



THE DIXIE NEWS

Publication of Dixie African Violet Society (www.DAVS.org)

Affiliate of African Violet Society of America, Inc. (www.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org)

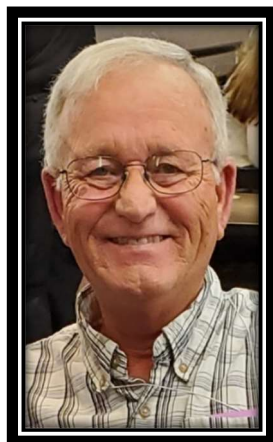
Mary Lou Harden, Editor (mlhard@verizon.net)

May 2025

Vol. 73, No. 2

President's Message

Robbie McMeel
rmmcmeel@bellsouth.net



Well, winter is finally over!!! This past winter has been one for the record books for us here in south Louisiana. We had the largest snowfall that I can remember. We had over 9 inches here at my house. Wow, it was nice to see, but it can stay away as far as I am concerned. It shut down this south Louisiana for a week; everything was closed.

I am so happy that spring is now here. I am enjoying working in the garden again planting the vegetables and cleaning out all of the flower beds around the house. I will have a lot of things to replace because of the 2 nights of very low temperatures we had. One night was 11 degrees and the next night it was 19 degrees. It basically froze all of the tropicals in the ground around the house.

Spring is also when all of the shows start for all of the clubs. I have seen plenty of advertisements for AV show and plant sales. Good luck to all clubs, hoping that your shows and plant sales are great. Please don't forget to send in your winners in the Dixie classes,

so that they can be published in the newsletter.

Now, on to business, as most of you know Dixie has a Facebook page. This was started by Sharon Gartner years ago. There was another individual involved as an administrator for the page, Joann Freeman. She is a member of the Jacksonville African Violet Society and is presently taking care of the page. She would welcome the help of someone familiar with Facebook and interested in becoming an administrator with her. If there is anyone interested in working with Joann on this, please contact me and I will give your name to her and you can make arrangements. We do have people who message us on Facebook with questions. It would be great if someone would be able to help out with this and to also post things happening in Dixie on the page.

Our show schedule has been re-approved by AVSA, so it will be posted on the website for all to see. We have been in discussion with Petals from the Past in Jemison, Alabama, on all of the particulars and what we will need for the show. They have been very accommodating and look forward to seeing us there. They will also advertise to all of their local customers and the public to come visit the show and see all of the plants and designs. We will have more on the show in the next newsletter. Also, Sandra Campbell, who lives in this area, has provided us with a

(continued, p.2, 2nd column)

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Episcia 'Silver Skies'

President's Message, continued from p.1

list of local hotels and eateries we can stay and eat at. I will have a list of these in the show schedule that will be going out. I have not been able to see if one of the hotels will give our club a discounted rate, as we don't know how many people will attend. **I would like for the directors in your particular area to poll your members to see who would be interested in attending the show and let me know, so that I can try to negotiate a deal with one of the hotels. Please call or email me with some numbers, so that I can let them know.**

Well, it appears that the idiot hackers have started. I have had a few members and officers call me about what I need to discuss with them. Don't get me wrong, I did enjoy the conversation, but I want you to know that I will contact you if needed. I was alerted to this by my wife, Becky. She received an email from me requesting that I call her to discuss some things about Dixie. Well, if I am too lazy to walk across the house to talk to her, shame on me. As I mentioned before, I **WILL NOT** email members or officers for any reason to pay a bill or send money on behalf of Dixie. As I am still old school, I will call you to discuss anything that may be needed.

I hope that all of the spring shows go well for all the clubs and sales are profitable. Please be safe in all your travels.

Respectfully Yours,

Robbie McMeel
DAVS
President

Episcia
'Fanny'
Hague'



**DON'T FORGET TO
RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**
(Membership Application on p. 17)

Please send check payable to DAVS to
Johnnie Berry, Membership Secretary
287 Fennel Way, SW, Atlanta, GA 30331
johnniepearl@comcast.net

“TREASURES IN GRANDMA’S ATTIC”



DIXIE SHOW FOR 2025

by Robbie McMeel
rmcmeel@bellsouth.net

SEPTEMBER 11-13

As you know, it was with the help of Michael Jackson in Birmingham that we were able to find another venue for our show. As a result, the 2025 show will be held at a venue in Jemison, AL, **“Petals From The Past”** which is located about one hour south of Birmingham.

Petals From the Past is a nursery that was listed as a place to visit when the DAVS convention was previously held in Birmingham, AL. We have secured the venue for our show, which will be September 11 – 13, 2025, at a price of \$500.00 for the 3 days of the show. So please mark these days on your calendar and make time in your schedule to attend and participate in the show. We need to have as many participants

as possible so we can to make it a viable show.

NOTE: A copy of the Show Schedule is a separate attachment to this newsletter.

JOIN THE



An AVSA membership offers the following benefits:

- Six full-color issues annually of the African Violet Magazine (AVM) filled with great growing information
- Regular columns include
 - In Search of New Violets
 - A featured Gesneriad
 - Registration of new cultivars
 - Coming Events

The AVM gives members continuous information on the latest developments in the African violet world. Commercial members advertise and sell the latest and most popular violets and products. Each issue contains commercial ads as well as an Index of Advertisers. Members have access to this information on AVSA's website www.africanvioletsocietyofamerica.org.

AVSA holds annual conventions in various regions of the country. All members may participate in these exciting events which feature judged shows open to all registered AVSA members. After judging, shows are open to the public. Informative presentations are made by experts in African violet culture. Commercial members also display their newest introductions and have booths where plants and plant-related products are sold.

Individual Membership in AVSA is \$35 per year. Register online or send check with contact information to:

AVSA
P.O. Box 22417
Beaumont, TX 77720

Last, but not least, SUPPORT AVSA. AVSA needs the support of its individual members, its affiliates and commercial members. **Donations can be made online or mailed to:** AVSA Office, P.O. Box 22417, Beaumont, TX 77720. Dixie encourages all Dixie affiliates and members to support AVSA. AVSA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations are tax-deductible. Donate online or by mail to: **AVSA Office, P.O. Box 22417, Beaumont TX 77720.**

2025 AVSA 79th CONVENTION

VIOLETS ARE
"Worlds of Fun"



KANSAS CITY • 2025

May 25 - June 1, 2025

Friday, May 30 – 9 am – 5 pm

Saturday, May 31 – 9 am – 3 pm

\$5 Entrance Fee

Doubletree by Hilton Kansas City

10100 College Boulevard

Overland Park (Kansas City), KS

BECOME A DIXIE MEMBER

DIXIE AVS DUES

Individual	\$15.00 Yr
Individual Life	\$175.00
Affiliate Club	\$20.00 Yr.
Commercial	\$25.00 Yr.
Dual (2 at one address)	\$20.00 Yr.

Mail application (p.17) or a copy with
check payable to Dixie AVS to:

Johnnie Berry, Membership Secretary

287 Fennel Way, SW

Atlanta, GA 30331

johnniepearl@comcast.net

Buckeye Violet Cryptogram. Dixie member Joshua McKinney has sent us a Buckeye Violet Cryptogram. **The Cryptogram is attached to this newsletter.** The Cryptogram Answer Key will be sent as an attachment to the August issue of The Dixie News. I hope you will enjoy the puzzle and we thank Joshua for challenging us!

WELCOME TO DIXIE!

by Johnnie Berry,
Treasurer and Membership Chair
johnniepearl@comcast.net

Renewals

Maurine Flynn

Central Florida AVS

Mary Kim Halbert

Tampa AVS

Sandra Campbell

Howard Kogan

Geneva Stagg

AVS of Greater Atlanta

Phillis Hinkle

James Matula

Bloomin Violets & Gesneriads of Palm Beach

Mary Corondan

George Ramirez

Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society



HUNTER'S CANDY STRIPER

ARKANSAS STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Betty Ferguson
bettywithviolets@gmail.com



Central Arkansas African Violet Society.

Ninety percent of Garland County residents and a host from surrounding counties appeared to have attended the Garland County Master Gardeners' Spring sale April 26 at the Hot Springs fairgrounds! Central Arkansas African Violet Society was invited to sell and was offered a generously sized free spot with a table and chairs. All sales proceeds went to the grower.

We went and we sold! Over \$700 worth of beauties. Well, mostly our VP Debbie Tait sold. Debbie took about 150 African violets, most in bloom, and other gesneriads and sold all but a few. Several others of us provided sale plants and related items, too. Debbie and her wonderfully helpful hubby and our president, Diane Riley, set up lighted shelves the day before. It was a totally fun day and provided bits of catch-up chat time we all crave but try to limit during business meetings. Our club has been invited to participate again next spring. You can bet we will.

FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



African Violet Council of Florida

by Jim Boyer, a/k/a King
James, AVCF President
iasb39@gmail.com

The African Violet Council of Florida held its spring meeting on April 19 by Zoom. Our speaker was Min Buih, who had just presented at AVSA's Virtual Circle. He enLIGHTened all of us about the effects of lighting on our plants!

We're planning an AVSA-judged show October 31-November 1 at Christ Lutheran Church, 2715 Lakeland Hills Blvd., Lakeland, FL. Our theme is "VIOLET TREASURES."

Blooming Violets of Marion County by Laura Perdomo (thepeacockcottage@gmail.com)

Blooming Violets of Marion County meets at 10:30 am on the first Saturday of the month except for September and sometimes January. We meet at the Marion County Sheriff's Southwest District Office, 9048 SW State Road 200, Ocala, FL.

Our membership continues to grow and everyone who attends our meetings enjoys our programs as well as our plant raffles. We have a very brief business meeting, refreshments, program and raffle every month.

Guests are always welcome at our meetings, so please come and visit! If you'd like more information, contact either me (email above) or Carolee Carter at caroleeviolets@gmail.com.

First Lakeland African Violet Society

by Mary Jane DiLorenzo, President
midilo92@gmail.com

First Lakeland African Violet Society has had a busy first quarter. We participated in the City of Lakeland's Plantae Palooza Sales and their Spring Obsession sale. Both were very successful. We are currently planning our sale next February.

Heart of Jacksonville AVS

HJAVS Has a Bloomin' Good Show by Robyn Bailey

The Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society meetings are held on the third Sunday of every month from September through June at the Jacksonville Garden Club, 1005 Riverside Ave, Jacksonville, FL 32204. Visitors and new members are always welcome. We begin with a Violets 101 in which experienced members help others learn to repot and groom their plants.

Our winter programs were kicked off by "Madame Violetta Fortuna" sharing her magic of understanding the Language Leaves and what leaves reveal about their plants' health and needs.



Other 2025 programs included creating dish gardens and terrariums and lighting options, design, and installation.

Of course, springtime is show time, and HJAVS's annual display and sale at the end of March did not disappoint. This year's theme: Timeless Elegance.



Timeless Elegance



Strep
PK
Listy



Just a week after our display, April opened with Blooms Galore and More at the Jacksonville Garden Club.

Our event season closed with the Mandarin Garden Club's plant sale at the end of April. (We needed a double booth this year!):

We will be having a repotting session/program at our May 18th meeting. This is a great time for members to bring in their leaves to put down, plants that are overdue for repotting and grooming or need extra attention or advice (if a plant is not healthy, please bag it securely). If members have extras, they are asked to please bring one to share with a friend! This time, we will have our raffle between the business meeting and hands on program. The plants we win MAY be ready for a repotting, so perfect timing!

We will close out our year on June 8 with our summer pot luck luncheon, always a treat!.

Please contact our president, Bobbi Johansen at bobbi@jacksonvilleviolets.org if you have any questions.

Tampa African Violet Society (TAVS)

Spring is a busy time for Tampa AVS. We had a very successful AVSA-judged show in late February. Earlier that month we participated, along with many other plant societies, in a plant sale in Northwest Tampa which brought us not only new customers but also some new members. And in April we joined many other plant groups for the Spring Plant Festival sponsored by the University of South Florida's Botanical Gardens.

We've had some excellent programs during the past quarter. Some of our favorites were "No Dawgs Allowed!" – Growing & Grooming for Show by Sandi Soto, "Growing Violets in Cooler Temps" by Jim Matula and a Zoom program by Heidi Dillenbeck, owner of Enchanted Gardens, Delanson, NY, who gave us a rundown of all the products she has in her shop.

Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society (TBGS)

by Carol Ann Burrell (caburrell2@gmail.com)

The Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society has had a very busy first quarter. We started off with

workshops on growing conditions. First up was soilless mixes. It was surprising how many different mixes there are and how growers learn what works for them. We also had members bring in their water to be tested for both total solids and pH. Several of us have city water, some on wells, and others have small community water. Reverse osmosis water was also tested. We were all reminded that when considering changes to select only one variable and to not try it on an entire collection.

We are very fortunate to have Dr. John Clark, who is a research botanist at Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, FL, as a member of our chapter. In February we had an all-day field trip to Selby Gardens. John gave us a tour of the research center in the morning. In the afternoon we were treated to a program by Dr. Charles Huston who was visiting from Minnesota on "Cultivating Gesneriaceae in a Greenhouse." He manages the University of Minnesota greenhouses.

We also tried two new events. The first was a one-day community plant sale instead of the multi-day botanical garden sale; the second one was accepting an offer from the Tampa African Violet Society to set up a display table at their show. We were quite pleased with the results of both of these activities. Carol Ann Burrell.

**GEORGIA STATE
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
by Phillis Hinkle
pchinkle@bellsouth.net



Greetings from the Peach State!

Spring has been wonderful here in Georgia!! Kathy Spissman is known as the "Strep Lady", and rightfully so. Her Streps were loving the cooler spring weather and "showing off" big time. She brought several to share at our monthly mini show. They were spectacular.



We are having our 2nd annual plant sale on May 3rd. Last year's was very successful and we are looking forward to another great sale. There will be violets, other gesneriads and supplies. We will also have a demonstration table for visitors needing help with their plants.

Our annual show will be September 6th. The theme is "Violets Take Center Stage." It will not be an AVSA-judged show this time. We will incorporate most of the details in an AVSA-judged show though, including ribbons and awards. We will also include another plant and supply sale. People love to shop after seeing the show.

Sending best wishes to our Dixie Friends for a great spring!

Phillis Hinkle

TENNESSEE STATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Marian Zoller

marigregz@gmail.com



Greetings from Tennessee!

We pray that everyone is doing well and have missed these terrible natural disasters, the floods, tornadoes and wind storms. Luckily, Memphis missed most of the worst of it although getting 12 inches of rain over a four- day period was a little worrisome. Now we are enjoying wonderful spring weather.

The Memphis African Violet Society has had some very good programs, all provided by our members. Geneva Stagg presented "Growing and Propagating Trailing Gesneriads." Larry Force showed us some of the beautiful Sinningias that he has hybridized, as well as some gesneriads that he picked up at the national convention last July. Also, Marian Zoller presented a program on "Primulinas."

In April we had a "Dawg Show" where everyone brought in problem plants and we discussed solutions.

We are now all anxious because the Central Christian Church where we have met for decades has been taken over by the Christ City Church. We may not be able to continue meeting there. As of now we are good through the end of the year with some new limits and restrictions and we will be able to have our spring sale there on May 10. After the end of the year, we do have a back-up plan and location. Pray for guidance as change is never easy.

Greg & Marian Zoller

DIXIE AVS AFFILIATES REPORT 2nd Quarter 2025

by Robbie McMeel

rmcmeel@bellsouth.net

Happy Spring to all members and clubs. As many clubs are now planning their spring shows, let's remember to put the Dixie classes in our show.

I hope to be getting many requests for the Dixie Class ribbons, which are available to all Dixie affiliates. Please let your show chairs that these are available for the nominal cost of \$10.00 for the set. This cost is to cover shipping of the ribbons to get them to you. **As a reminder, clubs no longer need to mail in their show schedule to me any longer.** Now that most clubs have capability of email, that would be fine. This eliminates additional cost and time. I hope that we will have a great showing of Dixie Registered Plants in the collections. If you don't have the Dixie Ribbons, please contact me, so that a set

can be sent to your show chairs. Dixie has rosettes for Best and 2nd Best Standard Collection and Best and 2nd Best Collection in the Semi/Miniature Collection. In the future, please try to grow Dixie Collections for both. There are a lot of great Dixie registered plants to choose from. To find out what they are, go to Dixie's website and there is a PDF file with all of the Dixie registered plants. If you are unable to get this list on the website, please let me know and I will more than happy to get you a list in the mail. If there is any plant that you would like to show in a Dixie class and it has not been registered with Dixie, please contact me and we will see what can be done with getting the plant registered.

If any affiliate has any questions regards anything or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Let's keep Dixie in all of our shows.

Respectfully and keep up the good growing,

Robbie McMeel
DAVS Affiliates Chair

ROSETTES AVAILABLE

BALTIMORE AFRICAN VIOLET CLUB BEST FANTASY ROSETTE. The Baltimore African Violet Club is offering a rosette for the Best Fantasy in any MAAVS or AVSA affiliate show. Send request and a check for \$5 payable to

Baltimore African Violet Club
Carolyn Epstein
14317 Yosemite Court
Rockville, MD 20853

OPTIMARA BEST OF SHOW ROSETTE FOR OPTIMARA & RHAPSODIE. To order this rosette and a sample kit of Optimara products, send your request to:

Optimara
Attn: Best of Show Rosette
P.O. Box 78565
Nashville, TN 37207
sales@optimara.com

Include your name, name of the AVSA-affiliated club holding the show, dates of the show, your complete address (NO P.O. Boxes), and daytime phone number.

WHAT'S ALL THE GURGLING ABOUT IN MY VIOLET ROOM?

by Lynda C. Welchel, San Antonio, TX*



While walking past my violet room the other day, the idea of just how and why our violets use water and strike a balance between wet and dry crossed my mind. After giving it some thought, I began to realize that there is a very intricate plumbing system working 365 days a year, tirelessly, and without so much as a peep or a cry for assistance, fewer hours, or higher wages!



Where there is no water, there are no plants! We all know that water is only one of the many substances which our plants depend on for life. Let's first stop and remember that just as it was the medium in which its life first began, so it is the essential element of water which caused the tiny seed to wake from its dormancy, poke out a tiny hair-like plant and eventually yawn and stretch and come alive into what we all know as a plant. A seed may be completely dry, its life put on hold with no chemical reactions occurring, no sign of

life at all. Add some water and in a short time you bring it to life! Water, after the seed, is the facet that sets the life cycle into motion.

As our violets grow, the need for more water and nutrients increases. Violets take to water through the roots. Water is used in all chemical reactions. It carries nutrients through its vast plumbing system to the stem and leaves and finally passes out of the leaves as vapor or liquid. The plumbing system of our violets is extremely efficient; however, it has its limits. Without water, none of the systems in our plants would function. Water, the lifeline to plants, is essential to our lives.

HOW DO PLANTS USE WATER?

Water is a very important element in our violet growing. How do plants use water? Our plants have a very intricate plumbing system in motion in our violet rooms which has its beginning in the fine root hairs. Through the process of osmosis, water is diffused into the cells and the manufacturing plumbing system dilutes the sugars, salts and other elements in the plant. As a few ounces of water passes up through the roots, more pressure is put into the plant and its walls, stem, blossoms and leaves become stretched. It is only at this point that we have a plant growing in all its glory.

At the other end of this intricate plumbing system is the area where the plant loses the moisture it has acquired through the roots through a process called transpiration. Transpiration is the process where, through tiny pores in the leaves, moisture is lost into the surrounding air.

How do the roots get this water in the first place? This is accomplished by a process known as osmosis, the absorption of a liquid through a cell's surface. Plants are covered with many tiny root hairs. These hairs penetrate the most minute crannies in the soil, and wherever they find moisture their cells take it in. When our violets have lots of water filling their cells, they look lovely. It's the exceptional grower that has not found a plant that has a dry wick, dry plant medium and for one reason or another is not getting adequate amounts of water. Our violets in this condition do indeed look quite sad.



Fertilizer & Mineral deposits on leaves

You could compare your plant to a balloon filled with air and one without air. When the plant loses more water through transpiration than it can absorb through its roots, the cell wall may partially deflate and your poor violet is in a state called wilt. If it does not get any water, we all know it dries up and dies.



This may be caused by an empty reservoir, or perhaps the wick has become clogged up with fertilizer salts, algae or deposits from water. The best remedy in this case is to gently wash the bottom portion of the wick that is extending out from the bottom of the pot. Holding the pot in one hand, run warm water over the portion of the wick extending out from the bottom of the pot. Using your fingers, gently squeeze down on the wick and take off any deposits that may have accumulated on the wick. Be careful not to pull the wick out of the pot. When you have completed this portion of care, pour some warm water through the pot and let it drain into the sink. Then set the plant in a small dish with about an inch or

so of warm water for 20-30 minutes. This process will usually rehydrate your plant medium. However, after this procedure, do not add fertilizer to this plant for a day or two. If you fertilize a plant that has wilted, it will surely burn! After 1-2 days, you may return to your regular fertilizing program. If this process fails to rehydrate the plant medium, I usually will take the plant out of its pot and remove as much of the dry plant medium as possible and start over again with fresh planting material.

What is all this activity going on in our plant rooms all the time? Our violet plants are actually a very busy and quite effective factory that rarely rests completely. Water movement is accomplished by osmosis, but is very slow. Individual cells in a plant will take up water, but there is a limit to the amount a single cell can take up. Just as violet people are friendly, so are the plant cells. If one cell loses some water, its cell-wall pressure will decrease. However, one cell can pass water from one to the other if there is an absorptive power between them. If one cell loses some water, its cell wall pressure will decrease. One cell can drink from its neighbor. This process can be visualized by picturing the cell nearest to the water will have the smallest absorption capacity, the one at the other end of the chain will be the thirstiest, with the largest absorption power.

WHAT CAUSES OUR PLANTS TO WILT?

When plants are not able to draw moisture from the soil, all the parts of the plant undergo a sort of reverse osmosis. A negative pressure reaction travels down through the plant, shrinking and breaking up its cell structure. The pores on the leaves contain a mechanism which controls the rate of water loss. The stoma (meaning little mouth) controls the rate of water loss from the plant. The stomas can be opened or closed by the action of two cells bordering each stoma. The opening mechanism functions according to the water supply in the leaf.

Now let's take a good look at the plumbing system as a whole. We have water coming into



Wilting leaves

the root hairs by means of osmosis and evaporating out the leaves by transpiration. Obviously, if the plant is to be kept from wilting, it must balance its water intake and output. It is quite important not to keep your planting medium too wet or too dry.

HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR PLANT'S PLUMBING SYSTEM

You can assist your plant's plumbing system by giving your plants a bath every couple of months using warm water (about 10-15 degrees warmer than the air). Be sure to keep the plant out of drafts, and out of direct sunlight while it is still wet. Direct sunlight on wet plants will cause burn spots. When bathing violets, try not to get water on the center area of the crown. I sometimes put a tissue on the crown of the plant if I inadvertently get it wet. I also try and wash plants early in the day so the plants will have plenty of time to dry before the evening hours. In addition, the use of a soft brush helps to keep the leaves clean and keep the tiny pores open in between baths.

Next time you walk by your violet room, if you listen very carefully you may hear a happy gurgle. Your violet's plumbing system is at work!

Reprint from an earlier edition of The Dixie News



NEXT VIRTUAL CIRCLE

August 23, 2025

3 to 4 pm Central

(Note: You must be an AVSA Member to participate.)

The Virtual Circle offers AVSA members a learning experience on many different topics. We have just had excellent presentations on pests and diseases that affect our plants and a detailed program on lighting and how different forms of lighting affect our plants.

DAVS AWARDS COMMITTEE

Marian & Greg Zoller
(marigregz@gmail.com)

We're now accepting donations for our 2025 show. Please send your donation to:

DAVS Awards
c/o Marian & Greg Zoller
4815 Oak Lane Cove
Arlington, TN 38002

the other Gesneriads: PRIMULINA

About Primulina, and writing for the Gesneriad Reference Web, Stephen Maciejewski reports that there are now more than 100 species within *Primulina*. And even though it is the largest of the ex-Chirita genera, *Primulina* is not the most widespread, being found only in the limestone areas of western and southern China and northern Vietnam. Guangxi province is particularly rich in species with about half of all

known species. All species are perennial herbs and many have rather leathery patterned leaves and/or attractive flowers making them ideal for cultivation. Over 30 species are currently known in cultivation, and many hybrids are available in cultivation and in commerce.

Pictured here are a few of the Primulinas I grow.



Primulina dryas 'Hisako'



Primulina 'linearicalyx'



Primulina 'JoAnne Martinez'

Primulinas like light soil mix, room-temperature water and keep soil evenly moist. Give them plenty of light, either from a light stand or in an East-facing window, and fertilize with each watering – 1/4 teaspoon per gallon. They will probably be root bound in about 9 months, so be sure to repot them on a regular basis. They will reward you with neatly tailored foliage and beautiful blooms.



Upcoming Events

May 30-31, 2025 - AVSA 79th Annual Convention & Show, "Violets are Worlds of Fun," Double Tree by Hilton, Kansas City-Overland Park.

June 29-July 5, 2025 - "Gesneriads Gather in the Garden State" The Gesneriad Society's 68th Annual Convention Sheraton Parsippany Hotel 199 Smith Road, Parsippany, NJ

September 11-13, 2025 – Dixie AVS Annual Show, "Treasures in Grandma's

Attic," Petals From the Past, 16034 County Road 29, Jemison, AL 35085.

October 31-November 1, 2025 – "Violet Treasures, African Violet Council of Florida, Christ Lutheran Church, 2715 Lakeland Hills Blvd., Lakeland, FL, 33805.

Information:

**Mary Jane DiLorenzo, 863-647-1517
africanvioletcouncilofflorida.club.**



WHERE IT ALL STARTED

by
Mary Lou Harden

Just in case you didn't know, I thought you might like to read a little of the history of Dixie African Violet Society. The following is part of Dixie's archived history.

Dixie was organized in 1956, primarily for growers who lived in the Southeastern states. For several years, a Southeastern regional organization for African violet growers had been talked about, but the opportune time to get started did not appear until October 1956. At that time, the Saintpaulia Study Club of Atlanta sponsored an African violet show at the Southeastern Fair and, as it was such a big undertaking, all of the AVSA affiliated clubs in the Southeastern states were asked to participate. Five of them had representatives at the luncheon following the judging and great interest was shown both for the show and for starting an organization for the Southeastern area.

The main aims of this organization were to acquaint growers with other growers, hybridizers and sources of supplies in the Southeast, to help with ideas for programs and projects, to promote the organization of more clubs, and to have an annual show and convention. Members could participate in all activities connected with an annual show and convention.

It was decided that officers would be elected at the first annual meeting, with each state being entitled to an officer. The organizing officers from Atlanta agreed to be the coordinators for the organization,

but they did not want to dominate it. Temporary officers who would conduct the organizing details until the first annual meeting were from Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and North Carolina.

Membership was to be open to individuals who had at least fifteen African violet plants, and dues were set at \$2.00 per year. Commercial growers would be in a separate class.

It was decided to have a bulletin or newsletter to be published quarterly or more often and each participating state was to be represented by articles written for each issue. The first issue of *The Dixie News* was March 1957.

The first annual convention of Dixie African Violet Society was held in Atlanta, GA, October 2-4, 1957.

Officers elected at that convention were: President, Mrs. Fred L. Williams, Jr., Atlanta, GA, First Vice President, Mrs. Frank (Chris) Huebscher, Panama City, FL, Second Vice President, Mrs. G. B. Oden, Hattiesburg, MS, and Third Vice President, Mrs. Frank Anderson, Greenville, SC. The name "Oden" is significant as it was Tommie Louise Oden of Hattiesburg who introduced the first variegated violet, the result of a single baby mutant from White Pride.

Since its beginning in 1956 in Atlanta, the organization has grown and there are now thirteen states included in Dixie but individual membership is open to all persons worldwide.



Episcia 'Cleopatra' (Canadian Clone)

Calcium, Lime, Gypsum, Dolomite-- All That Stuff

by Betty Ferguson

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For a long time I wondered, What's the difference in all those calcium products? Why do I even need to know? And for a long, long time I didn't want to know bad enough to bother researching the boring matter (matter pun just happened, not intended).

But learning that most of Arkansas' water (mine), has very little mineral content, the matter became important to me. Water is considered a natural solvent, and our rocks are not calcium and magnesium rich. Other Dixie states with soft water are Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia. States with hard water are Texas and Florida, whose water is considered to be "hard to very hard." Reverse osmosis, distilled and rain waters also lack minerals, which will need to be replaced.

Alkaline (hard) waters and soil result almost entirely from the dissolved salts of calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium from rocks. Ground and surface water that run through decomposed vegetation, such as a peat bog or pine needles or oak leaves, may be more acidic. African violets tend to prefer slightly acidic soil, 6.0 to 6.8, but our mixes, generally high in peat moss and/or bark, tend to be quite acidic and lacking in minerals unless they are adjusted to more effectively meet most plants' needs. Potting mixes are not required to provide that information or even the ingredients for customers. When I was a new grower, I was told to use the 1:1:1 mix of equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite. I wasn't told that growers using this mix should provide extra minerals through additives and/or their fertilizer unless their water provides them. Knowing our water hardness or softness can help us determine which, if any, additives to provide. Aquarium tests can provide that information.

Checking the bag of my favorite fertilizer, Better-Gro Orchid Plus, I found no calcium listed at all. Nor does my box of Miracle-Gro All Purpose Plant Food. The Better-Gro fertilizer does include magnesium. Excess levels of calcium can negatively affect a plant's uptake of other

nutrients. Fertilizer companies appear to choose to leave out calcium, as a result, and expect growers to add their own if calcium is needed.

So, given the choice of various calcium products, which should we choose, if any? Local water department or county extension agents can be helpful. Here is a list of our most common choices.

Calcium (Ca) is a pure chemical element. Calcium is the fifth most abundant element in Earth's crust. Calcium carbonate is the most common calcium compound. Limestone and dolomite make up 17% of earth's crust. In plants calcium supports cell creation and strengthens plant cell walls, enhancing structural integrity and resistance to pests and diseases. Its lack slows growth and impairs flowering and root growth.

Calcium carbonate (CaCO_3), limestone, is often called agricultural lime or just "lime" by farmers and the employees at my farm store. It consists of one atom of calcium, one of carbon and three of oxygen. Calcium carbonate is naturally present in eggshells, chalk, limestone, seashells, marble, pearls, and coral. Limestone is sedimentary rock composed mainly of calcium carbonate, usually in the crystal form of calcite or aragonite. Limestone deposits also contain essential micronutrients necessary for plant health. Calcium carbonate increases the pH of acidic soils. This increase in pH increases soil fertility and makes plants better assimilate nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, but it has a very low solubility in water. It can take two to three years for finely milled calcium carbonate to completely react with soil, depending on soil acidity at the time of application.

Calcium hydroxide (Ca(OH)_2) also goes by the following names: hydrated lime, caustic lime, builders' lime, slaked lime, cal, and pickling lime. Although we can purchase calcium hydroxide at farm stores, adding this form of calcium to the soil along with fertilizers containing ammonium phosphate will reduce the nitrogen content of the soil. Due to its caustic nature direct contact with calcium hydroxide is harmful to humans and might even cause loss of vision. As a result, the US has banned adding calcium hydroxide to the soil. It is not recommended for use with our plants. Until states banned its use in the 1950s

for line markers on football fields, this caustic calcium compound caused lime burns on players' bodies. You may have used this calcium hydroxide to make pickles or hominy.

Gypsum ($\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$) is calcium sulfate, a naturally occurring mineral. It is used in the manufacture of wallboard, cement and plaster of Paris. Alabaster is a form of gypsum. This product can be used as a source of calcium and sulfur. It is more soluble than calcium carbonate and can add calcium more rapidly to the soil or our potting mixes. Plant response to gypsum may occur within the first few months after application. But this source may result in decreasing potassium or magnesium levels. Gypsum will not increase the soil pH.



Dolomite Lime ($\text{CaCO}_3 \cdot \text{MgCO}_3$) contains both calcium carbonate and magnesium. It raises the pH in acidic soils and produces benefits in the plants within a few months.

Dolomite lime is a type of calcium from dolomite rock, which contains both calcium carbonate and magnesium (MgCO_3). Because it also contains magnesium, it is the preferred form of calcium in a soil and a soilless mix. Magnesium is essential for chlorophyll production, aiding in photosynthesis. Magnesium deficiency leads to stunted growth. **Dolomite lime is used to raise potting mix pH making it less acidic.** The danger of using ordinary lime (calcium carbonate) is that too much calcium in soil can prevent uptake of magnesium by plants. Using dolomite lime instead will add magnesium and calcium to soil in relatively equal amounts. Effects of

dolomite lime may be seen after a few months, according to Michigan State University.



Cal-Mag is a liquid supplement that provides calcium and magnesium for plants, along with iron. It is used to treat plants exhibiting yellowing of leaves, browning of leaf edges, curling leaves, and stunted growth. It enhances chlorophyll production, strengthens cell walls, boosts flower

production, and improves nutrient uptake. It helps plants better withstand stress from environmental factors, pests, and diseases. Prescription Cal-Mag is used to treat a number of medical problems.

Cal-Mag is a quick-acting concentrated liquid that also provides iron.

Hints:

- If you want to lower your potting mix pH, consider adding elemental sulfur.
- If you want to add magnesium without calcium, consider using Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate), but don't overdo it.
- If you want to add calcium to soil without adding magnesium or raising pH, consider using gypsum (calcium sulfate). You may need to add extra potassium and magnesium, however.
- To increase pH, liming products must contain carbonate (CO_3^-), which reacts with hydrogen ions to neutralize soil acidity.
- If you want to add calcium and magnesium, increase the pH, and get fairly rapid results, choose dolomite lime.

Before making any changes:

- First, identify your symptoms.
- Next, test your water's hardness or softness, inquire at your local water department, or if you have well water, have your county cooperative extension agent test it.

- Choose the right corrective product.
- Determine the correct amount of the product to use. Your cooperative extension agent might assist you.
- Consider adding the calcium product to your potting mix several months in advance to give it time to break down.
- Err on the side of caution.
- Choose a few guinea pig plants to test the change on.

And consider each plant species' or genera's needs. Epiphytes, such as *Aeschynanthus*, *Columnnea*, and *Nematanthus*, that grow in the humus of decaying leaves of trees tend to require more nitrogen, a lower pH and less calcium and magnesium.

Calcium--a boring matter maybe, but important.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Mary Lou Harden

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Hello, Dixie Members and Friends,

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this
issue. We love hearing from all of our affiliated
clubs as well as individual members. So please
continue to send me information about your club's
activities, special events, plant sales, shows and
special program ideas.

Please help us increase our membership by
talking about Dixie in your local meetings and
sharing information about our fall show. Encourage
your members to become members of Dixie and enter
their plants and designs in our show on September
11-12 at Petals From the Past, just south of
Birmingham! And remember -- It takes all of us
working together supporting and promoting Dixie so
that our membership will grow.

Be sure to send me your show information,
including winners, and include photos of your
best entries.

REMINDER: Sending you also our Show
Schedule and Buckeye Violets Cryptogram

Mary Lou Harden