

African Violet

The Amazing African Violet

The African violet was discovered by Baron Walter von Saint Paul in Africa about a century ago and since then has become one of the most popular flowering houseplants.

There are thousands of varieties, some with purple, flat flowers, slightly fuzzy, but the flowers can also be white, mauve, pink, or magenta, and single, double, or frilled; leaves may be variegated, serrated, velvety, or smooth. The African violet blooms all year long and is not very difficult to grow as long as the following conditions are provided.

Key Tips

Keep in mind when purchasing an African violet that you are taking a plant used to perfect conditions and are moving it to an entirely different situation. For this reason, a small plant would be more suitable than a large one because it will adapt more quickly to its environment. When choosing an African violet, make sure it has no blemishes on the leaves, or signs of insects or disease.

Watering

Watering an African violet can be an art; over watering and under watering can both damage the plant. The soil should be kept moist but not too wet, and the water used should always be warm to the touch.

The best time of day to water an African violet is in the morning because it probably needs a good drink to start the day. The thing

to remember is not to allow the moisture to settle on the leaves as water drops will result in spotting.

Soil Requirements

African violets like a porous, airy type of soil mixture, one that is soft to the touch, fluffy and lightweight. The mixture should appear dark in colour with plenty of visible organic matter and should be slightly acidic. A good soilless mix consists of three parts peat moss, two parts vermiculite, and one part perlite.

Temperature

The ideal temperature is between 19 and 24EC.

Repotting

A good indication that the African violet needs to be repotted is the roots growing to the sides of the pot; however, repotting shouldn't be done until it's necessary: the African violet blooms best when it's somewhat pot bound.

Lighting

The African violet needs a lot of light throughout the day but can't take hot, direct sun, which can scorch the leaves and blooms. It is extremely fond of artificial light for this reason. Fluorescent lights are good because the plant will flower profusely, and the lighting is soft and not harsh on the leaves.

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