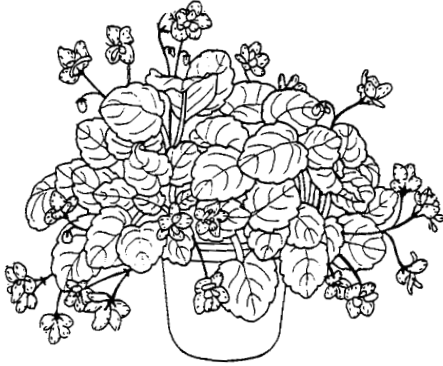


TRAILING VIOLETS



History

The Tinari greenhouses introduced the very first trailing African Hybrid in 1954 at the AVSA Convention. It was called "Wild Girl" and showed beautiful cascading tendencies. This was achieved by experimenting cross-pollination done with species *Saintpaulia grotei*. However, the same year the introduction of the very first double pink blooming violet took the show and enthusiasts for trailing violets only took place years later in 1966 when Lyons' Greenhouses introduced "Violet Trail". A few years later, "Pixie Blue" and "Pipsqueek" which were respectively semi and miniature trailer hybrids created with cross pollination done from the *Saintpaulia Magungensis minima* species were introduced. Nowadays, a collection of hybrid African Violets is not complete without one or two trailing hybrids.

Classification

Trailing hybrids of African Violets are classified under the (micro-miniature), miniature, semi-miniature and standard classification. However, this classification is not applied to the size of the plant but rather the size of its leaves. Trailing plants are not limited in growth by a specific size.

Trailing violets can also be distinguished under two distinctive trailing

habits. The cascading trailing habit where the plant tends to grow horizontal/downward shoots (branches), and the semi-trailing habit, where the hybrid will exhibit a bush (bonsai tree) like growth and where the shoots (branches) will grow semi vertically.

They may also be called Caulescent Violets, which means that they have more than one crown.

Cultural Care

Light

Trailing violets require good light from the start. They tend to grow stemmy and leggy with improper light, and therefore will exhibit foliage flaws such as: leaves too small or too big, leaf stem too long, etc. They might require to be kept closer to your fluorescent lights than all of your other African Violet Hybrids.

Fertilizing

Trailing violets may require a more frequent fertilizer intake than other African Violet Hybrids. Such is explained by the numerous amounts of leaves and blooms possibilities due to those multiple crowns.

Propagation

Propagation of your Trailing African Violet can be done the same way as for normal violets from either a leaf or cuttings. However, once the plantlet is well established and the one central crown is visible, you should pinch out that center crown to promote side shoots (branches) and therefore force a better trailing pattern. To pinch out a crown, all you need is a pair of small tweezers, you then carefully remove the center 2 to 3 leaves in formation, carefully leaving any bloom stalks. In many cases this may very well be the only time pinching is needed. However, some hybrids are more demanding than others and will need frequent pinching and shaping.

Repotting

Sadly, trailers grown for show have

shorter lifespan than most violets. Because the main stem is usually subdivided in at least 3 shoots (branches), as the plant acquires a neck it soon disqualifies as a "Show Trailer". When planted deeper in a pot you end up with 3 trailers instead of one with 3 distinctive shoots. Trailers grown for show therefore have to be propagated frequently. Sometimes however you can plant your trailer deeper in a pot with the 3 distinctive shoots creating 3 different plant, as these create their own rooting system you may then divide the plants and create 3 new plants (as long as these boasts at least 3 shoots each then these can still qualify as show plants).

The Trailer that is grown for pure pleasure and not for show can be grown quite differently. As you get ready to propagate your trailer you can take all the crowns and place them in a pan pot to root. The multiplicity of plantlets will then grow, requires very little pinching and you will have an ever blooming bushy Trailing Violet.

The size of the pot used for Trailing Violets is not prescribed. Most agree that the pot chosen should look in proportion with the plant. Therefore if a miniature trailer is big enough it may grow in a 6" pan pot. Pan pots are favored and usually we find miniatures and semi miniature trailers in something like a 3" or 4" pot, standard trailers in a 6" to an 8" pot. As you see the branches of the plant grow over the pot it may be time to move to a bigger pot. Trailing Violets that are going to be Show plants should be repotted 4 to 6 months prior to the show whether or not it needs a bigger pot. They should also be severely groomed and cutback to promote a fuller more uniform growth.

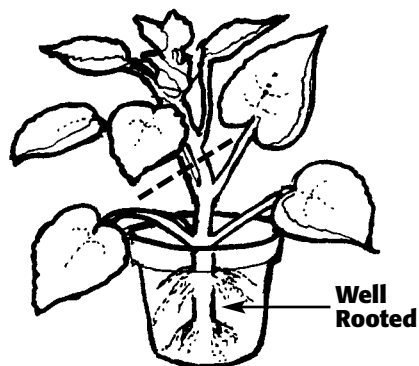
Grooming

Depending on the classification of a specific hybrid (i.e. Standard Trailer, Miniature Trailer, Semi miniature

continued

Trailer) the leaves of your Trailing Violet should reflect this classification and be comparable in size to leaves of their rosette style (single crown) hybrids. Therefore all oversize leaves, or immature leaves should be removed (except the center crown leaves that are still growing). As you would for all other violets all yellowing, damaged, spotted leaves should also be removed. Leaf removal in Trailing Violets promotes growth and you should not hesitate to groom your Trailing Violet as frequently as needed. The plants should overall stand out as a uniform rounded mass, rosette symmetry is not something to be concerned about in Trailing Violets. Remove vertical growth or any leaves competing for the same space and/or leaves that seem to damage the overall image of the plant.

First Pinching (dotted line)



Crown Pinching

Crown Pinching is a must for some hybrids that will require frequent pinching. For other hybrids that tend to branch out naturally, crown pinching may only be needed to attain perfect symmetry. Pinching the two or three central leaves of a crown will help promote side shoots. Leaf removal and/or stem scoring may also promote side shoots. Therefore when a plant looks lopsided don't hesitate to remove crowns, leaves or slightly score the stem of the plant where side shoots are desired.

Disbudding

There seems to be some discrepancies in the reviewed literature in regards to

the disbudding of Trailing Violets. Some argue that by disbudding you favor plant growth and therefore the plant will host more crowns. Others argue that you should not disbud since the multiple crown usually will produce an adequate amount of flowers and disbudding would only favor limpy, stemmy leaf growth. The best is to try both and decide what works best for you or for a particular hybrid.

Show Standards

According to the AVSA (African Violet Society of America) Scale of Points. Trailing African Violets should be judged as such:

Form (according to variety) . . . 25pts

Trailer hybrids will be judged on their form rather than symmetry. To be considered a trailer must have at least three crowns growing from the central stem.

Condition (cultural perfection) . . . 25pts

The size of the plant should be in proportion with the container it is planted in. Trailers are not restricted to specific sizes. There should be no evidence of spent blossoms, yellowing leaves, etc. Size of leaves should be consistent; all crowns should be of equal sizes.

Quantity of blooms 25pts

Number of bloom will depend on hybrid and will be judged accordingly. Blooms should however, be distributed evenly around the plant. Each crown should exhibit similar amounts of blooms.

Size and type of blossom 15pts

Judged according to hybrid specifications.

Color of blossom. 10pts.

Judged according to hybrid specifications.

Conclusion

Although they may require specific

care, Trailers are one of the easiest growing Hybrids of the African Violet family. Trailers are very floriferous and will bloom unconditionally given some care and attention. These are plants that will grow rapidly to large proportions and may require lots of space. Lots of wonderful new trailing hybrids come out each year, forever pushing the boundaries of this trailing habit. A collection of African Violet is not complete with a plant that will bounce back when dropped on the floor and may even welcome it.

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