

African violets are among the world's favorite flowering houseplants. Their botanical name, *Saintpaulia ionantha*, comes from Baron von Saint Paul, who found the plants growing in the forests of the Usambara mountains of Tanzania in 1892 and sent their seeds to a German naturalist. It has been cultivated as a houseplant ever since. It is a member of the Gesneriad family; other houseplants from that family include the *Episcia* (flame violet), *Streptocarpus* (cape primrose), and *Primulina dryas*.

African violets have been bred to show a wide range of leaf shapes and flower color, including dark violet, white, pink, lavender, fuchsia, red, coral, and bicolors. They are prolific bloomers and with proper care can live up to fifty years. They are even non-toxic to cats and dogs!

Light

African violets like medium-bright **indirect** light. Avoid direct sunlight as it can get too hot for them. A northern or shaded window can be good, or a location one to two feet away from an eastern window. African violets will also perform well under grow lights.

Temperature

They prefer temperatures in the range of 65° to 80°F, but they will tolerate lows down to 50°F. Try to avoid higher and lower temperatures and especially avoid rapid temperature changes.

Soil & Potting

Pot in African Violet Mix, not regular potting soil. Normally your plant will grow happily for several years before needing repotting. Self-watering pots or specialized African violet pots will make proper watering easier.

Water

African violets like consistent watering, but they can develop problems if the roots stay soggy. Water them from the bottom rather than using a watering can. **Keep water off the crown of the plant to avoid crown rot, and off the leaves to avoid spotting.**

Fertilizer

Fertilize spring through late summer with African violet food. Follow label instructions.

Reblooming

Remove spent flowers to encourage fresh buds and blooming. African violets can bloom nearly year-round if you meet the basic needs listed above.

Special needs

- **Keep water off the crown of the plant to avoid crown rot.**
- **Avoid overwatering, which can lead to root and crown rot.**