

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

November 2020 - No. 81

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(Some of) What's New:

 'Like' us on Facebook!

Check the website for all of the newest varieties.

Our calendar:

December 29, 2020.

International orders must be placed by this date for shipment week of January 4, 2021.

No international shipping in December due to conflict with holidays and likely delays.

All of our shows have been cancelled thru Summer 2021.

If all goes well, we will hope to see everyone at a show in 2022.

Free stuff and how to get it!

2021 AVSA Show awards.

Best Robinson collections
1st place: \$200
2nd place: \$100

Write a review.

Write a review before ordering, good or bad, we'd like to know. Get a free plant added to order.

Contact us:

email. comments@violetbarn.com

mail. POB 9, Naples, NY 14512

phone. 585-374-8592
Mon. thru Sat., 12-5 pm ET

What's News:



Construction continues here. A year ago at this time, we took down our glasshouse and replaced it entirely with an indoor growing area under artificial light--we call it our "greenroom". This year we are replacing all of our light stands in the "shop".

This is the oldest of our five growing areas, being located in the "basement" of the barn. Our other four areas were all added as we expanded over the years. The wooden stands are (were) 30 years old, the shelves sealed with fiberglass to make them waterproof. Over the years, we've had to reseal the shelves numerous times. The light fixtures originally held two T12 florescent bulbs with electronic ballasts, which was new technology 30 years ago. Over time, and as technology changed, we switched to T8 florescent bulbs, then T8 hybrid LED tubes, then T8 bulbs bypassing the ballasts. The end result was a mix of lighting sources on old stands that constantly needed repair. Time to bite the bullet and start from scratch. The photo shows an old stand in foreground, and newer stands (still being assembled) in the back--work is still in progress. More stands are not in view.

Since our plant inventory is lowest in November (after heavy shipping all year), and there was less to move off of the shelves, now was the time. The new stands are steel, the shelves are PVC (plastic), and all of the lighting is LED. This will save on electricity (both lighting and cooling costs), and provide better light for the plants. The new shelves have 5 levels (rather than 4), so we can actually grow more plants with less floorspace. This give us wider aisles and more workspace. This remodel should be complete by next month. When the current pandemic passes, and visitors are again allowed, they will notice a much more modern, cleaner, brighter look.

An interesting note: Our electricity bill approximates what it was 20 years ago, even though we've more than doubled our total growing area under lights. More energy efficient lights and HVAC system, and less extreme temperatures in the growing areas making it easier to heat and cool. With the most recent changes, this should only improve.

Inventory updates.

We have just taken shipment of more [You Can Grow African Violets](#), so this is again in good supply. This is our favorite reference book explaining all of the must know basics of care and growing African violets. A must have on every violet grower's bookshelf.

Our shop and glasshouse at:
7209 County Road 12
Naples, New York 14512

Sorry, our shop is closed to visitors at this time.

Place an order for pickup!

For those living locally, we are offering [pickup service](#). Save on shipping, and we'll have your plants waiting for you.

Are you a member?

Consider joining the African Violet Society of America. Sign up through our website and get a free plant! For more information, visit www.avsa.org

Has your collection grown far beyond violets? Consider joining the Gesneriad Society. For more info: www.gesneriadsociety.org

We've also replenished our inventory of [leaf support rings](#), so all three sizes are again available. Though these aren't necessary items for most growers, they are useful "training" devices for plant foliage and are essential for those wanting to grow larger plants for exhibition or display.

My plant "looks like this"



If it does, you likely are overwatering it. Leaves can become soft and limp for many reasons. If the plant is very dry, they may simply be wilted. If this is the case, it will usually recover with a good watering. If the leaves are limp, but the soil is still wet, then it may have been overwatered, usually more than once. Like an underwatering, a violet will usually recover from an occasional overwatering. If the soil is kept constantly wet, or overwatered repeatedly, then the symptoms shown at left can appear. In this case, some of the leaves not only are soft, but are actually turning brown and beginning to rot. Your plant is discarding leaves (oldest ones first) as its root system is damaged (and made smaller) by the excess water about it. At this point, these leaves won't recover and can be removed.

If watering from the top, to goal is "moist", not soggy nor dry. Water when the surface is "dry to the touch". If you feel the surface and it's wet, don't water yet. Water when the surface is dry, but not yet crispy and the plant has begin to suffer. Use the same rule if you water from the bottom but, since the surface will dry last, err on the side of too dry rather than too wet. For overpotted plants, or those just repotted, also be more careful not to overwater--water based on size of root system, not size of pot.

A light, porous, potting mix is important. More so if you are a heavy waterer. A good mix should contain plenty of coarse ingredients like vermiculite and perlite. The wetter you keep the soil, the more perlite should be in the mix. If you use a self-watering system (keeping the soil constantly wet), then the potting mix should contain at least 50% perlite. Perlite will absorb less water than either peat or vermiculite and will help aerate a wet soil--by the same logic, you could also use horticultural charcoal, styrofoam beads, coarse sand, or the like, if you choose.

This month's question

When my order arrived a few months ago, one of the plants looked like it was shaken and was wobbly and loose in the pot. I adjusted it in the pot and it survived and has since grown, but not nearly as much as the other plants that were received in the same shipment. Any suggestions?

(This is abbreviated from a phone conversation). It likely just needs to be better "anchored" in the soil. Grab an outer leaf and give it a gentle (don't break the leaf off) tug. See if the plant moves or wobbles--it shouldn't (you said yours did). If it does, the root system is not well developed and anchored well in the soil. This will keep the plant from developing as quickly as it should. With the soil moist, work your fingers underneath the lowest leaves and firm the base of the plant into the soil by gently pressing the soil up against the trunk and slightly down into the pot. If there isn't enough soil to work with, you can add some. Then give the plant another gentle tug to test.

Though this may differ from the advice of others, it's our experience that plants grow and develop better when the soil is firm (not hard, but certainly not loose nor soft). Young plants just potted, or repotted, develop faster when they are firmly anchored in soil. An analogy...think of how you deal with the small start of a tomato plant in your garden. You don't just dig a hole and drop it in. You place it in the hole then firm and/or press the soil around the plant against it. The plant will grow faster, and more robustly, because of this. African violets are no different.

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