www.violetbarn.com

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

March 2023 - No. 109

For best results, view in HTML

'Like' us on Facebook!

Our calendar:

No events or shows scheduled at this time.

March 28, 2023
International orders must be received by this date for shipment week of April 3.

Winter shipping in effect.
Safe arrival guaranteed only by Express mail when signed for upon delivery thru March.

Free stuff and how to get it!

2023 AVSA Show awards.
Best Robinson collections
1st place: $200
2nd place: $100

Write a review.
Write a review on product pages before ordering. Get a free plant added to order.

Join AVSA.
See further below in this column.

Contact us:

(Some of) What's New:

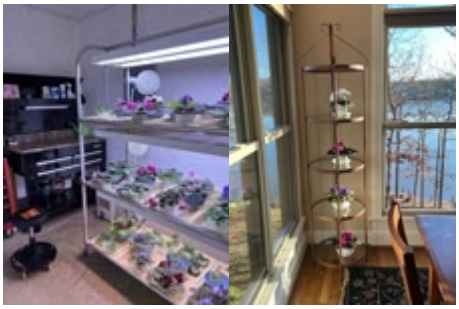
Check the website for all of the newest varieties.

What's news:

Website changes and packaging updates complete.

Updating of website is complete. Our informational pages (the care pages, lessons, FAQ, etc) had been unavailable since January. They can now be accessed via the shopping cart home page. If you've bookmarked the old pages, you will need to change these bookmarks.

We've also begun shipping most plants in the new packaging shown at left. Thus far, the reviews have been very positive. Plants are easier to unwrap (unbox), there is less breakage, and plants arrive cleaner than in the past, even with a rough ride in transit. A QR code appears on each box directing you to our plant care pages for growing tips and instructions. It's also easier on our staff!



My plants look like this:

The photos at left were sent by a reader with the suggestion we pass it along. We're printing his email just as it came to us, as we can't improve on the wording. Thanks for the great idea and newsletter material!

"I enjoy your regular newsletter and am attaching a potential item to encourage hobbyists, especially new ones, to grow more violets."

"Common complaint: 'I would love to grow more violets but just don't have a place with good light to do it'. My husband's solution: He encouraged me to grow violets in his basement tool room and display them on the main floor on a display rack on a rotating basis. I do not need to be concerned about "good light" on the rack or any location where the violet is displayed because each plant is only displayed for 6 or 7 days before it is returned to the light cart in the basement and a new one takes its place. Light carts come in all sizes and display racks do too, if your space is limited. You don't have that

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

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

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

ugly light cart out where everyone can see it, and yes, you can have year-round, robust, blooming violets in your living space without a greenhouse".

This month's questions:

I purchased several violets from you last fall. I just replanted a couple of them and see that there is a lot of a substance, thin shiny flakes, in the soil that you use. What is that? Is it vermiculite, mica, or something else? I'd like to know so that I can be looking for a potting soil that is similar.

What you're describing is likely the vermiculite in our mix. We use two different grades/sizes of vermiculite. The larger pieces can have the flaky, "metallic" look. Our mix also contains perlite. The base is Pro-Mix, which is a commercially available peat and perlite mix also containing a wetting agent and mycorrhizae--a beneficial fungus that promotes healthy root development.

We mix three diffent soils for our use here. Our "all-purpose" mix is about 40% peat moss, 50% vermiculite (two grades), and 10% perlite. We use this for most of our plants, and all that we ship. Our "wicking" soil has much more perlite, so that it will hold less water and can be used for wicking or self-watering pots. As we don't wick or use SW pots here, we don't use it widely. We do use it on some water-sensitive plants, or those we tend to keep very wet. Its composition is approximately 50% perlite, 20%vermiculte, and 30% peat moss.

We use a third mix for leaf propagation. This is about 75% vermiculite (2 grades), 5% perlite, and 20% peat moss. Of course there are almost as many soil recipes as there are growers. Everyone has their favorite and what works best for them, the plants they are growing, their environment, and how they grow them. These are what works for us.

One hobbyist I know ascribes to a system of changing bulbs on his grow cart every two years, even if bulbs are still functioning. His logic is that bulbs decrease in light output after that. In addition, he says that he can feel more confident that bulbs will not burn out while he is away on vacation if they are replaced regularly. Most of my other friends say that they do not replace their grow lights until the bulbs burn out. What is your opinion?

We replace ours only when they burn out. Mostly, this is because we have hundreds of light fixtures, and replacing them more often makes for more work. Both florescent and LED lights will produce less light over time. Florescent bulbs will get noticeably darker at their ends in time, and LEDs will gradually degrade over time.

Under normal use (10-12 hrs a day), most LEDs are claimed to last nearly ten years without significant degradation. Florescent bulbs are typically rated to last only about half as long. This is consistent with our experience, though we've yet to reach ten years using LED lights.

In any event, most florescent bulbs used nowadays are T8, and these are significantly brighter than the old T12 bulbs. LED fixtures are brighter as well. We often have to find creative ways to reduce the brightness of new lights--either we diffuse the light, or run lights fewer hours. If they dim very slightly, it works to our benefit. With either, we've never found the need to regularly change bulbs/fixtures--there is a small difference in brightness over time, but it never seems significant enough to force our hand.

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