

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

January 2022 - No. 95

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Our calendar:

February 1, 2022

International orders must be placed by this date for shipment week of February 7.

CT Flower & Garden Show.

Sorry, but will not be selling at this year's show.

2022 Spring shows.

We presently have no shows scheduled this spring. We hope to be able to attend shows later in the year.

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:



Bristol's Geode. Our newest streptocarpus hybrid. Beautiful white blooms with deep purple netting on lower lobes. Well behaved, medium green foliage. A great bloomer and easy grower.

Check the website for a complete listing!

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.

Inventory updates. Standard chimeras and streptocarpus have been, or are being, updated as we work on them. Availability for both should be good very soon. We also now have limited wholesale availability on miniature terrarium plants.

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.



Diastema comiferum and **Diastema luteolum**. These are two plants that are among our favorites and we would recommend. Neither grows very large and both bloom easily. Though not plants for the true novice or the very neglectful, they are far from difficult to grow.

These tiny relatives of African violets (gesneriads) grow from scaly rhizomes beneath the soil surface, not much larger than a kernel of rice. Plants shown are of the size we ship, in 2.25" pots. Both can bloom at a young age and small size, and can be attractively grown to a size not much large than one's fist, making them truly miniature. Both will readily branch and produce additional growth from the soil (rhizomes).

Blooms are produced year round, though ours seem to bloom heaviest fall through spring. Though there's no need for them to go dormant, old growth and blooms can be unattractive if not removed as they appear. If plants become overgrown, aged, or otherwise unattractive, dividing and repotting readily perks them up.

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

Diastema will enjoy a little extra humidity to look their best, but don't require doming or a terrarium environment. Provide moderate temperatures, and bright, but not hot or intense, light. If conditions are very dry and hot, leaf edges can prematurely brown. We grow ours under lights with our other plants. Keep soil evenly moist. They will tolerate some wetness if soil is light and porous enough, and would prefer this to being too dry and allowed to wilt.

Propagation is very easy. Do this by division of multiple plants that will appear over time, rooting tip cuttings, or by harvesting and growing from abundant rhizomes.

My plant looks like this:

We get many questions about what a "sucker" is, how to identify it, and how and when to remove it. The African violet shown at left provides a good illustration, showing both a small sucker and emerging flower bud. The sucker appears as the horizontal, dark green, "figure 8" in the center of the photo, the bud as a the red ball just above it and a bit to its right.

The first thing to notice is the difference in appearance. The sucker will appear as a pair of tiny leaves much like what's seen above. Sometimes buds can have very tiny "leaves" attached as well--the one above does if you look VERY closely. When suckers and buds are very small (smaller than what's shown), they can be hard to tell apart. Though some buds can come with leaves, they'll always have a tiny, round, ball at the center of these leaves. Suckers will not.

Being able to identify each is important, since it is always best to remove suckers as soon as they appear and you can identify them. First, if left alone, that tiny sucker will quickly grow much larger, deforming the plant, and eventually becoming another crown or attached plant. If you've had to "divide" an African violet, this is because a sucker (or suckers) have been allowed to fully develop. Also, notice that both sucker and bud emerge from the leaf axils. Where one is, the other isn't. Every sucker means one less place for a bud to emerge. Removing suckers as they emerge today, will encourage it to bloom more later.

How to remove? With some practice, larger suckers can be removed with the tip of a sharp knife or razor. If taken out whole, you can root these--with some skill, you can root even the tiniest of them. Better to not let them get that large though. If very small, either cut them away, or use the tip of that same knife, or any tool with a pointed tip (like a sharp pencil) and prick them out. Failing that, you can simply scrape or "rub" them out with a sharp tool.

Have a grooming schedule for your violets. At least every few weeks, pick them up, remove any old, unsightly growth and blooms, then look between the leaves. If you see suckers, remove them while still young and easy to remove. Your violets will look better, bloom sooner and more, and save you work in the long run.

This month's question

What is a good temperature range for African violets? Could I keep them on a covered porch? I live in zone 9b.

Though 9b is (to us here in zone 6b, we're envious) much warmer, there can still be variability. For African violets, the minimum temperature should be at least 60 degrees. Ideally a range 65-75f degrees. If you are comfortable, so are your violets. Some Saintpaulia species will tolerate cooler temperatures, but these are exceptions. Most violets will survive at cooler temps, but they won't be at all happy and will show the effects (slow growth, tight centers, brittle foliage, susceptibility to mildew,

etc). In addition, exposure to the elements simply makes them more difficult to care for and less attractive. For this reason we consider them to be houseplants, even for those in otherwise suitable climates.

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