

# African Violets



African violets are one of the most popular flowering house plants in the United States. They were first discovered by Baron Walter von Saint Paul in East Africa in the latter part of the 19th century. He sent samples back to Germany where the plant was cataloged and given the botanical name "Saintpaulia" in his honor. In the 1920's and 1930's the African violet increased in popularity due to its beauty and ease to grow. Since then hundreds of cultivars have been developed ranging in size from miniature (less than 6" in diameter) to large (over 16" in diameter) and in a multitude of flower colors and leaf shape.

For years, Rose Behnke grew and sold beautiful African violets and developed these simple guidelines listed below for her customers —

## Do

- Use porous, sterilized soil, high in organic matter.
- Provide adequate drainage.
- Water your violets when the soil just begins to dry.
- Provide enough light. Try different exposures if the plants do not bloom.
- Take measures to increase humidity.
- Wash leaves weekly with lukewarm water.
- Fertilize twice a month.
- Watch for signs of insects or disease.
- Remove damaged leaves, old flowers and stalks.
- Provide ventilation.
- Try new varieties.

## Don't

- Don't overwater, and do not allow the plants to stand in a saucer of water. Empty the saucer after watering.
- Don't use pots that are too big. Violets prefer comparatively smaller pots.
- Don't use cold water. Tepid water is better.
- Don't expose plants to very bright sunlight for extended periods.
- Don't subject violets to sudden or extreme temperature changes. Do not expose them to temperatures below 60°.
- Don't allow violets to be exposed to drafts.

— Rose Behnke

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