



THE DIXIE NEWS

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

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President's Message

Betty Ferguson
bettywithviolets@gmail.com



Hello Dixie members and friends,

I've been feeling lonely for a convention. It was with a sad feeling that Kathy Spissman, our Convention Director, and I decided not to take the gamble on proceeding with our Murfreesboro 2021 Dixie convention. History tells us that previous pandemics have played themselves out in about 18 months—masks, social distancing, vaccines, or not. This coming October will mark about that 18th month of COVID prevalence, but people with big titles and lots of letters behind their name aren't quite so encouraging.

In addition to the iffiness of October, for some years almost all plant societies have had difficulties meeting the attendance and financial requirements hotels now demand. While many people are feeling more adventurous after receiving the vax, some Dixie members are still reticent about travel and hotel stays. As a result, fulfilling our agreement with the hotel would have been even more difficult. Plus, all the other plant groups I'm aware of have cancelled their conventions for the remainder of this year.

And so, with those considerations in mind, Kathy and I agreed to (some good news!) postpone rather than cancel our convention in Murfreesboro to October 2022. Kathy will tell you more, but the hotel was willing to work with us on that plan.

In the meantime, I'm just letting my plants bloom and flower as they feel like it—no disbudding going on at my house. What a treat they're providing!

Oh, Dixie members, the Veterans card spammers have struck again. This time it was Michael Jackson who received not just one, but two text messages supposedly from me. The first was worded: "I want you to handle some purchases now, send me a quick reply if you're available." The second was rather funny asking, "Are you available to assist? I am quite unavailable now and I've got credence in you to take care of this. **Dixie African Violet Society** need [sic] some gift cards for donation to Veterans at Hospice and Palliative care units for preventative items from Corona Disease. I am liable for reimbursement."

Smelling something fishy, Michael gave me a call. The spammer is apparently obtaining personal info from our Dixie website. If your email address or your phone number is listed anywhere on the website. You're likely to get one of these messages from (NOT) me, if you haven't already. If in doubt, check with me. You can also click on the return address the sender uses to see if it is actually my BettywithViolets address.

Happy growing!



"Gentility" – Photo: AVA of Australia

CONTENTS

President's Message – Betty Ferguson	1
Contents	2
Dixie Convention News	2
AVSA Cyber Convention	2
Join the AVSA	3
Louisiana State Director's Report – Becky McMeel	4
Become a Dixie Member	5
Georgia State Director's Report – Phillis Hinkle	5
Welcome to Dixie! – Johnnie Berry	6
Renew Your Membership!	6
Arkansas State Director's Report – Betty Ferguson	6
Florida State Director's Report – Bobbi Johannsen	6
With Sympathy	8
DAVS Affiliates Report – Robbie McMeel	8
Rosettes Available	8
Plant Intelligence: Mycorrhizal Assistance Betty Ferguson	9
Let's Meet our Vendors and Hybridizers Robbie McMeel	11
Copy Deadline for August 2021 Issue	12
The Heat is On! – Mary Lou Harden	12
The Other Gesneriads: Plants Need Rest, too Carol Schreck	12
Upcoming Events	14
Publication Deadlines	14
Underwater Designs – Mary Lou Harden	14
Taking A Look Back	15
What Are Fertilizer Salts?	16
DAVS Officers	16
State Directors, Standing & Special Committees	17
From the Editor – Mary Lou Harden	17
DAVS Membership Application	18
Commercial Members	18
Commercial Ads	19



NOT looking back!

Even though our 2022 convention seems a long way off, we're already excited just thinking about it! How wonderful it will be to once again meet in person, renew friendships, make new friends, and show off our beautiful plants and designs. So, let's look ahead to October 2022 and plan to meet in Murfreesboro!

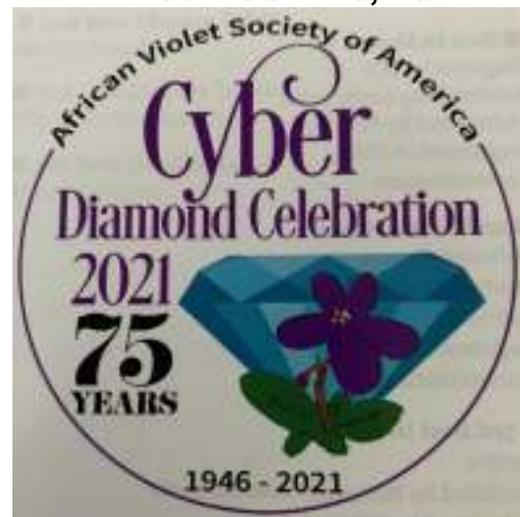
DIXIE CONVENTION 2022

OCTOBER 12-15, 2022



DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON,
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

AVSA CYBER CONVENTION MAY 30 – JUNE 6, 2021



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

Thanks to many AVSA members who have volunteered their time and talents, AVSA's 2021 Cyber Convention is about to begin! Here's a brief overview of what's planned for convention week (you can read more on the AVSA website).

Sunday, May 30: Beginning at noon Central time, Julie Mavity-Hudson will give an instructional presentation on "How to Zoom," and how to participate in bingo and scavenger hunt!

Monday, May 31: Sandra Skalski will be teaching the "Basics of Growing African Violets." You can also view the Welcome video, access all forms, instructions and announcements, and that evening join your friends for two virtual cocktail hours. The first cocktail hour features special guests Ralph and Olive Ma Robinson of The Violet Barn in Naples, NY. The second hour features AVM columnist Sandra Skalski.

Tuesday, June 1: View the "Spectacular Streptocarpus" presentation by Terri Vicenzi. Also, see New Introductions and tour The Violet Barn! You can also participate in the Silent Auction and live Bingo via Zoom that evening.

Wednesday, June 2: View Dr. Jeff Smith's "Science of Flowering" presentation and tour Moscow's Dom Fialki (House of Violets). You can still access new introductions and bid in the Silent Auction. Join the evening cocktail hours, first with special guest Dr Jeff Smith of Ball State University, and next with Ken Muzalewski, hybridizer of Hunter's Hybrids.

Thursday, June 3: The showroom opens at noon and the salesroom opens at 3 pm Central time. Our fifth presentation, "New Blossom and Leaf Artwork" will be presented by Dianne Duggan. Plus, tour Nevsky Dom Fialki in St. Petersburg, Russia, and enjoy new introductions. Join Dianne Duggan at an evening cocktail hour, and in the second evening get-together, "meet" special guest Kathy Hajner of Hajner's Hybrids.

Friday, June 4: Richard Follett will present "75th Anniversary of AVSA" and the tour provides a preview of the attractions at next year's convention in Little Rock, Arkansas. View the showroom and visit the salesroom, silent auction and new introduction gallery.

Saturday, June 5: Be sure to bid in the silent auction and submit your scavenger hunt entry form before noon Central time. Join the Judges Breakfast at 10 am Central time, and the annual membership meeting and open forum at 3 pm Central time via Zoom. The AVSA Board of Directors meets that afternoon and later, the Society will install new officers and directors.

Sunday, June 6: Watch for an announcement of the scavenger hunt winner at Noon Central time and join your

AVSA standing committee in a 2 pm Zoom meeting. Continue to view the showroom, salesroom and new introductions.

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.**



JOIN THE AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA

An AVSA membership offers the following benefits:

- Six full-color issues annually (64 pages each) of the African Violet Magazine (AVM) filled with great growing information
- Regular columns include

- For Beginners
- Question Box
- In Search of New Violets
- Gesneriad Advice
- Registration of new cultivars
- Thinking Small
- Coming Events

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

AVSA holds annual conventions in various regions of the country. All members may participate in these exciting events which feature judged shows open to all registered AVSA members. After judging, shows are open to the public. Informative presentations are made by experts in African violet culture. Commercial members also display their newest introductions and have booths where plants and plant-related products are sold.

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

AVSA
P.O. Box 22417
Beaumont, TX 77720



Live Wire



LOUISIANA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

May 2021

by Becky McMeel

lilmama55@hotmail.com

Hello Violet Lovers!

Spring has sprung with a vengeance down in south Louisiana! Isn't it amazing how plants know the change of season? My violets and streps have taken off! How do I know this? They sure are thirsty when they are growing! While my re-potting skills have improved, I still have a long way to go! I am proud to announce I have successfully potted a sucker from Lucky Lady Bug, rooted a few crowns off my Rob's Vanilla Trail AND separated a strep, too!



Rob's Vanilla Trail

Sundowners AVS is still meeting virtually. The club updated and voted on club By-Laws in February. The club was established in 1978 and by-laws were updated maybe once since then and long overdue. Perhaps it is time to update YOUR club by-laws?

In March, Vice President and Program person Wilhelmina Allen read a lovely article entitled "*Where Wild Violets Are*" by Mary Stotterstrom, originally published in the November 3, 2003 New York Times. Member George Ramirez showed us 2 month old leaves potted up to a 3 inch pot. The club is contemplating a name change in the future. They are also considering a pop-up plant sale as well since all their plant sale options did not pan out.



April saw Sundowners narrowing down name change choices to the top 3- Louisiana African Violet Society, Pelican State African Violet Society, and Bayou African Violet Society. The club originally met at sun down to accommodate working members. The name change will be voted on at the May meeting.

The June meeting will also be a members-only plant sale at the home of Becky and Robbie McMeel. Members will get to increase their collections as well as allowing them to own the plants for 3 months as per show rules.

Speaking of shows, Sundowners will have their annual Plant Show and Sale on October 9th and 10th, 2021 at the Baton Rouge Garden Center. The theme is "Violets Celebrate the 20's". If you are in the area, come on by! We would love to see you!

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a Happy Spring! Be safe, mask up, and get vaccinated so we can meet again IN PERSON!!!!

Till next time- Happy Growing!

Becky McMeel, Louisiana Director

BECOME A DIXIE MEMBER	
DIXIE AVS DUES	
Individual	\$15.00 Yr
Individual Life	\$175.00
Affiliate Club	\$20.00 Yr.
Commercial	\$25.00 Yr.
Dual (2 at one address)	\$20.00 Yr.
Mail application (p.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	

in reality it was the year before. We are all hopeful that the light at the end of the tunnel is coming closer.

At the present time we are still having zoom meetings with great participation. We also have a mid-month "Show and Tell" when we share plants, problems and helpful hints. Our monthly meetings have been great. We have zoomed with guests we would never have been able to host in person.

In February we welcomed Julie Mavity-Hudson as our guest. Julie is a professional photographer whose specialty is plants. She had many suggestions for background, light and angles to improve our plant pictures.

In March we zoomed with Rob and Olive Robinson at the Violet Barn. They shared the remodeling and reconstruction of the violet rooms since moving out of the greenhouses. The request for plants has been overwhelming and they have been challenged to meet the orders. They were very gracious to answer many questions.

Our April zoom was with Dale Martens. She welcomed us into her plant area, sharing the hybridizing of her beautiful gesneriads especially Sinningias. Dale always has great tips and loves to share them.



Sinningia
pusilla
White
Sprite

GEORGIA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Phillis Hinkle
pchinkle@bellsouth.net

Greetings from
The Peach State,



If you're like me, I feel that I have lost a year. I have to pause when I start to say "last year" and remember

Diane Mathis from the Rome African Violet Study Group tells me that they are "hanging in there". They were looking forward to a plant sale on May 8. They are participating with the Federated Garden Clubs in a "Yard Sale". She is hoping they will be able to attract some new members and add something to their treasury as well.

It is our hope that each of you will enjoy good health and that we will see each other face to face soon.

Phillis Hinkle, Georgia Director

WELCOME TO DIXIE!

by Johnnie Berry,
Treasurer and Membership Chair
johnniepearl@comcast.net

New Members

Dianne Duggan, Webster, TX.
NASA Area African Violet Society, Webster, TX
Stuart & Kathy Swayze, Sun City Center, FL
Chesley Poole, Ruston, LA
Will Key, Salado, TX

Renewals

African Violet Club of Greater Atlanta
Phillis Hinkle
Sandra Campbell
Jos Violets
Mary Halbert
Stephen Linton
Jim Boyer
Marian & Greg Zoller
Memphis AVS
Heart of Jacksonville AVS
Sundowners AVC
Alice Terry Jordan
Central Florida AVS
Becky & Robbie McMeel
Roselind Rovinsky
James Matula
Linda Price
Betty Ferguson
Barbara McGrath
Jean Marie Ross
Rome AVSC

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP! (Membership Application on p. 18)

Please send check payable to DAVS to
Johnnie Berry, Membership Secretary
287 Fennel Way, SW, Atlanta, GA 30331
johnniepearl@comcast.net

ARKANSAS STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Betty Ferguson
bettywithviolets@gmail.com

Arkansas Director's Report

By Betty Ferguson



The Central Arkansas African Violet Society remains active on Zoom. Dave Harris, hybridizer of the Ozark line of Sinningias and owner of Dave's Violets and Other Gesneriads, presented our April program on "Caring for Gesneriads with Tuberos and Rhizomatous Root Systems." He showed pictures plus tubers and rhizomes of various plants, explaining differences and planting methods. We were happy to have Marian Zoller from Memphis joining our meeting.

Although Zoom meetings can't compare with real life get togethers, Zoom does allow us to drop in on other club's meetings and we've enjoyed having other out-of-staters join our meetings.

Our March meeting focused on online ordering and trading and snags to watch for.

We held a May 1 sale in a pavilion at the park. Due to COVID, many people have ventured into the plant hobby. They haven't been able to spend their fun money in normal ways and are excited to find an outdoor plant sale.

FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Bobbi Johannsen
Bobbiviolet@bellsouth.net



The individual groups have been trying to keep in touch, however possible. Now that the Florida mask mandate has been lifted, and many people have been vaccinated, we are starting to see some positive strides toward doing some of the things we used to do and have missed so much.

First Lakeland African Violet Society has been meeting in person, but is now able to meet at their usual location, Lake Pointe Village community center, with all protocols in place. They had a sales event on March 13th at Lake Crago Park which was very successful, even with masks.

Central Florida African Violet Society has held the last 2 meetings by Zoom. Plans are being made to have an in person meeting starting in June.

Tampa African Violet Society has continued to meet, sometimes by Zoom and sometimes in a member's home. Sample their upcoming programs:

May meeting featured a YouTube interview of Ken Froboese, owner of Hill Country African Violets in Boerne, TX.

June 18 meeting will be by Zoom with Cindy Brooks of Holden, MA, a member of the Bay State AVS.

She has a wonderful program on POTS, POTS & MORE POTS!

July 16 meeting will be a Zoom meeting with Joyce Stork, AVSA past president, on a myriad of topics.

August 20 meeting will be by King James Boyer on SINNINGIAS!

Congratulations to their recently installed new officers: Mary Beth Bryant, President, 1st VP Mary Lou Harden, 2nd VP Jim Matula, Secretary Lynn Bandy and Treasurer Glenn Shelton.

The Tampa club always creates a wonderful display at the Florida State Fair. This year they had a space theme, as you can see in the pictures (right column). I was very happy to see the OGS (Other Gesneriads) well represented!



Heart of Jacksonville Sales events

The Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society have been meeting in person as well as sharing their monthly meetings on Facebook live. One benefit of this, the meetings are out there for anyone to view, forever! Yes, you can go find one right now!! The group was so pleased to be able to participate in 2 craft sales events this Spring (pictures above). The public seemed very eager to be out (wearing masks) and sharing / buying handmade goods again. Since the

club could not have their Spring show, one car load of loyal customers made a day trip from Charleston to one of these craft sales to restock! The group is so sad and trying to carry on after the loss of their fearless leader, Sharon Gartner. There is much to discuss over the Summer break.

African Violet Council of Florida had its Spring meeting via Zoom and finally welcomed its new officers.

Linda Price, President

Mary Lou Harden, 1st Vice President

Elvie Blakely, 2nd Vice President

Bobbi Johannsen, Recording Secretary

Corresponding Secretary, Angela Newell

The position of Treasurer (left vacant by Sharon Gartner) to be appointed by Linda Price.

Plans are being made for all members of AVCF to hold a one-day sale in Lakeland, FL on Saturday, October 2. More information coming soon!



Tampa AVS display at Florida State Fair

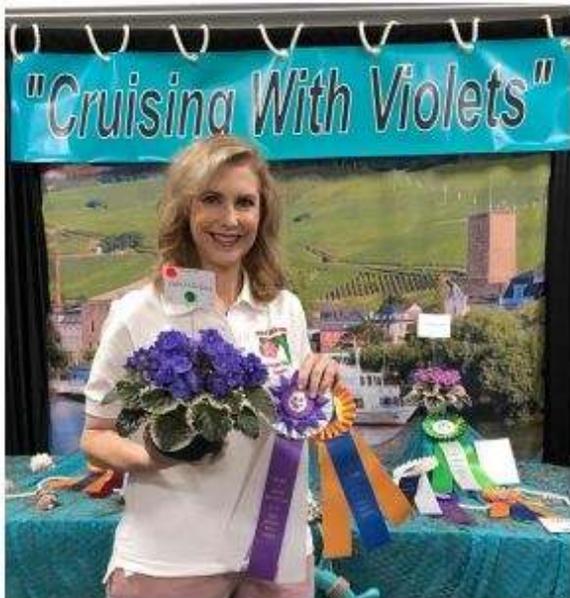
With Sympathy

We were saddened to learn of the passing away on April 22, 2021, of Sharon Gartner of Jacksonville, Florida. Sharon had been undergoing treatment for cancer for more than a year. Sharon was President of Heart of Jacksonville AVS, Treasurer of African Violet Council of Florida, and was serving as AVSA Awards Chair. Her close friend, Bobbi Johannsen, wrote the following about her:

"Sharon was so much to so many people. A daughter, sister, aunt (that was like a mother), friend, mentor, care-taker, leader, and organizer extraordinaire. She was the one who would take on a new task, no matter whose job it really was!! She would always be the first to come to the aid of others, sometimes ignoring her own needs. She would share anything with you...her plants, her knowledge, her time. It would be a great tribute to continue this caring / sharing way of life. Help each other, take care of each other and share your knowledge and love of African violets. And, maybe, think of Sharon when you do...."

You can read her obituary here:

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/jacksonville-fl/sharon-gartner-10164437>



BEST IN SHOW AND BEST STANDARD

"CAJUN'S ELLA GRACE

Won by Sharon Gartner

DIXIE AVS AFFILIATES REPORT

March 2021

by Robbie McMeel
rmcmeel@bellsouth.net

As I have not received any requests for ribbons for shows, my report is very short this quarter. I will be glad, as I know that all of you will be too, at the time that we can meet with all of our friends and travel to shows again. We truly miss all of our friends from all over the country that we have made through growing violets.

I hope that all of our members are doing fine and staying safe through these trying times, as the nasty virus keeps coming. As it appears that we are slowly getting this pandemic under control, we all still need to be cautious. Again we had to cancel our show this year, as we did not want to endanger any of our members. Becky and I have both been vaccinated, but continue to stay home and out of public gatherings to keep our exposure to a minimum.

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

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

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

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

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

PLANT INTELLIGENCE

Mycorrhizal Assistance

by Betty Ferguson
bettywithviolets@gmail.com

Suzanne Simard, with over 30 years of research in forestry and plant communication says, "Underground there is this other world. A world of infinite biological pathways that connect trees and allow them to communicate and allow the forest to behave as if it were a single organism. It might remind you of a sort of intelligence."

Underground mycorrhizal networks link nearly every tree in a forest passing nutrients, water, carbon, hormones and even communicating alarm signals from tree to tree. Recent research has found these fungal networks virtually all over the world, even in the Arctic and in deserts. They link not only trees but are a source of communication and provider of needs for about 90 percent of plant species. This fungal network is composed of microscopic cells that grow as long, very thin threads called hyphae. A single hypha can span the distance of many yards snaking its way through soil particles, roots and rocks and often connecting multiple plants. You have probably seen a network of mycorrhizal fungi when you brushed away leaves in a forest.

The kingdom of fungi includes yeasts, molds, mycorrhizae, and the more familiar mushrooms. The kingdom is neither plant nor animal, but scientists believe fungi is more closely related to animals than to plants. While little is yet known about this diverse kingdom of millions of species, scientists do recognize the role of fungi in breaking down organic matter and releasing oxygen and nutrients into the soil and the atmosphere.

Mycorrhiza means "fungus-root." This fungus forms a beneficial, symbiotic relationship with the roots of its host plant. A symbiotic relationship benefits both the fungi and the plant. Fungi cannot photosynthesize, so the plant exchanges sugars and amino acids with the mycorrhizae, which in turn travel long distances into nooks and crannies where plant roots are too short or too big to fit. Exchanged nutrients include nitrogen, phosphorus, zinc, manganese, copper plus other micronutrients the plant might need. John Kempf reports there is a definite improvement in photosynthesis when mycorrhizae is

present. In addition, mycorrhizae help the plant resist stress, and stress-free plants don't attract diseases or pests as readily as weaker plants.



(How I wish I understood the secrets these bottomland trees share. Do they give out their password to the cypress trees? The ferns and mosses? Would they share their resources with an African violet or an Episcia?)

We can compare the symbiotic relationship of plant and mycorrhizae to that of a business system. The plant acts as the boss and pays the employee mycorrhizae in the currency of nutrients the plant manufactures through photosynthesis. The boss orders the fungi, "Bring me water, oxygen and some silica," or whatever nutrients it needs at the time. If fungi isn't available or doesn't respond, the plant fires it and puts out more roots in an effort to survive. Searching for the help the plant needs, it expends more and more of its energy needed for growth, blossoms and fruit.

To provide that exchange, mycorrhizal fungi are composed of two types. Endomycorrhiza hyphae set up shop inside the plant's hair roots. Endomycorrhiza benefits almost all plant species. Ectomycorrhiza hyphae live next to but outside roots and primarily benefit woody and tree species and blueberries.

Some exceptions that do not respond to mycorrhizae are brassicas (mustard, cabbage, broccoli family), carnations, blueberries, spinach, and some carnivorous species. The brassicas are known to have a natural antifungal effect.

In her research Suzanne Simard found that the "wood wide web" not only functions in the exchange of physical commodities. It also acts as a giant nervous system communicating from plant to plant, alerting of danger so other plants in the vicinity can mount their defense before the attack reaches them.



Mycorrhizae and an earthworm companion I uncovered in my garden.

Dr. Simard found that the oldest trees in a forest, called mother trees or hub trees, recognize their own children and grandchildren. As in any economy or family, Dr. Simard found that not all is fair in the forest. The mother trees show partiality to their own, sharing more of their resources with their kin through the connecting network.

“They have serotonin. They also have glutamate, which is one of our own neurotransmitters,” Dr. Simard says. “There’s a ton of it in plants. They have these responses immediately. If we clip their leaves or put a bunch of bugs on them, all that neurochemistry changes. They start sending messages really fast to their neighbors.”

The pulsing sound of underground plant talk has been recorded for us to hear as plants communicate and share resources through their internet.

Not only do terrestrial plants benefit from a relationship with mycorrhizae. Scientists have found that even epiphytes establish symbiotic relationships with mycorrhizal fungi.

Most of the research and literature on mycorrhizae is slanted toward big farmers, but container growers can benefit from the crumbs that fall from the USDA table. Few of us use garden soil now with our indoor plants, and most soilless media contains no mycorrhizae, leaving our African violets and cousins to scrounge for

nutrients the best they can. Some of our better companies--Fox Farm, Pro-Mix, Roots Organics--are supplementing their media with mycorrhizae and beneficial bacteria. In addition, growers have an array of mycorrhizal supplements available to us.



Aeschynanthus pulcher

(Even epiphytes enjoy symbiotic relationships with mycorrhizae. For more information on Gesneriads and their life in the wild check out the Gesneriad Reference Web, www.Gesneriads.info. Photo by and courtesy of Ron Myhr.)

Here are some considerations, however, for Gesneriad growers. Healthy garden or forest soil with plants growing in it contains vast quantities of mycorrhizae. Supplemental products we purchase usually consist of only two or three species of fungi, which may or may not benefit our plants. Fungi is heat sensitive, and storage in a hot warehouse may have killed all the fungi. Being stored for a period of time without the nutrition it would receive from plants, may have starved the mycorrhizae. Those products may contain enough fertilizer that the grower thinks fungi is responsible. That raises the question of whether we should inoculate our potting mixes with a little native soil just prior to potting.

If the thought of adding garden soil to your mix makes you squirm, you can count on finding quality products at your local hydroponics store. The growers who most often shop at hydroponics stores demand cutting edge and effective products. My hydroponics store owner recommends Orca Premium Liquid Mycorrhizae with endomycorrhizae. It contains beneficial bacteria and enzymes plants need. Orca can be added directly to the reservoir.

Mel Grice says he’s a firm believer in the benefits of mycorrhizae in the soil. He uses ProMix HP for his plants and adds dried molasses. He explains that the

molasses is basically sugar for the beneficial microbiome to feed on. He said, "I get fantastic roots, so I get fantastic plant growth." And if you know Mel, you know he grows fantastic plants.

Let's Meet our Vendors and Hybridizers

by Robbie McMeel
rmcmeel@bellsouth.net



I had the pleasure of meeting Glenda and Jim Williams at one of the Lone Star AVS shows years ago. Glenda and Jim are owners of Glenda's House of Violets. They sell all kinds of supplies and many violets, and are commercial members of Dixie AVS and AVSA.

Glenda grew up gardening with her family in east Texas. They raised their own food and vegetables for the family and were probably, what is today, called "homesteaders". She said gardening has been a huge part of her life for over 6 decades.

Presently she and Jim, her husband of 46 years, live in central Texas in a small community called McDade on the outskirts of Austin, along with their 4 cats Gus, Tony, Tootles, and Loki. She has a 60 square foot garden that always has some type of vegetable growing. She added two new 3' x 24' raised beds this year to increase their growing capacity.



Glenda became interested in African Violets in the early 70's. She met an elderly German lady named "Nana Fuelberg" who was her mentor. Nana's house

was filled with beautiful violets, which inspired her to grow them.

Glenda also likes to grow other gesneriads along with her violets. She also grows many other indoor plants that are compact in size. She would also like to try her hand at hybridizing in the future.

She and Jim have explored "cloning" plants which was a very enlightening experience to them. At the beginning, there were many failures because you need to have patience, and adhere to the set schedule for cloning activities. They will continue to experiment with this as time allows.

Glenda does have a collection of "Show Plants" that she grows for shows and has had many starter plants that she grew to sell at several venues. Unfortunately, it was needed to scale back on the starter plants because of the time factor, and focus more on the supply end on her business.

Glenda and Jim are members of AVSA, DAVS, Lone Star African Violet Society, Central Texas Judges Council, First Austin African Violet Society, Houston African Violet Society and the Gesneriad Society. She presently holds the following offices:

3rd Vice President – AVSA
President – Lone Star AVC (LSAVC),
Historian – First Austin AVS (FAAVS).

She is also a certified Texas Master Gardener in Bastrop County, where she spends many hours volunteering with community projects.

Glenda started selling supplies in small quantities at her local affiliate club shows and helping people locate things that were needed to grow plants. She enjoyed this so much, she, along with Jim, started to expand the business to handle more items, thus opening "Glenda's House of Violets". They have added many items, including the "hard to find items". They have a small shop on their property where people can go by and purchase needed supplies (at this time by appointment only to make sure that they are available when you drop by).

They also have an online store- www.ghviolets.com you can order from. They now travel to local and state shows, and national conventions with their goods. Glenda and Jim both enjoy talking with their customers and want to help out in any way possible. They strive to be sure a customer will come back when things are needed.

In closing, I have enjoyed the friendship with Glenda and Jim over the years and I am sure that you will enjoy talking with them in the future when shows start

again. Please remember that we need to support our commercial vendors.

COPY DEADLINE FOR AUGUST ISSUE July 15

THE HEAT
IS ON!



SUMMER CARE FOR YOUR AFRICAN VIOLETS

by Mary Lou Harden
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We give our African violets different care in summer because of the high humidity and soaring heat here in Florida. Up north, some people may put their plants outside for the summer, but we can't do that here because either the sun would cook them to death or the almost daily rains would drown them—and we don't need or want cooked or drowned plants! Additionally, in the summer African violets are more vulnerable to fungus attacks, crown rot and root rot. Some of the things we need to remember or be reminded of—especially for those living in Florida and other Southeastern states, are:

- Potting soil needs to be light—not heavy! May need to use extra perlite.
- Reduce the amount of fertilizer to 1/8 teaspoon per gallon of water.
- Lighting. The number of hours your fluorescent tubes are on can be reduced. If growing in natural light, plants may need to be moved further away from the light source.
- “Keep your cool!” African violets really prefer temperatures of about 75 degrees in the daytime and 65 degrees at night. They can, however, withstand both higher and lower temperatures. If YOU are comfortable, most likely your plants will be also.
- Have good air circulation which will help prevent powdery mildew. Running fans in the plant room will help accomplish this.
- Keep a small sponge or tissue handy to blot up spilled water from foliage.

- Maintain a regular watering schedule. Violets don't like soggy soil, and they don't really like soil that's too dry. Keep it evenly moist.
- If growing for show, maintain good symmetry.
- Remove any suckers when there are 3 or 4 leaves showing. They can get big before you realize it – and can easily and quickly destroy the symmetry.
- Clean soil particles or other debris from the foliage with a soft cosmetic brush.
- When spraying plants with any chemicals, be sure to wear rubber gloves and a mask.
- “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” After handling outdoor plants, take a shower or at least wash your hands! Don't handle your African violets immediately after doing yard work! Remember that mites, mealybugs and thrips sometimes hitch a ride on your clothing and are then happy to take up residence among your violets! Also, remove dead blooms. Keep trays and matting clean!
- “I Wanna Be Close To You” or “Lean on Me” may be good songs for humans – but violets prefer “Alone Again” or “Go Away Little Girl.” In other words, give your violets SPACE to grow without touching each other! Having proper space will help with symmetry. It will also discourage insects from traveling from one plant to another.
- “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Observe your plants – check them out every day. This will help you stop any problems from even starting.

THE OTHER GESNERIADS

PLANTS NEED REST, TOO!

by Carol Schreck*

Do plants sleep? Some people would tell you that plants don't (can't) sleep because they don't have a central nervous system. However, in a manner of speaking, plants do sleep, the same as do animals and people. Regardless of what we are, all of us live according to the rhythms of nature. Part of our daily rhythm includes rest or sleep.

Plants are affected by a grander rhythm—that of the seasons which we refer to as winter, spring, fall and summer and also to wet, dry, cold and hot. Nature's cycles for plant growth apply to those growing indoors the same as they do to those outdoors. Shorter days and cooler temperatures



induce dormancy. Except for the length of day, centrally heated indoor environments offer plants a potentially endless summer. A constant environment is entirely possible in a fluorescent lighted garden where day length can be the same all year around. However, even artificially lighted plants tend to have resting periods, growth slows and they need less food and water.

Tuberous and rhizomatous plants generally die to the ground while they rest. In cultivation, we simply withhold food and water. If a plant you want to thrive in captivity came from an environment that was so dry in summer that it stopped growing, or even died down to the ground to conserve energy, then you will need to duplicate those conditions.

Not all plants require a pronounced season of rest or dormancy. In fact, relatively few of those we grow indoors do, but some such as Achimenes, Kohlerias, Smithianthas, Chrysothemis and Sinningias of the florist gloxinia type do require an annual rest.



Rhizomes

If you have been growing any of these and they produced a heavy flower and foliage crop through the summer months, beginning as early as mid-March you can induce a fall-winter dormant season for the tubers or rhizomes of these plants. To do this, simply withhold water and fertilizer and store the pots in a dark, dry place (temperature 55 to 65 degrees). Check the pots periodically and add water only as necessary to prevent the total desiccation of the tubers or rhizomes. If you do not have the room to store them in their pots, it will be necessary to “harvest” your tubers and rhizomes after their tops have dried off. I have had success with putting the rhizomes and tubers in Ziploc bags, along with their appropriate name stakes, for storage during the resting periods. Kept this way, they are not likely to need water and you can see through the plastic Ziploc bags to know when new growth appears to tell you the plants are waking up from their periods of hibernation.



Tuber

The length and time of the dormant season varies, depending on the natural habitat of the plant, and whether it requires the long-light days of spring and summer or the short-light days of fall and winter to

trigger leaf and flower growth. When you notice signs of growth from the “sleeping” tubers and rhizomes, they are telling you that they are fully rested and ready to grow again.

Sometimes new leaves will be found poking through the soil at the very time you have decided the old leaves are telling you the plant is ready for dormancy. When this happens, you can force a rest by



Sinningia, a/k/a Florist Gloxinia

withholding water and fertilizer and placing the pot in a dark place, or you can simply cut away the old leaves and stems at soil level and allow another growth cycle to proceed without interruption.

At the other extreme, sometimes you will have a sinningia that is very temperamental about breaking dormancy. Some sinningias seem to take forever to wake up. Sinningia “Tinkerbelle” is one with this tendency. When this happens, I recommend exposing the top of the tuber to light, then watering well, and keeping it warm. Most often this will work, but not always.

The light rhythms of plants are called photoperiods. Some ornamental plants prefer a short day and a long night, while others require a long day and a short night. Still others are day neutral. African violets are day neutral plants and will bloom under a fairly wide range of light hours, but should always have a total of eight hours of total darkness per day. They require at least ten hours of bright light per 24 hour period for sturdy growth, and they will bloom and grow with ease with 14 to 16 hours of light per day. Just because 14 hours may be a good day length, it does not mean 24 hours is better! Remember—your plants need to sleep, too!

*Reprinted from “The Florida Connection, newsletter of the AV Council of Florida.



Episcia
Canadian Clone
'Cleopatra'

Upcoming Events

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

July 2, 2021 – Gesneriad Society Unjudged Virtual Show. Entries submitted between May 1 and May 31, 2021. Show Schedule, Rules and all information at GesneriadSociety.org.

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

October 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

UNDERWATER DESIGNS

by Mary Lou Harden
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Of all the Design classes in an African violet show, the underwater designs are some of the most intriguing to the public. They often ask whether the violets are "real" and "how long can they live under water?" Underwater arrangements are indeed eye-catching. The process to create one of these designs is really quite simple – although some designers find them to be challenging, even difficult.

The first thing to do when deciding to enter this class is read the show schedule! In most cases, the Schedule will give you the size limitation of your container. You'll need to consider the overall size, the

height, width and shape of the container. Most any shape of colorless, clear glass container can be used, but if the container is square or has other angles, you'll need to make sure those angles don't distort the view. The container must be crystal clear, with no marks or fingerprints or specks of dirt. Washing the container with a vinegar solution will help make sure it is perfectly clear.



Also, glass containers will magnify the design, often causing the design to appear twice its actual size. And you'll need to make sure that whatever other live plant material you use can tolerate being submerged for a few hours – even sometimes a couple of days. You don't want the plant material to become translucent.

The class title should immediately prompt your brain to begin imagining what items you might want to use in the design. It should help you decide on the colors, shapes, sizes, and filler material you will need. The Schedule may require you to use a specific color blossom or "vibrant color blossoms," or some object. If there is such a requirement, that narrows your personal choices.

It's always best to do a practice run at home prior to the show. That way you can tackle any obstacles at home which will help you prepare for the real deal. If you don't, or for some reason can't, do the practice run in advance of the show, you're apt to become too nervous to create an outstanding design. Keep your design as simple as possible.

As in all design classes, the elements and principles are the same for an underwater arrangement. You can use glass beads (no plastic beads, which float) or smooth pebbles or sand or small shells to cover any mechanics used. You should also soak beads, pebbles and shells in a vinegar solution to get rid of

any debris, dust or dirt which could potentially cloud the water.

When selecting blooms, always choose double blossoms and dark colors. Whites and pale colors as well as single blooms will quickly become translucent and just don't hold up.

When you've created the basic part of your design, use a hot-glue gun to place the blossoms where you want them. Then, after you've added your blossoms, place the entire design in the container. You can either glue the design to the bottom or use a weighted object such as a heavy needlepoint in which to place the entire design. Otherwise, your worst nightmare might happen – your design might float! Your design materials should not touch the sides of the container or rise above the water level.



Now, begin slowly adding Distilled water to the container, avoiding pouring the water directly on the blooms. When you've partially filled the container with water, you can slowly add the glass beads or pebbles. When you've finished adding those, continue filling the container with water. The water should come within about a quarter-inch from the top opening.

If you've never entered this class in a show, I challenge you to tackle it in our 2022 show in Murfreesboro!



Episcia 'Silver Sheen'
by Carolee Carter, Ocala, FL

**TAKING A LOOK BACK
AT SOME GOOD TIMES
AT DIXIE CONVENTIONS –
and
LOOKING FORWARD TO 2022!**



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WHAT ARE FERTILIZER SALTS?

According to the AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges, p.32, Fertilizer salts is "an excess of salts from fertilizers, salts that are left behind when water evaporates, which can affect foliage and roots. **SIGNS:** Excess fertilizer can cause browning of the leaf tips and margins, wilting and yellowing of the foliage, and death of roots. Excessive fertilizer causes foliage to become stunted and brittle. **CONTROL:** Control by watching fertilizer rates carefully and by flushing soil with plain fresh water after every four or five applications of fertilizer."

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From the Editor. . .Mary Lou Harden
mlhard@verizon.net

Dear Dixie Members,

I don't know about you, but I am ready for a Dixie convention! It's been way too long since we've been together, doing what we love to do – share our beautiful African violets and other Gesneriads not only with our friends and families – but with the world!

Although we love our in-person meetings and conventions – they are the best! – There's something to be said for Zoom and other electronic meetings. At the very least, they have made it possible for us to stay in touch with each other – not only hearing each other, but also they give us the ability to see each other. They have also helped us expand opportunities to learn from other respected growers and hybridizers who sometimes live far from us. So from that standpoint, and because it was the only safe way for us to meet during the past year, electronic meetings have been good.

However, I believe the greater value is when we can meet together in the same room, see each other, enjoy each other's company, learn from each other, and care for one another. So, I'm looking forward to our 2022 Dixie convention in Murfreesboro and I hope you are, too!

In the meantime, we Floridians are making plans for a display and plant sale in early October in Lakeland. My local club, Tampa AVS, just concluded a display at the Florida State Fair and we're beginning plans for a 2022 judged show in the spring.

I hope you will enjoy the articles in this issue of *The Dixie News*. And I hope you will let our writers know that they are appreciated. We're always happy to have our members contribute pictures and articles about their methods of growing. You don't need to wait for someone to ask you—just send me your pictures or anything newsworthy or educational related to African violets, other Gesneriads, or your club.

I hope also that you have registered for and will participate in the AVSA's virtual convention beginning Sunday, May 30. And the Gesneriad Society's virtual convention show is July 2nd.

Best wishes to all for a safe and beautiful summer!

Mary Lou Harden

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