

September 2013

# *The African Violet Way*

An E-Newsletter by Ruth Coulson

I have created this E-Newsletter for my own enjoyment, and I hope for the eventual enjoyment of those who may read it. I have grown African violets over many years but always believe that there is more to learn, just as there are new cultivars to grow. You are invited to download this and to enjoy it in any way you wish.

I intend to include all sorts of news and views about African violets. Questions that have been asked via my website will be answered here. I will also give information about African violet organisations, particularly those in Australia. And, quite frankly, anything else that takes my fancy, or if you ask for it.

Should you want to comment, ask a question or contribute, please email me at [coulson.ruth@yahoo.com.au](mailto:coulson.ruth@yahoo.com.au).



## *Jcy Sunset*

*Semidouble fuchsia large star/white fluted edge. Dark green, plain/red back. Standard. (S. Sorano)*

African violets that have a single row of petals are called singles. As you can see some of the flowers in the photograph have a few extra petals in the centre, being the beginning of a second row, therefore they are semidouble. But a single row of petals is usually five, isn't it? So what is Icy Sunset doing with ten petals in a single row in most of the flowers on this plant?

The answer is that star-shaped flowers - that is the ones with even sized petals - often have many extras in each row. Sure looks spectacular!

## *African Violet Shows around Australia*

There are several shows coming up in the next little while. **All** are worth visiting.

**African Violet Association of Australia.** At the Burwood RSL Club, 96 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood (Sydney). Saturday 2nd (2-6 pm) and Sunday 3rd (10 am to 4 pm) November. (<http://www.africanviolet.org.au/>)

**Early Morn African Violet Group.** At the Mount Waverley Community Centre, Mount Waverley, Melbourne. Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> (1.00 to 5.00pm) and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> (10am to 4pm) November 2013

**African Violet Society of Queensland.** At the Auditorium, Brisbane Botanical Gardens, Mount Coot-tha Rd, Toowong (Brisbane). Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> (11am-5pm) and Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> (10am to 4.00pm) October 2013. (<http://www.africanvioletsocietyqld.happyo.com/>)

**African Violet Society of South Australia.** At the Burnside Community Centre, Tasmore (Adelaide). Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> (1.00pm to 5.00pm) and Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> (10am-4.00pm) October 2013. (<http://www.africanvioletsa.com/>)

*Note: Links must be copied into your web browser.*

### *Some Thoughts on Fertilising African violets*

1. It is more important that you do fertilise than exactly what you use.
2. Less is commonly better than more
3. Young plants not ready to flower need a good general fertiliser with a balance of Nitrogen: Phosphorus: Potassium (N:P:K)
4. If available use a fertiliser that is high in phosphorus, and medium high in potassium. Nitrogen needs to be available but is rather less important for fully grown plants than it is for young ones.
5. Fertiliser should be provided regularly so that growth is continuous and even.
6. When growth is slowed because of cold weather apply less fertiliser, or less frequently
7. When weather is very hot reduce the strength of fertiliser solution because the plant will take up much more liquid

### ***Gentility***

*Semidouble to double shaded mauve with white edges. Dark green variegated foliage. Standard. (Hybridised by Margaret Taylor)*



I was given a leaf of this plant last year and have enjoyed it immensely. Its foliage is very well behaved and the flowers are just so pretty. I think these lilac/mauve colours are undervalued. So many people prefer red, fantasy and other multicolour blooms as they

feel they are unusual. I love the lilac shades. I have a feeling that lilac was a top fashionable colour in decorating in the 1960s or 70s. I suppose liking it dates me rather. Never mind!

More of Margaret Taylor's hybrids may be seen (for reference) at <http://www.picturetrail.com/Margaret29>.

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### ***A question about rejuvenation of African violets***

*On my website I ask visitors to send me their questions on growing African violets. I answer these directly, of course, but I used to also publish those of the most general interest in the website. I now believe that this is a better alternative.*

*I wonder if you can help me with a problem I see now and then with my violets. I have a beautiful one that my cousin gave me that was a favourite of her mom's. This violet blooms for many months on end with one showy bloom after another.*

*My problem is that now the lower leaves are losing their vigour and turning dark and limp and have to be removed leaving the mother plant looking like a tall stalk from the lower leaves to the potting soil. Do I need to cut this violet at the soil level, perhaps scrape the 'stalk' and re-pot? I think I read that somewhere but I cannot retrieve the information.*

*I love this violet...it was my Aunt's favourite and I would love to be able to save it. It's very hardy, even when I've been a bit neglectful as sometimes does happen.*

**Answer on next page:**

### **Answer:**

As you suspect, you will need to repot your African violet lower in the pot. It is natural for these plants to lose their older leaves. Since the new growth comes from the centre you end up with a tall stalk - what we call a "neck". If left too long it does indeed look like a palm tree.

Just how radical you need to be depends upon the length of this neck. Remember you will not want to ever put your plant in a pot bigger than around 100 mm across the top, and less than that in height. Take the opportunity to remove any leaves that have passed their prime so that you won't have the same problem appearing too soon. See how long the neck is.

If, so as to have the lowest leaves at the same level as the top of the potting mix, you need to remove all, or almost all the roots, then that is the option for you. Cut the stem off leaving a reasonable amount, and simply plant it as a cutting in a clean small pot of fresh potting mix. You can scrape the stem just enough to remove the lumpy bits where the leaves have been removed. There is no need to scrape



*The photograph shows a plant that needs this sort of attention. Alongside it are the leaves that have been removed to ensure that only fresh young leaves are left after rejuvenation.*

it like a carrot!

If the neck is not so long, then after teasing the old potting mix out from the roots, you should cut off enough roots so that you can easily replant with the top of the leaves at the level of the fresh potting mix.

Take the opportunity to remove all the older leaves on the plant at the time you carry out this operation. That will slightly postpone the length of time before it needs doing again. Always wait until warm weather conditions, preferably spring and summer before doing major repotting.

*I hope you enjoy this e-newsletter you are welcome to distribute it to others if you wish. Articles reused must be acknowledged to source. There will be another in mid-November 2013. If you would like email notification of when that will be ready for download, please email me at [coulson.ruth@yahoo.com.au](mailto:coulson.ruth@yahoo.com.au). Otherwise just keep checking back to the website: [www.africanvioletsforeveryone.net](http://www.africanvioletsforeveryone.net). Remember, too, all this information and more is available in the book - available from the website.*