

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

July 2021 - No. 89

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Our calendar:

July 27, 2021 .

International orders must be placed by this date for shipment week of August 2.

All of our shows have been cancelled thru 2021. If all goes well, we will hope to see everyone at a show in 2022.

At this time all orders are guaranteed by any means.

Free stuff and how to get it!

2022 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.

Join AVSA.

See further below in this column.

Contact us:

(Some of) What's New:

Check the website for all of the newest varieties. We expect to introduce new varieties over the coming months.

My plant looks like this:



It has aphids. Though not common to African violets or most gesneriads (don't panic!), this photo, sent to us earlier this year, is a good illustration of this pest. There are *many* species of aphids that can vary in appearance, but the most common seem to be those shown at left--small but visible to the naked eye, soft-bodied, semi-translucent, and light green in color.

Aphids have piercing mouthparts and inflict damage by sucking plant juices and weakening the plant. They will often leave behind a sticky 'honeydew' and may transmit or spread other plant viruses. Quite common in outside gardens, they are not as common on plant collections grown indoors, and the good news is that African violets aren't their preferred diet. If found indoors, they've likely "hitched a ride" on another plant, person, or pet. In the past 40+ years, we've only encountered aphids twice--once on streptocarpus we purchased at a show. The other time the carrier was our pet dog--aphids covered some tall weeds near the gate of her outside pen, and she had been taking some home with her after every visit.

This leads to a few general rules. Once outside, plants stay outside. Bringing plants back indoors often means bringing along uninvited guests. If people or pets go outside (in the grass, garden, or woods), do an inspection before entering. If you can, change clothes and wash up. If you can plan your time, do your outside garden or yard work after you work on your indoor plants, not before.

What to do if you find them? If in small numbers on a small number of plants, washing in mild dish soap and room temperature water can be effective. You may have to repeat this over the course of a few weeks until they are all gone. Spraying with a soap and water solution, or neem oil, will help as well, if you can do so thoroughly and reach all parts of the plants (aphids are good at hiding under leaves or on stems). In our case, we took a loss and discarded the (heavily) infested plants we had purchased--better safe than sorry. In the second instance, aphids had already found their way into our growing area. Neither discarding nor washing that number of plants was a viable option. Instead, we released *Aphidius colemani*, a parasitic wasp, into our glasshouse collection. These beneficial insects lay their eggs in the aphids, causing them to die. The wasps effectively reduced the aphid population to near zero, at which point scouting, spraying, and washing eliminated the remainder. What about the

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

Open to public Sundays 12-5 pm
Please call ahead for appt.

Place an order for **pickup!**

For those living locally, we offer 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

wasps? Harmless to you or your plants, they will disappear once there are no longer aphids in which to lay eggs.

Inventory updates.

[Standard chimera](#) inventory has just been updated. We have a limited number of most varieties now available. [Episcias](#) have also been recently updated and availability is good at this time. For those looking for Sinningia, we are presently propagating them and they should reappear, after a long absence, by early fall.

This month's questions

Unfortunately, 2 of the 4 miniature violets I ordered were shallow rooted and did not survive transplanting. Could you replace them?

Sorry, but we can only promise safe arrival. It is our recommendation not to repot plants, especially into larger containers, until plants first outgrow their current pot (have a full root system). This is especially true when using self-watering pots. Soil in these pots is kept very wet and young plants are unable to process that much water before root system grows into the added soil. What may happen is what appears in your photo-plants will lose leaves as they turn soft and rot. When using self-watering pots, you must use a soil containing at least 50% perlite. Unfortunately most "african violet" soils sold at the local nursery or department store will not have nearly enough perlite. After repotting, don't immediately fill reservoir with water. Instead, water moderately from the top until you see the plant show obvious signs of growth, which will indicate likely root growth as well. At this point, the plant will be better able to process the water provided by the self-watering pot, and you can fill the reservoir. Hope this advice will help.

Some time ago, I ordered a few streptocarpus. All have bloomed, except for one. Well, except for another, which my cat ate, which doesn't count. They are all in the same windowsill and get watered about the same. Any ideas? Also, I am going to be away from home for two weeks. Could I keep them in bowls of water to keep them alive? I'd like to keep them in a room where the cat cannot get to them while I'm gone, and would run in if the cat sitter opened the door.

With sufficient light, all should bloom if otherwise healthy and growing. So long as the light isn't overly intense or hot, streps will tolerate quite a bit of light. I would move your stubborn bloomer to a position or place where it is getting more light, if possible.

Leaving your plants in bowl of water should be okay, so long as they are mature plants in the proper size pot and soil (see the discussion above). Streps like a very porous soil, and generally don't like soggy feet. Though we don't wick our streps, we do use a "wicking" soil containing lots of perlite when growing our larger plants (not the smaller pots we ship). On occasion, like when our grower goes on vacation, he will leave them sitting in a saucer of water and they will stay watered until he returns. That said, streps would prefer not to have wet feet too much of the time, so we top water for their regular care. You might also consider moving the plants away from the bright light and heat of a window, to keep them from drying out unexpectedly while you're gone. I wouldn't keep them in front of a running air conditioner or fan, for the same reason.

We don't have any advice on how to deal with your cat. Unfortunately, streps are only slightly less appealing to them than ferns. Keeping cat and plants segregated sounds like a good strategy.

