

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

April 2022 - No. 98

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Our calendar:

April 26, 2021 .

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

May 26-28, 2022.

AVSA Convention Show.

(Inter)national show held this year in Little Rock, Arkansas. Details to come. visit avsa.org

Safe delivery now 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.

(Some of) What's New:



Bristol's Potpourri Sport. A mutation of one of our favorite streptocarpus hybrids. Deep shell-pink blooms with bright lemon-yellow throat, but with darker rose and white fantasy speckling. A constant and heavy bloomer, compact grower, and fragrant! Available in limited quantities.

Check the website for all of the newest varieties.

What's news:

Spring shipping is here.

With the arrival of spring, and more predictable weather, we can now guarantee safe arrival by any means of shipment (priority or express).

We will attending AVSA Convention Show.

After an absence of two years due to Covid, AVSA has returned with an in-person convention. We will be attending the show in Little Rock. We will have a small sales table (we are flying and shipping plants ahead). Stop by and say hi!

Shop visitor hours.

We will be closed to visitors during April and May. We simply are too busy during this peak shipping time and cannot accommodate visitors to the shop. We will reopen to visitors in June, by appointment.

Inventory updates.

Mini wicking pots are back! For those who wish to wick-water, this was a very popular item in the past. They are now back in inventory, in four different colors. We plan on offering "standard" (for 4" pots) size wicking pots very soon--look for them.

Our shelves are full, and inventory of most plants is good. That said, demand in spring can be extreme--we're all tired of winter and have been waiting to add to our plant collections! We keep our inventory updated, but give the volume of spring shipping items can be listed, then disappear quickly. If you see it, we have it. If you don't, check again later--when we have more grown and ready to ship, it will reappear.

My plant looks like this:

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

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



It has mealy bugs. Like most pests, if you grow enough plants, for a long enough time, you will encounter them. Like most other problems, your plants won't suffer much when infestations are small. We've known of many

instances of prize winning showplants later being found to have mealies. If care is otherwise very good, plants can overcome, even continue to thrive, with small infestations. Discovering mealies, or any pest, isn't proof of poor care and, like many pests, can arrive in your collection from many possible sources. If not dealt with, however, they can cause significant damage to your collection.

If you see slow-moving, white, waxy, insects hiding within the leaf axils of your plant, you may have foliar mealybug. Sometimes they'll look like little bits of perlite--if it "squishes" it's mealy, if crunchy, it's perlite. At some point, you'll notice the eggs. If you bottom water (or wick), you'll notice them in the water or saucer. Infested plants might also "puff" (our term) eggs that you'll see on the leaves of the plant, or nearby plants (a bigger problem). The white substance around the base of your plant many very well be a mass of mealybug eggs. Soil mealybugs are harder to see, since they are smaller and do most of the damage within the soil, to the plant's roots. They will also leave egg masses around the soil surface around the plant base. You'll know for sure by taking the plant out of the pot and examining the root ball. You'll see white patches, like powdered sugar, on the root ball or inside the pot.

Prevention is always the best strategy. Most importantly, never take a plant indoors once outdoors. This is the easiest way of introducing problems into a collection. When acquiring new plants, especially from high exposure sources (like open greenhouses, or mass marketers/resellers), keep plants segregated until you are certain they are healthy and pest free. Make it difficult for small problems to spread. Don't reuse soil. Avoid plants sharing water or surfaces where pests can migrate. Repot when necessary and avoid stressing plants. Keep your plants and growing area clean and free of unhealthy or dead material.

Left alone, mealies will destroy roots and suck the life out of a plant. Your violet will lose its vigor, look dull, and turn limp as its roots become more damaged. In the extreme, like the photo at far right, roots may be so heavily damaged that they cannot support the plant above. Mealybugs can be difficult to get rid of without taking extreme, or costly, measures. Don't put much faith in remedies like individually killing mealies with alcohol swabs or spraying with alcohol solutions. You'll never be able to get every bug or egg, may damage your plant in the process, and never really solve the problem.

If it's not a valuable plant, and you don't want to risk the problem spreading to the rest of your collection, it may be best to simply discard the plant. Too often, growers will take half-measures in an effort to save one plant, meanwhile letting it spread to the remainder of their collection. After (sometimes years) of battling, the original plant, as well as many others, end up being discarded anyway.

Should you want to keep the plant and fight the problem, be prepared to spend some time, effort and perhaps, money. Unfortunately, many of the chemicals that are proven to be effective can be either too toxic to wisely use

in the home, too costly, or both. Chemicals such as *Cygon*, *diazanone*, or *Malathion*, once popular, and perhaps effective, are just too toxic to safely use in the home (though many of us did). Today, the insecticides of choice contain the active ingredient *imidocloprid* (look for this on the label), and come in both granular and liquid form. Though still toxic, and to be used with caution, it is much safer for home use than what's been used in the past (it's the same active ingredient in the liquid flea medication you may be applying to your pet). Unfortunately, these products can be quite expensive—\$100 or more per container, making it impractical for many small growers and hobbyists. Don't waste your time and money on less products like insecticidal soaps intended for in-home use. They are ineffective (regardless of what the label says) for problems such as mealybug.

The best approach may be to restart the plant. Remove all of the root ball and soil, leaving only the crown (top) or the plant--keep only the youngest, healthiest, growth, no more than maybe six leaves. Discarding the soil and root ball will also discard the mealies and eggs in the soil. Then wash the plant, using mild dish detergent and room temperature water. Wash and rinse well. If you've done a good job, you've removed the mealies and eggs from the plant. Fill a pot with well moistened soil. If you have the granular form of *imidocloprid*, you can sprinkle some on the surface of the soil and into the hole in which you will root the plant--take precautions (gloves and mask) when doing this. Press the base of the crown into the small hole and firm the soil around it so it is well anchored and doesn't wobble. Place the plant and pot into a clear container (or large baggie), seal, then wait 4-6 weeks until rooted. Then remove from bag. Until you're certain the plant shows no sign of mealies, keep it separated from your other plants. If a valuable variety, you might want to start some leaf cuttings as well, taking the same precautions.

This month's questions

I'm hoping that you can help me with a new-to-me issue. I have a number of mini violets from the Violet Barn, including a number of variegated varieties. As usual, there tended to be more white on the leaves once the temperatures cooled down. However, this winter I have already lost three different varieties after they produced all white new foliage and eventually died when they ceased having any green leaves left. I have two other plants doing the same thing now, with only a few lower leaves with any green at all left on them. What can I do?

Some of our varieties can be heavily variegated which, we think, makes them all the more beautiful and interesting. You are correct that variegation is very dependent upon temperature, with more variegation as temperatures cool, and less when warm. This is why most serious exhibitors will air condition their growing area or grow in naturally cool areas, like a basement--it brings out the best variegation in foliage and color in blooms. Some of the most heavily variegated varieties, especially those with "crown" variegation, can go to extremes, turning nearly all white at times. We find that most are actually very easy growers (often better), just a bit slower to mature.

Our best answer is simply to grow them a bit warmer (not as cool), and give them time. They will "green up". Because they will grow slower when so heavily variegated, you need to be more careful with watering and feeding. Very white leaves are more prone to damage from overwatering (or wilting). Aim for evenly moist



soil. Avoid constant sogginess--for this reason, we would not recommend constant watering (like AV pots or wicking) if you are losing plants. Don't overfeed, as the plant is growing slower and processes less water and fertilizer as others. If leaves are rotting or drooping, it likely is being kept too wet. If leaves are burned, it may be overfed.

If the plant has some green, leave this on the plant, even if it's on older (otherwise healthy) leaves that you might otherwise remove. This is an exception to the "grooming rules" for our staff here when grooming plants--always leave at least some green on the plant, even if it looks out of place. Provide all of the above, then be patient.

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