

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

December 2021 - No. 94

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Our calendar:

January 11, 2022

International orders must be placed by this date for shipment week of January 17. Due to likely delays caused by holidays, we are not accepting international orders during month of December.

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

Winter shipping.

Select **Express shipping** to guarantee safe delivery of your plant order.

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.

(Some of) What's New:

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

Not old, kinda new, one of our favorites:



Bristol's Mascara. A streptocarpus variety that we introduced in 2020, it's become one of our very favorites. The plant shown at left currently resides on a light stand in the cold entranceway to our shop, and has been in full bloom like this for well over a month with no signs of slowing down. This is a variety of a manageable size and growth habit that always seems to perform. We had to show it off!

What's News:

Winter shipping in effect. We ship every week of the year, including in winter. To guarantee safe arrival, select **Express** shipping--overnite to most areas.

Holiday shopping.

For arrival by Christmas, orders must be received no later than 4 pm ET, Friday December 17, for shipping week of Dec. 20. Timely, and safe arrival by week's end can only be guaranteed by Express shipping.

Gift certicates.

Can't place the order in time, don't know what plants to ship, or want to avoid the high cost of winter shipping? We can email a digital [gift certificate](#) to you, or the recipient, within 24 hours your placing the order.

The weird, unusual, or charming:

We grow lots of plants, many of them simply because we like them. Many for their beauty, some just because they are different.



Begonia amphioxus. This is one of our favorite little plants because it is so odd and exotic looking. It grows like a small, upright, shrub with stiff, tender, stems and very narrow, pointed, green leaves oddly and distinctly spotted in maroon. Flowers are greenish in color, though we don't allow ours to bloom--we prefer the foliage.

Join AVSA.

See further below in this column.

Contact us:

email. comments@violetbarn.com

mail. POB 9, Naples, NY 14512

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

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

This is one of those "collectible" plants that we don't recommend for the true novice or inexperienced grower. Though it doesn't require it, high humidity is preferred, making it ideal for a terrarium or enclosed container. The plant pictured is in a 2.25" pot. It can grow much larger, perhaps a foot or so in height (if staked), in a larger pot. We think it looks best when kept small, as the younger growth will have a fresher look and better coloring. Pruning will keep it in check and keep it full and attractive.

Though it does prefer higher humidity, an otherwise moderate environment is good. Avoid extreme heat and dryness, and grow under bright, but not intense light--we grow ours under artificial light with our other plants. Keep soil evenly moist, and avoid wilting or persistent dryness, which may cause browning or loss of leaves. Propagate by tip cuttings of new, tender, growth, and rooting under cover or in high humidity.

My plant looks like this:

It has powdery mildew. Plant shown at far left is a young streptocarpus, at it's right is a leaf of an African violet.

Powdery mildew is a VERY common problem, which most every grower will encounter at some time. It is an *environmental* issue, *not* necessarily a grower problem. Seeing this appear on your plants is *not* evidence of neglect or poor care. It is rarely fatal to plants, unless left undealt with and allowed to become extreme--at which point it would be neglect or poor care.

Unfortunately, these mildew spores are largely unavoidable. They are present around us, in the air we breath and live in, most of the time. Like any other mold or mildew, powery mildew appears when the conditions are conducive to it--damp, stagnant, air and the proper temperature. Temperature and air circulation (or lack of it) appears to be most important, almost always appearing when there are larger temperature drops from day to night, and reduced air circulation. For this reason, mildew is most common fall and spring, when nighttime temps drop and houses are closed. Those in northern (colder) climes are more familiar with this problem, but it can appear for anyone, anywhere if the conditions allow it.

How to treat it? Prevention is best. Try to avoid the conditions that allow powdery mildew to appear. You might want to move that plant off of the cold windowsill or off of the lowest shelf of the light stand. Provide good air circulation--this will also moderate temperatures within the room. Don't crowd your plants, giving them a little space and allowing air movement between them. For treatment of affected plants, this depends upon the size of your collection, your time, and patience. For affected flowers and buds, just remove them--they are too difficult to treat and will never look their best once covered in mildew. For foliage, you can "spot treat" using products like powdered sulphur (inexpensive, found at your pharmacy)--a few grains applied with a small brush, then brushed off. You can also wash a leaf, or plant, using mild dish soap and room temperature water. Make a lather in your hands, gently apply to leaves, then rinse. For a larger problem, or collection, or as a preventative spray, "neem" oil works wonders. Follow directions on bottle (mix oil with warm water and a bit of dish soap), and spray over plants. We do this once a week during "mildew season" on our plants.

This month's question

At what stage in a plantlet's development is it ready for the full strength fertilizer directed on the label? Someone recommended a 20-20-20 fertilizer for my violets. Even though the numbers are evenly distributed, as you recommend on your site, would the product be too strong for African violets?

Once a plant is rooted and growing on it's own, you can fertilize every time you water at the recommended dilution, even when very young. We water all of our plants out of the same watering can, young or old, with the same fertilizer. If you use a self-watering system (AV or wick pots), or otherwise keep your plants constantly wet, then use a lesser strength, perhaps 1/3 to 1/2 the recommended amount.

A 20-20-20 formula is fine. We're believers in providing a "balanced" diet, and this kind of formula does this. What you want to avoid are the extremes, like "bloom boosters" (like a 12-55-6 that we've seen) or those with little to no nitrogen--numbers needn't be identical. Any ordinary "houseplant" food typically is sufficient. Whether it's a 5-5-5 or 20-20-20, or something similar, won't matter. The recommended dilutions listed on the label should take this into account.

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