr. Ingham recommends changing to organic fertilizers such as manures or worm castings, rich compost or compost tea. Many of our Gesneriads would benefit from the addition of mineral rich lime or eggshells. Changing from our traditional soil mix of peat, perlite, and vermiculite to a product with forest products and enriched with soil microbes would help provide the microbiome the plants need.



We can encourage aerobic bacteria and discourage anaerobic pathogens with adequate soil aeration and ensuring that our plants do not become waterlogged.

Growers who use molasses to feed beneficial microbes swear by it, and

some studies show the addition of commercial microbial inoculants to be effective.

It does, after all, take a colony to raise an intelligent plant.



Broadway  
Star Trail

Pamela Van  
Durme  
Tampa AVS

AVSA 2021  
Cyber  
Convention

## Let's Meet our Vendors and Hybridizers: Kathy Spissman

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

In this installment of "Let's Meet our Vendors and Hybridizers", we have a person that does not need any formal introduction, as she is well known throughout the circuit, Mrs. Kathy Spissman, aka (Mrs. Strep Streps).



Kathy's love with plants in general started back in 1973. She and her husband Marvin lived in a small apartment and had lots of houseplants and outside plants on a large patio. In 1974 she bought four African violets from K-Mart and this started her love with violets. In 1975 she saw an article about an African violet club that had just started in Atlanta, GA and joined. The African Violet Club of Greater Atlanta was in the process of making drums out of baby food jars for the 1976 annual convention of AVSA that was to be held in Atlanta, which was hosted by DAVS. She didn't know what AVSA or DAVS was at the time but jumped with both feet to do what she could. By 1979 she was president of the local club which had roughly 80 members.

Kathy and her husband of 45 years now live in Tucker, GA which is just east of Atlanta. She and Marvin were blessed with 2 children, Mandy and Jason and are now enjoying their grandchildren, twin girls Shelby and Kaitlyn (10), and Jacob (13). They enjoy gardening outside and have a vegetable garden too. Marvin likes to work in the outside gardens, but helps Kathy out a lot with all of her inside plants.

Kathy is a member of many clubs, African Violet Club of Greater Atlanta and AVSA (1975), DAVS (1980), Atlanta Gesneriad Interest Group (1986), and the Gesneriad Society (1998). In her local club, she has



held all of the offices. She presently holds the position of Newsletter Editor. In DAVS she has been Convention Director for the last 15 years and will retire after the 2022 convention in Nashville, TN, October 12-15, 2022. In the Gesneriad Society, she is currently a Director.

Along with African Violets, Kathy grows many other gesneriads, which she got interested in in the mid-1980s. Her favorite gesneriad is Streptocarpus, i.e. her nickname "Mrs. Strep Streps". She presently has many varieties of gesneriads, but will always have room for African violets. She retired from her full time job in 2001.

After retiring, Kathy started selling plants, leaves and cuttings on EBay. Presently she has an EBay store, <http://www.ebay.com/str/mrsstrepstrepplantsandsupplies>. In this store she sells plants and lots of violet-related supplies. Please check it out!!

Kathy also sells plants and supplies at local shows and all of the conventions, wherever the conventions are held. She enjoys traveling and talking to all of the people who want to know about violets and gesneriads at the shows and conventions.

Along with all of her plants and supplies, Kathy has enjoyed collecting "salt and pepper" shakers. She has been to every state in the U.S. with the exception of Hawaii, Canada and Mexico. At present she has 900 pairs in her collection and still looking to add more.

In closing, I have enjoyed the friendship with Kathy over the years, as I am sure we all have. Please be sure to stop by her table at the upcoming conventions and shows to speak with and support her. Now that she is retiring as Convention Director for DAVS, thank her for all of her years of service.

**COPY DEADLINE  
FOR NOVEMBER ISSUE  
October 15**



AV Chimera  
Misbehavin'

## CHOICE PLANTS FOR TERRARIUMS AND DISH GARDENS

by Carol Schreck\*

Since our local clubs, state Council and national shows always have a design division with classes for entries of terrariums and dish gardens, why not grow some of the "other gesneriads," especially for use in these classes? Many gesneriads are small growers and will give you a contrast of foliage color, size and shape to make your plantings an attractive collection of material that can easily be made to appear naturalistic.

Many gesneriads are epiphytes. In their natural habitat they grow in rock crevices or cling to a crotch made by tree branches, therefore they will have shallow root systems. Also, many gesneriads have similar tastes in soil, temperature, humidity, watering and fertilization.



Achimenes 'Glory'

Gesneriad cuttings will root so easily that they may be planted in a terrarium, starting with unrooted pieces, and before long, they will take hold and look as if Mother Nature had herself placed them there. Some gesneriads are true miniatures while others can be kept small by judicious pruning.

Of course, you know that you must have a blooming Saintpaulia (African violet) as your focal point if entering in an African violet show. For a gesneriad or garden club show, this would not be necessary unless required by the Show Schedule. Depending on the size of your container, you might use a standard-size plant or a semiminiature or even a miniature. Trailers are an excellent choice for dish gardens or terrariums. Since a design is judged as a whole planting, the plant does not have to have the perfection of form or symmetry that would be necessary if it were entered as a single plant that would be judged on its own merit.

Among the plants that I would recommend that you grow for use in your artistic plantings are:

**Achimenes, Aeschynanthus, Alsobia,  
Codonanthe, x.codonanthus, Columnea,**

**Diastema, Episcia, Gesneria, Gloxinia, Kohleria, Nematanthus, Phinaea, Sinningia and Streptocarpus.** Some of these are rhizomatous, some are fibrous-rooted and Sinningias have a tuberous root system.

Let's take a look at these groups of plants, one at a time, according to their root structure:

**Rhizomatous: Achimenes, Diastema, Gloxinia, Kohleria and Phinaea.**

- Of the **Achimenes** genus, some of the small growers are *A. candida*, *cettoana*, *erecta*, *misera*, 'India' and 'Sauline.'
- **Diastema latiflorum**, *quinquevulnerum* or *vexans* are excellent choices for a terrarium or dish garden as a low-growing plant.
- **Gloxinia erinoides** is a miniature long-blooming plant that produces spikes or racemes (flower clusters) with little flowers held well above the foliage.
- **Kohleria** like high humidity so they do well in a terrarium. *K. 'Bud's Strawberry Shortcake,' 'Green Goblin,'* and *'Thad's Uncle Ron'* will all be excellent choices.
- **Phinaea.** *P. albolineata*, *multiflora* and *'Tracery'* will stay small and produce near-white blooms.

**Tuberous: Sinningias.** Among the sinningias you might choose for your plantings, you will most likely want to stay with miniature varieties unless you have a very large terrarium or dish garden. Among the most faithful of the sinningias are these hybrids, *S.*



Sinningia 'Ozark Purple Zebra'

'Bright Eyes,' 'California Sunset,' 'Cindyella,' 'Deep Purple Dreaming,' 'HCY's Aries,' 'Hsaing's Shining Galaxy,' 'Li'l Georgie,' 'Ozark Rosy Cheeks,'

'Ruffled Wood Nymph,' 'Snowflake,' 'Snowy Owl,' 'Tinkerbelle,' 'White Sprite' and 'Wood Nymph.' Species *pusilla* and *pusilla* *White Sprite* are also good choices. However, there are many other varieties you can choose from with equally good results.

**Fibrous-Rooted:** Choosing from the fibrous-rooted gesneriads gives you some that are graceful trailers like **Aeschynanthus, Columnea, Codonanthe, x Codonanthus and Nematanthus.** Some are

shrubby like the **Gesneria, Rufodorsia and Streptocarpella**, while others such as **Episcia and Alsobia** will make a nice rosette type of growth, provided you keep their stolons pruned. To use *Aeschynanthus* in a container, root tip cuttings and use them for contrast in form and color.

Most **Aeschynanthus** plants do well as basket plants, so they won't stay an appropriate size for your container garden for very long, but they do look nice cascading down a hill you have landscaped into your design. One exception to this is *A. hildebrandii* which is a dwarf species with an erect growth habit. *A. 'Fireworks'* is another compact grower and you will be pleased with the following varieties: 'Firecracker,' 'Flossie,' 'Hot Flash' and 'Red Cascade.'

Among the **Codonanthe**, *C. carnosa*, *digna*, *luteola* 'Phgmy,' *paula*, *macradenia* 'Compact Jade,' and *crassifolia* 'Cranberry' are good choices. Any of the **x Codonanthus** hybrids will make excellent vegetation for your plantings as they all have small growth habits. This intergeneric family is the result of crosses made between *Codonanthe* and *Nematanthus*.

**Columnea** that will make appropriate plants for your container garden are *C. 'Apollo,' 'Broget Stavenger,' 'Early Bird,' 'Frosty Hills,'* and *Orange Sherbet.* Species include *C. dodsonii*, *hirta*, *light prince* and *rubra*.



Columnea 'Carnival'

Suitable **Nematanthus** varieties include *N. 'Christmas Holly,' 'Freckles,' 'Tropicana,'* and species *gregarious* and *wetsteinnii*.

Other fibrous-rooted gesneriads to choose from are **Gesneria** *cuneifolia*, *reticulate*, 'Lemon Drop' and 'Tom Talpey.' From the **Streptocarpus** genus, consider the following from the sub-genus *Streptocarpella*: *S. 'Concord Blue'* and 'Good Hope.'

Unless you want your planting to be quickly taken over and dominated by an **Episcia**, look for a miniature such as E. 'Silver Skies' or 'Toy Silver.' From the **Alsobias**, A. dianthiflora, 'Cygnet' and 'San Miguel' are good choices.

You can learn more about all of these gesneriads on the Gesneriad Society's *The Gesneriad Reference Web*.

[Reprinted from *The Florida Connection*, quarterly publication of the African Violet Council of Florida]

### FOND MEMORIES OF A MASTER DESIGNER

Bob Green [1936-2021] passed away Sunday, July 25, following a brief illness.

Bob was a man of many talents. He attended Rollins College in Orlando where he studied Spanish and later taught Spanish. He then enrolled in the University of Tennessee's Law School and later studied for the ministry at Union College in Kentucky. It was at that time the Viet Nam war broke out and many were being drafted into the Army. Bob decided to enlist in the Air Force.



Bob served in the United States Air Force for 26 years and retired as a Staff Sergeant. He served with the CIA for 23 years and his last 13 years were spent as Launch Control Officer at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. During his military years he was stationed in many different countries, as well as several bases in the U.S.

For a period of time following his retirement, he was a test grower of roses for the American Rose Society. The Society would send him rose bushes to grow and he would evaluate them before they were marketed.

He was a member of AVSA for 50-plus years and served on the Bylaws Committee. When AVSA conventions came to Florida, he served as Convention Chair and Show Chair. He was a Master Judge and Teacher. He was perhaps best known for his very creative and distinctive floral designs. He was asked by many African violet clubs to do workshops and teach the elements and principles of design. He wrote many articles on design for the *African Violet Magazine*.

Many people fondly remember Bob at the 1996 AVSA 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary convention in Atlanta. Everyone was

challenged to wear costumes representing *Gone With The Wind's* famous couple, Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara. Bob wore a white suit and had a black mustache, and Jackie wore a wide-brimmed white hat and white gown. They were the talk of the town!

Bob was also active in Dixie AVS, serving as its president as well as holding other offices, and the African Violet Council of Florida of which he was a charter member and where he also served as president and held other offices and published its quarterly newsletter. He, along with Alyce Droege, Barbara Robinson and Jim Boyer, was instrumental in starting a violet club in Orlando, the AVA Gardeners.

Over the years, Bob was influential in encouraging and inspiring many people to enter the design classes in shows, and also to study and become judges. He will be greatly missed.

Bob's wife Jackie resides in Rockledge, Florida.

A military service at Cape Canaveral National Cemetery in Mims, FL, will be scheduled at a later date.

## Upcoming Events

**October 2, 2021 – African Violet Council of Florida Display and Plant Sale**, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Christ Lutheran Church, 2715 Lakeland Hills Boulevard, Lakeland, FL 33805. Information: Mary Jane DiLorenzo, 863-647-1517

**October 9-10, 2021 - Sundowners African Violet Club Show and Sale**, Baton Rouge Garden Center on Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA. Theme: "Violets Celebrate the 20's"

**May 29 – June 5, 2022 - AVSA Annual Convention & Show, "Violets Go Hog Wild in Arkansas,"** Little Rock Marriott Hotel, Little Rock, AR.

**October 12-15, 2022 - DIXIE AVS Annual Convention & Show**, Double Tree by Hilton, Murfreesboro, TN.

### PUBLICATION DEADLINES

**February Issue – January 15**

**May Issue – April 15**

**August – July 15**

**November – October 15**

**PHOTOS FROM THE 2021 AVSA CYBER CONVENTION by Dixie Members**



Rob's  
Antique  
Rose

Terry  
Jordan

Tampa  
FL AVS



Rob's Vanilla Trail  
Becky McMeel, Sundowners AVS, LA



Rob's  
Pewter  
Bells

Johnnie  
Berry

Greater  
Atlanta  
GA  
AVC



Container Garden  
Becky McMeel, Sundowners AVS, LA



Sundown Trail  
Wilhelmina Allen, Sundowners AVS, LA



Kohleria 'Peridots Rolo'  
Johnnie Berry, Greater Atlanta AVS, GA



LE Shotlandskii Veresk  
Wilhelmina Allen, Sundowners AVC, LA



Episcia 'Chocolate Soldier'  
Johnnie Berry, Greater Atlanta AVC, GA



Rob's Boolaroo  
Pamela VanDurme, Tampa AVS, FL



Streptocarpus 'Steffano's Double Take'  
Becky McMeel, Sundowners AVC, LA



S. Clone confusa Mather E -Wilhelmina Allen, LA



Streptocarpus 'Picnic'  
Terry Jordan, Tampa AVS, FL

## AFRICAN VIOLET TRAILERS

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



Sundown Trail

Wilhelmina Allen, AVSA 2021 Convention

**What's the origin of Trailing Violets?** In the early 1950's, Ann and Frank Tinari of Tinari Greenhouses in Pennsylvania were doing experimental cross-pollination with species *Saintpaulia grotei* and successfully produced the very first trailing African Violet Hybrid which they named "Wild Girl." This trailing violet made its debut into the violet world at AVSA's 1954 convention at St. Louis, MO. Meanwhile, Lyndon Lyon of Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses in Syracuse, NY, had also been experimenting using cross-pollination with the species *Saintpaulia Magungensis minima* and introduced a semiminature trailer named "Pixie Blue" and a Miniature trailer named "Pip Squeak."

**So what exactly is a Trailing Violet? From AVSA's website:** "A trailing hybrid is expected to originate from a single point of growth: it is not several plants potted together." This is an important point for judges to consider when judging trailers in a show. When the trailer has not matured, it's usually easy to see that there's only one plant in the pot. However, when the plant has matured and grown many crowns and is planted in an 8-inch or larger pot or tray, it can be difficult, if not impossible, for a judge to determine whether it's a single point of growth or whether there are several plants potted together.

**Trailing African violets** grow with multiple crowns that either (a) trail over the sides of the pot or (b) produce "runners" with *horizontal* (not vertical) growth. The growth habit of trailers can be variable, from sideways to a more upright cluster form of growth and they should produce dense, not sparse, foliage.

**Containers.** Plant the violet in a shallow container in a light, porous soil. As with all violets, for a small starter plant, use a 2" pot and as the plant grows, move it into the next size pot. For trailers, the tub pots are recommended. You can also use plant saucers. You may also want to pin crowns into the soil to promote rooting.

**Lighting.** Place the violet on a lighted plant stand or in bright, indirect sunlight. You may have to adjust the distance between plant and window if in a south or west window. Too much sunlight may burn the leaves or cause yellow leaves. If on a plant stand under fluorescent tubes, there should be about 6 to 12 inches between the top of the plant and the tubes for 12 to 14 hours per day.

**Watering.** Water your violet with room temperature water whenever the top inch of soil feels dry to the touch. The soil should never be soggy. Overwatering will kill your violet.

**Temperature.** Ideal room temperature is between 65 and 75 degrees F. While the plant tolerates temperatures as low as 60 degrees and as high as 85 degrees or even higher, blooming is reduced.

**Feeding.** Trailing violets may require more frequent fertilizer than other African violet hybrids – due mainly because of the numerous amounts of leaves and blooms because of multiple crowns. Fertilize the violets lightly with each regular watering. While the plant is in its initial growth stages, use a balanced fertilizer (NPK)--20-20-20. Once mature, the plant will want to bloom and it will need more phosphorus and potassium, so use a fertilizer with a higher middle number (P) such as 12-36-14. Dilute fertilizer to one-fourth the ratio recommended on the fertilizer container. Leaves with a rusty appearance indicate that the fertilizer mixture is too strong.

**Pinching Your Trailer.** When plants are growing nicely and just a few inches tall, pinch out the center crown of 3-4 leaves to encourage new growth. However, some semi-trailing African violets send out new growth in all directions on their own so that may not be necessary for them. As the plant continues to grow new crowns, you should pinch out the crown of each new crown. You want the plant to fill the pot. Once the pot is filled, you can then stop pinching and let the plant grow.

**Condition.**

- The size of the plant should be in proportion to the size of the container.
- Trailers are not restricted to size.

- Miniature and semiminiature trailers may be exhibited in the same size containers as standard trailers.
- No yellow or spotted leaves, bare stems showing, or spent blossoms.
- Size of leaves should be consistent. Always remove immature, oversized, off-color, or damaged leaves.
- If your trailer shoots out a crown with either larger or smaller leaves than the rest of the plant, the crown with the odd-sized leaves should be removed.



Cirelda  
Photo: AVA of Australia

**Growing for Show?** Here's what judges look for.

- Form -- 25 points.** Good form means that the plant is well-shaped--round (circular) in shape when viewed from above. Good form means the plant has a smooth, rounded appearance, without a spikey or pointed look. Remove any vertical growth and leaves that detract from the overall round appearance.
- Condition (cultural perfection) -- 25 points.**
- Quantity of bloom -- 25 points.** Good trailers will produce many crowns, so they have the potential for a great quantity of bloom. A trailer with many crowns has the potential for many times the number of blooms of a single-crowned plant. Blooms should be evenly distributed. However, you should remove any blossoms that are not fresh or their color or size are not right.
- Size and type blossom --15 points.** Size and type blooms, as well as color, must be consistent with the variety description of the hybridizer.
- Color of blossom -- 10 points.** Always remove any blossoms that are questionable in terms of color or size.

**REFERENCES.** African Violet Trailers. African Violet Magazine, Vol. 54, No. 3. p.49. Lewis, Velma (2000). Grooming and Judging Trailers. African Violet Magazine. Vol. 53, No. 6. pp.50-51. Manozzi, Nancy (1999). Trailers--My Favorite African Violets. African Violet Magazine. Vol. 52, No. 6. p.38. Robinson, Ralph (1998). Notes on Trailing African Violets. African Violet Magazine. Vol. 51, No. 3. pp.22-23. Tremblay, Michel (1987). The AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors, and Judges.



Saintpaulia grotei

#### WHAT IS POWDERY MILDEW?

According to the AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges, p.33, Powdery Mildew is "a fungus disease that appears suddenly, spreads rapidly and is aggravated by poor ventilation. **Signs:** Watch for grayish white powder on leaves, stems and blossoms. Blossoms may be deformed and discolored. **Control:** Isolate plant. Dispose of all badly infected plants. Remove all infected leaves and flowers. Increase the space between remaining plants, reduce temperature fluctuations and humidity, improve air circulation, and spray with fungicide."

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

Dear Dixie Members,

Despite all the lockdowns, masking and distancing, many good things have been happening in the violet world. However, we were deeply saddened to learn that our good friend and past president, Bob Green, passed away. I've included a tribute to him elsewhere in this newsletter.

The AVSA's cyber convention was a great success, as was the Gesneriad Society's. Several Dixie members entered plants and designs in the AVSA convention. I've included several pictures of their exhibits in this issue. Now it's time to make plans for the 2022 conventions



In the meantime, there are some plant displays and sales scheduled this Fall. The AVC of Florida is having a display and plant sale on October 2 in Lakeland. The Sundowners in Louisiana will have their 2021 show and plant sale in Baton Rouge on October 9-10. The USF Botanical Gardens in Tampa will have its fall plant festival the weekend of October 9-10 in which my local club will participate. Hopefully, more violet and gesneriad clubs will be able to get back to the business of having shows so we can spread the good news about the benefits of growing violets!

Please check out all the good information and articles in this issue of *The Dixie News*. I'm always looking for good articles, pictures and growing tips from our members—including our commercials. So, please send me pictures or anything newsworthy or educational related to African violets, the other gesneriads, or your club.

Until next time, stay safe and enjoy the rest of your summer!

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