



GARDENING MARCH WOOTOWN GONE TO SEED

Saintpaulia Secrets

Posted by Lee Goggin on October 08, 2007 10:41AM

African Violets (*Saintpaulia* sp.) can be grown successfully in a number of locations, as long as the plant's requirements are understood. Proper environment greatly improves the chance of growing healthy, beautiful African Violets. The key word is "proper". The factors contributing to proper environment are: light, watering, soil, feeding, humidity, potting, temperature, ventilation, and cleansing.

Proper Light: Light is the most important environmental factors for growing healthy, blooming plants. Violets need enough of some type of light to stimulate growth and bud formation. Strong sunlight, unless filtered, is dangerous. An East or Northeast window is preferable, because it receives the morning sunlight of moderate intensity and little heat. If plants are grown in a South or West window, filter the sunlight during the summer months with a thin curtain, or move plants back a foot or two from the window. Because they lean toward the light, turn plants a partial turn as needed to keep them growing straight. A quarter turn every three days is recommended.

If your home receives little natural light, investigate artificial light. Fluorescent fixtures make it simple to control the amount and intensity. Because of the heat of incandescent light, African Violets are generally grown under fluorescent light. Cool white, cool white in combination with warm white, or special Grow-Lux lights can be used. Since the intensity of the light decreases with time, it is best to replace the tubes every 15-18 months. Since the light in the center of a fluorescent tube is stronger than at the ends, plants that require more light are put in the center of the lights; and plants that require less light are grown at the ends. Observe your Violets! If the leaves turn down, and stems are long, there is too much light. Curling of center leaves and bleaching (or yellowing) of the foliage are also signs of too much light. If Violets grow upright and stems are short, there is too little light. Generally, plants that grow in correct light, form a flat rosette with blooms held erect. Adjust the lights so that they are 8-12" above the tops of the plants.