

African Violet Growing Tips from TheFranklinhouse

Did you know that your African violet can bloom almost **all year**, or that **you** can choose when your violet blooms? Here's how:

1. **POT SIZE:** Unlike most plants, African violets must be potbound to bloom. Keep the pot size limited to 1/3 the diameter of your African violet. Only repot when your violet gets a "neck."
2. **FOOD:** Using an all-purpose or African violet fertilizer is a must. Use only ¼ amount of the recommended regular feeding every time you water.
3. **WATER:** Condition your water by filling a one-gallon jug with tap water (NO softened water), and let it sit uncovered for at least 24 hours. Then add fertilizer as necessary. Keep your violets evenly moist. Do not let violets completely dry out or wilt in between waterings. NEVER let your violet sit in water. Every fourth gallon or so, water with clear, conditioned water, no fertilizer. *This watering method applies to top-watering methods only — not wick-watering or mat methods.*
4. **LIGHT:** African violets MUST have sufficient light to bloom. Here's how to make *your* lighting situation work:
 - East Window: Ideal for African violets. You can place violets directly in an east window. The morning sun is not too harsh, and it won't burn the violets.
 - West Window: Good for blooming, but violets cannot have direct exposure to the afternoon sun. If using a west window exposure, set the plants back from the window, or use a sheer curtain to diffuse the light.
 - South Window: This is usually too much light for violets. If you only have a south window, make sure that the violets are not in the direct sunlight. The good news is that it is usually easier to diffuse a bright light than to make up for insufficient light.
 - North Window: This is usually not enough light to keep violets blooming. If using a northern exposure, put violets nearest to the light source and enhance with fluorescent lighting or a special grow bulb for approximately 10 hours a day. Keep grow bulbs at least 2 feet away from the violet.
 - Fluorescent Light: African violets bloom great under fluorescent light. If your violets are not blooming under the fluorescent light, and you are meeting the other requirements, then try getting your violet closer to the light. As a general rule, do not let violets get closer to 1 ft. from the light.
5. **"DIRT"** African violets actually prefer a loose and airy potting mix. Commercial mixes consisting primarily of black dirt are TOO HEAVY for violets to grow well. They prefer a mix closer to:
 - ¼ part African violet potting "soil" or mix,
 - ¼ part perlite,
 - ¼ part vermiculite,
 - ¼ part peat moss *

* Most "veteran" growers use variations of the above recipe, often decreasing or eliminating the African violet potting "soil" or mix altogether.

If you are meeting the above requirements, your African violet should give you many years of continuous blooming pleasure.

Timing your African violet bloom.

You can plan to have your African violet bloom at your chosen time, for that special holiday or occasion. Here's how:

You usually need enhanced lighting to control the bloom time of your African violet. Either strong fluorescent lights or plant grow lights work well. Depending upon your climate and season, a south window could work.

Controlled blooming is done by "disbudding." Disbud an African violet by removing all bloom stalks forming in the juncture of the leaf stems and the main plant stem. Remove the entire flower stalk to the main stem of the violet. Most violets take 6-10 weeks to bloom, depending upon the flower type. Test your plant by disbudding completely, and tracking your bloom time to full bloom. Consider seasonal weather. Cooler seasons can slow bloom time, while warmer seasons can increase bloom time.

Remember, African violets make beautiful centerpieces!

Did you know that your African violet can *live forever*?

With proper care, your African violet can live indefinitely. Follow these simple guidelines to keep your violet for generations:

1. Keep your African violet a "single crown." Most African violets should grow from one main stem, with the leaves growing outward and forming a wagon-wheel type appearance. To maintain this, an African violet should not be allowed to develop "suckers." A sucker is a new plant growing from in between the violet's main stem and the violet leaves. This sucker should be removed. (It can be used to start a new plant!)

If your violet is too large and bushy already, try to remove the suckers and larger growing plants from the main stem until you reach the new "crown" of the plant. The crown is the new growth coming out from the top center of the plant. Allow the crown to grow until it gets large enough to transplant.

2. Don't allow your African violet to get a "neck." As the violet grows from the center, and older leaves from the outside start to fall off, a neck forms from the plant growth at the stem. When a neck reaches ½" to 1" or more, transplant the plant. Transplant the plant by removing the violet from its pot and cut off part of the existing root ball (up to half is usually okay). In a clean pot, put in a small amount of your new soil mix, reposition the freshly cut plant in the middle of the pot, and fill your soil mix in around the root ball and around the neck up to the base of the leaves. Water lightly, but do not let a newly planted violet get too wet, as it does not have enough roots yet to absorb extra water.

If you follow these two simple guidelines, your violet will renew itself and reward you with fresh and lovely blooms.