

# VioletsFun

Violet Barn newsletter

February 2024 - # 120

## (Some of) What's New



**Hunter's Skeeter Bite.** Double white and purple-red, variable, multicolor blooms. Small, pointed, medium green foliage. Easy growing, great blooming miniature.

**Hunter's Dinky Do.** Sdbl. to double white blooms with blush pink

overtones. Nice, medium green, pointed, miniature foliage. Excellent grower and bloomer.

## News and updates:

### Inventory updates.

Both standard and begonia inventory have been updated within the last week. We will make a further update of both standard and miniature violet inventory soon.

### Wholesale and large orders.

Our inventory for African violets has finally returned to near normal and we are again able to offer wholesale pricing. [Details appear on the website.](#)

### Winter shipping remains in effect.

We continue to ship through winter! Despite our current mild winter, from now through end of March, we can only guarantee safe arrival when Express mail is chosen. We will ship via priority mail (less expensive) but this is done at customer's risk.

## My plant looks like this:



This photo was sent to us recently with the message: "I'm sure you don't remember me but I called the first time 'Susie Sunshine' bloomed because the blossoms were just plain cream colored and you told me to wait to see the blooms in colder conditions. Well, she exploded with bright yellow and pink just as predicted".

Another recent email, concerning 'Warm Sunshine', stated, "Why are my blooms white and in the picture they are yellow?" Our answer: "This plant will range in color between white and yellow, depending upon environment. That is the nature of all "yellow" violets. Typically they will be more "yellow" when grown in cooler temps, less when warmer."

For many years, yellow was a color that didn't exist on African violets. It only began to appear in collections in the 1990's as breeders introduced the first "yellow" hybrids (Nolan Blansit being credited for the first of them). Even after years of breeding since then, it remains a highly variable and unpredictable color on African violets. Most will be some combination of yellow blushed on white or on pink. The photo above would be typical of what you might expect. Under optimal conditions and care, many can be quite yellow. If conditions aren't optimal, blooms can be mostly white (or pink) with little, or no, yellow.

What is optimal? This can depend upon the variety, and can be a matter of trial and error--you'll know it when it happens. As a general rule, though, all else equal, you'll see more "yellow", and deeper, or more intense, colors generally, when temperatures are a bit cooler--say, 65f to 70f degrees. Good humidity, light, and generally good care help greatly as well, but temperature plays the largest role.

Growing "yellow" varieties requires the proper expectations (don't expect "canary" or "daffodil" like intensity), providing it the best environment, and a bit of patience.

## Charming plant



**Eleocharis radicans.** Otherwise known as "German nut grass", among other names, this is one our favorite little plants. A low growing grass that never grows taller than a few inches and produces cute little seed pods on its tips.

It is rhizomatous, so that plants spread easily, forming dense, pincushion-like clumps. Very thin, but stiff, leaves are upright and bristle-like. Seed pods will appear when the plant is mature and conditions are favorable--for us, spring and fall, though they can appear at any time.

This is a semiaquatic plant that would be found growing in wet bogs or along streams. For us, this makes it easy to care for, as we grow them in trays that we flood when the soil surface shows signs of drying. Better to keep them on the wet, rather than dry, side. Use a light, porous, soil that can be kept moist. Similarly, it won't look its best ("lush") if conditions are overly dry or warm, though it will tolerate it. It is small enough to be grown in a terrarium, and it will appreciate the moist conditions. It's not necessary though. We grow ours on our light stands with our other plants.

Propagation is both easy and interesting. As *Eleocharis* grows and spreads, its rhizomes will grow outwards from the plant in expanding circles around the center. When removed from the pot, you can "unwind" the rootball from the outside in. Laying it out flat, you'll have something like a grassy, green, "picket fence" in front of you. Sections of this "fence" can cut, separated, and potted individually.

## This month's question(s)

Do you have information on how to correctly pot up young trailers from the 2" pots you ship them in? Which hybrids have long or short internodes? Will the plants produce the needed three crowns for show or do we need to manipulate them? Another question: do you have problems with wicks not drawing up water? The plants were doing great until they went slowly dry. Is yarn a better material than mason line? Can you use too much perlite in the mix?

*The photos on the website will give you a good idea of the growth habit of each. Most of our (Rob's) hybrids make good showplants as they will branch and spread well--they are true "trailing" plants. Typically, varieties that "trail" the best will have somewhat longer internodes. Those that we describe as "semitrailing" will typically have shorter internodes and will have more of an upright, branching, habit and less of a spreading, trailing habit--more of a "shrub" like appearance.*

*Any good trailing variety will produce at least the three crowns, or branches, that is needed for exhibition. Varieties that don't shouldn't be described as trailers (and we wouldn't grow or sell them). Even so, our practice is to remove the main crown when the plant is young, just to "jump start" the process and ensure that the customer gets a plant with more than a single crown (and we root the tips to propagate the plants--more reliable than leaf cuttings).*

*Repot the trailers from the 2" pot into 3" pots when the plant looks full in it's current pot. From there, you can pot into gradually larger pots (one size at a time) as they outgrow the pot they are in. Like any plant, don't pot up until the root system has fully developed in the current pot. Trailers, because they want to spread, can end up in fairly large (wide) pots if given enough time. Pots should never be very deep, however, as the roots on even a large plant will never grow more than a few inches deep. We've grown showplants in 10 or 12" diameter "pots"--actually saucers that were no more than 3" deep that we drilled holes into for drainage. Getting a trailer to this size is a subject needing more time and space to explain.*

*As for the wicks, you may have to "restart" them if they go completely dry and don't draw water. Much like a dry sponge, you need to moisten it first. If the soil is moist, the wick is moist, and it is in water, it should draw water. If the wick becomes very old, it might get clogged with salts or sediment from the fertilizer, soil, and water, and might need cleaning or replacing. We don't wick ourselves (but have in the past), but many growers do. Any man-made, absorbent, material should work. Acrylic yarn works well and is easy to find and use.*

*The wetter you keep the soil, the more perlite (or similar material) you need. There is no limit. In the extreme, you could grow your plants in 100% perlite, and sit the pot in water all of the time--"hydroponically". Many years ago, we (Olive) actually grew a number of small showplants in this manner, and was able to transport them when travelling internationally, as the "potting" mix contained no soil or peat (just wet "packing material").*

March 7, 2024. 7 pm.

**AVGSR Meeting.** Our local African violet and Gesneriad society welcomes new members. Held at Messiah Lutheran Church, 4301 Mt Read Blvd, Rochester, NY. Program: Pollinating African violets

**March 2024.**

Next international shipping. Sorry, due to weather and the holidays, we are not shipping internationally during winter months. We will resume late March.

**April 25-27, 2024.**

AVSA Convention Show. Phoenix, AZ. We will attend and be selling.

## Contact us

**Email:** [comments@violetbarn.com](mailto:comments@violetbarn.com)

**Mail:** PO Box 9, Naples, NY 14512

**Phone:** 585-374-8592 (M-S 12-5 ET)

*Sorry, we're currently closed to visitors*



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## Are you a member?

**African Violet Society of America**

Sign up through our website and get a free plant added to order! More info: [avsa.org](http://avsa.org)

**Gesneriad Society**

Has your collection grown far beyond violets? Consider joining the Gesneriad Society. More info: [gesneriad.society.org](http://gesneriad.society.org)

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