

VioletsFun

Violet Barn newsletter

November 2024 - # 129

Preparing for winter



Winter is knocking on our door. After a nice summer and mild fall, the trees are now bare and the cold has arrived. It will turn colder and snow will be here soon enough. Hoping it doesn't overstay its time here.

Living where we do, being able to grow plants like we do is something to be grateful for. No matter the cold and the shades of gray outside, it's warm, lush, and colorful inside. It can't be overstated how much spending your day in a bright room, a bit warm and humid, surrounded by beautiful plants, does for one's emotional (and physical) well being.

There are challenges. Two nights ago, the furnace decided to stop working properly, barely producing any heat. It was repaired and worked fine for a day. At this time, no longer working. Because our plants' health (even survival) depends upon a proper environment, we've learned to take precautions. A large generator for when the power goes out (which it does frequently), space heaters if the furnace quits (which it did), a spare AC unit for when one breaks down in midsummer (as happened this year), and we always have a couple hundred gallons of water on hand in case our well stops pumping (you guessed it...). We chose to be farmers....part of what we signed up for.

The plant care changes a bit too. How quickly plants dry, and when they need watering changes. There's never a fixed schedule for watering. In the transition between warm days and cold, neither the AC nor furnace will run much. There is less circulation and more humid air. Once it gets colder, the furnace runs, dries the air and moves it around the growing area. Plants that had been staying damp for two weeks can dry in less than half that time.

Cooler nights, when air circulation is minimal, means problems like powdery mildew can appear. We try to stay on top of this by keeping plants well spaced and spraying with neem oil (effective and nontoxic) when mildew appears. Easy to keep in control if kept on top of. Even though our area is "sealed" from the outside, it is nice to know that pests are mostly not present or inactive outside in the winter--we, or the dogs, won't be bringing in any "hitch hikers" with us, always a concern in summer.

There are also "microclimates" within our growing spaces. We have four separate growing areas, and each has a slightly different environment, and smaller areas within each growing space can have a different temperature, humidity, and air movement. For example, we grow petrocosmea, which tolerate cool temperatures well, on a stand against an external stone wall that is cold in winter. At the other extreme, episcia, which prefer it warm and humid, are grown on upper shelves in a separate building that stays more humid, with less air movement, in the winter. Cuttings, or plants grown protected in covered trays, are mostly grown on lower, cooler, shelves.

With all of that said, we eagerly await spring. Though they grow well in winter (note the photo of trailers for sale above), they tell us when spring arrives. Like the trees and flowers outside, they'll suddenly grow a bit lusher and will burst into heavier bloom.

News and updates

Our new You Tube channel.

At our recent open house, we invited Karyn Cichocki, master judge and accomplished designer, to give a presentation on dish gardens. We recorded her presentation and have posted this as a video on You Tube. We've condensed the 45 minute presentation to an easily watched 18 minutes. It's informative, and if you weren't able to attend, you can see what you missed. We hope to post more videos in the future (we're new at this) on topics concerning growing, showing, and the like. [Click here to view the video.](#)

Winter shipping now in effect.

We continue to ship through winter! However, 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), and though boxes are well insulated, priority mail is at customer's risk.

Our apologies for the current high cost of Express mail. The USPS has *greatly* increased rates for the holiday season. The shipping costs we charge are actually much *less* than actual postage costs! We are hoping rates will return a bit more to "normal" after the holidays.

Ordering plants for the holidays?

If you want plants to arrive safely, on time, please order no later than December 12 for shipping the following week. Timeliness, and safety, of delivery is only guaranteed via Express mail. If a gift, please tell us when ordering. Also remember that not all plants are in bloom all the time--we will attempt to send blooming plants, but cannot promise this for specific varieties requested.

My plant looks like this:



My questions are about repotting and future growth of trailing violets. I'm not sure I understand them, even from reading and photos. Should I be burying the long stems? Do I remove anything when I repot, as with standard violets? Are they supposed to have some long stems and eventually fill in, in the middle? Do I continually need to size up the pot? Will they ever grow to hang down from a pot, or do they simply get more round and full? Any advice is appreciated.

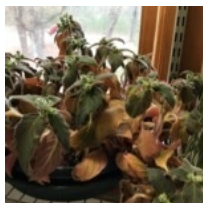
Your plants look healthy, so you're doing most things right. Like any African violet, a "neck" or bare stem will become visible as the plant grows and older leaves are lost or removed. Since trailers are naturally branching, spreading, plants, these bare stems are more visible. For your trailer to "fill in", we would pot into a shallow pot (3" deep or less) that is wide enough so that you can lay down and/or pin branches onto the soil surface. Shallow pots like this can be hard to find--sometimes you'll have to "make" your own. For example, we've used large saucers, or the like, into which we've drilled holes for drainage. Alternatively, use a slightly deeper pot with layer of perlite in the bottom for drainage.

Make sure your soil is firm enough so that the stems can be pinned to it without popping loose. You can use paper clips or bent wire for your pins. You can then cut or pinch the tips of the branches to stop growth at the ends and force growth further down the stem. Ideally, this would have been done a bit sooner, so you would have more branches to work with and less filling in to do.

Most of the large "show" plants shown on the website are trailers that have been grown similarly. For trailing violets, AVSA rules allow only one plant in the pot, and a minimum of three branches. These huge plants are actually one plant, starting from a plant like what we shipped you, that have been grown for a few years, with pruning, pinching, etc. They are more work to grow in such a way, but nothing is more spectacular.

They can be allowed to hang over the pot, and the one you have seems ready to do that. It's just a matter of the plant growing wider than the pot diameter--gravity, and nowhere else to go means they will hang. It can be more difficult to keep them full grown this way, as providing good light at both the top of the plant as well as the sides, is difficult, and if it can't be done, growth can get stringy and sparse. Personally, we prefer to grow them more like "ground covers" in wide, shallow, pots as they will look fuller this way, and are easier to care for.

This month's questions



I have a great many of your plants and generally do quite well with them, but I do have a question about my kohlerias. They have a reddish coloration on the lower leaves, some of which dry up. This container is in an east window, with supplemental lighting.

Yours look heavily budded or blooming, and that's a good thing. Our guess is that they just need repotting and freshening of the soil. Kohlerias can be very fast growers and will get "old" after a time, easily getting root bound. Given what I see in the photo, my guess is that you will find LOTS of rhizomes in the pot, and a very full root system. Light and temperature can play a role as well. If conditions are too warm, dry, or bright, you might see plants look like this.

I would start by repotting, you can separate plants if they are crowded in the pot, and pot individually in fresh soil. You can harvest the excess rhizomes if you like--they can be stored in a sandwich bag with a fistful of moist soil, to use later or give away to your plant growing friends. You'll find them growing in the bag, eventually, if left alone. If the stem isn't too long, you can lower in the pot to bury it. You can also simply lop the top off of the plant (if it's in bloom enjoy the cut portion in a vase!)--it will branch and/or resprout from

the rhizomes. Kohlerias are survivors and almost impossible to kill, short of the most extreme neglect.

My violets were beautifully variegated white and now they are not. I have them growing on a light stand and the plants are losing the white leaves as they grow older. In addition, when I plant leaves from the "mother" plant, they are not variegated as they grow anymore. I could use some advice.

The amount of variegation depends upon many things--the genetics of that particular variety, age, and environment. Some varieties are simply more likely to keep, or lose, variegation. Variegation is usually more prominent on newer growth, and can diminish (or disappear on some varieties) on older growth or as the plant matures. Most importantly, all else equal, variegation will be best when temperatures are cooler, and can disappear if grown very warm. Beautiful, highly variegated, plants seen at shows are typically grown in cool basements or airconditioned rooms. Most varieties will variegate reasonably well under normal household temperatures (about 70f degrees), but can be improved if grown just a bit cooler (65-70f--don't get too cold!). If you have warmer conditions, where the temperatures are regularly above 75f degrees, you likely will see less variegation.

Calendar

December 5, 2023, 6:30 pm.

AVGS Rochester Meeting

Holiday dinner at members home. New members and guests are welcome!

Contact: comments@violetbarn.com

March 2025.

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

Contact us

Email: 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
Come to our Open house in October!*

Notes



Follow us on facebook!

We want you to succeed!

Plant not growing well? Don't wait until it's too late. Send us a photo and an outline of care and environment. You are not alone--perhaps we can help.

Having success?

Let us know and share your story.

Write a review to get a free plant

Write a review on the product pages of our website before ordering. Get a free plant added to your order.

Place a pickup order!

For those in the area, we offer pickup service. Save on shipping and we'll have your plants waiting for you.

[More info...](#)

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

Gesneriad Society

Has your collection grown far beyond violets? Consider joining the Gesneriad Society. More info: gesneriad.society.org

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