



# 'VIOLET TALK'

*January February 2016*

*1/2016*

*The AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY of WA (Inc.)*

Affiliated with the Gesneriad Council of Australia and New Zealand

Founded August 1965

PO Box 197, Como 6952.



Visit our website at [www.waavsinc.com](http://www.waavsinc.com) or Google *African Violet Society WA*

*Celebrating 50 years*



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All photographs by Eric Bateman including Leucotricha Sinningia, in the article other Hybridising Sinningias.

The other photographs in the article were provided by Andy Kuang.

## 2015/2016 President's January February Report

Welcome back everyone. We are looking forward over the next few months particularly to our Annual Show on the Mother's Day weekend 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> May at the Kardinya Park Shopping Centre. This year has started with an informal Pop-Up Shop at the Gardener's Circle Meeting at the South Perth Civic Centre last Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 which provided the Society's growers with an opportunity to show their wares.



From left : So and So (Gardeners Circle; Jacqui (AVSWA); and Pat (AVSWA)



A coming event: Plant and Garden Clubs Fair

Perth's continuing heatwave, including a record equalling three days of consecutive 40<sup>o</sup>C plus for February, has been a challenge. The May Show's theme is 'Colour Parade' and is on track thanks to an influx of support from the Eastern States through seeds and leaf. Certainly the Quarantine restrictions are an obstacle and no live plants are allowed, no matter what precautions are taken. Hybridising will become a focus later this year with the continued encouragement to our members to enter the monthly Table Competition. Education is another focus with a Question and Answers at each Monthly Meeting scheduled; panelled by our experienced growers Reiko Lee, Aileen LaRosa, Jacqui Bateman and Pat Humphries. Our other members expected to do well are Ann Cowie moving into the Open Category, with Gwen Currie and Peter Fry who have graduated to Intermediate. We also are pleased to announce a membership drive through our website called E-Members. The statistics from our website, show approximately 750 visitors per week, and would hope that a proportion will start an E-Membership with us, wherever they are. Our very first member signed up this week. Peggy Stacy who is a grower but does not have the time to attend meetings is we hope the forerunner of many more who visit our website to take up the E Membership option. We are receiving generous support from our sponsors and thank them for their continued backing.



**KARDINYA PARK  
SHOPPING CENTRE**  
South St, Kardinya



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### AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF WA INC. SPONSORS

Our relationship with our friends from the five Australian Societies and Associations is very important to us and greetings to all of you. It is wonderful to keep in touch through email and the occasional visit to Annual Shows and it is much appreciated when receiving your respective Newsletters. Have a great 2016 and an efficacious growing and showing year for African violets and Gesneriads.

*Eric Bateman*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Subject to change

- **Password** has changed to the **Members Only** section of our web site a little late and apologies for any inconvenience. Aileen can be contacted on 9417 4117 if you are having difficulties otherwise email our Secretary [wa.inc.avs@gmail.com](mailto:wa.inc.avs@gmail.com)
- **Garden Clubs & Societies Fair – 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>** South Perth Civic Centre. Need volunteers to attend and bring plants. Please contact Jacqui on 0407 702 879.
- **Monthly Meeting – Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>** at the Manning Activity Centre 3 Downey Drive Manning 12.30 pm to 4 pm. See website for details.

## African Violets Trailers

Trailing African violets aren't any trickier to grow than their single-crowned counterparts, but grooming them can be a challenge. Whether you've got a plant that's refusing to branch out or one that's grown into a dense tangle, I've got some tips on getting your trailer to shape up. I love the way the foliage on a trailing African violet fills and spills over the edges of its pot. For an introduction to this wonderful African violet form, see "**Trailing African Violets: Flowing Foliage and Bountiful Blooms.**" Although many trailing varieties will do their thing with little or no help from you, an occasional grooming session can be useful in shaping up your plant for maximum impact. As a bonus, grooming your plant generally provides leaves and cuttings for propagation.

Not all plants of trailing varieties sucker readily at first. You want to encourage your plant to produce suckers, because the suckers turn into desirable additional crowns and runners. The more crowns your plant develops, the more



blooms it'll be able to produce. If your trailer remains stubbornly single-crowned as it grows, you'll have to screw up your courage and remove the crown of the plant.



To remove a crown, use a very sharp knife, and slice into the stem at an angle on either side to separate the crown from the base of the plant. Removing a row of two of outer leaves from the crown (leaving at least the center two pairs of leaves) creates a stub of stem for sticking into barely moist potting mix. Firm up the potting mix around the stem and place in a high-humidity environment, just as for rooting a leaf. After a few weeks, the crown should develop new roots and start growing.

Another way to encourage a trailing habit is to give new suckers more light for rapid growth. Removing larger, older leaves can let a lot of light down into the plant. You may be able to remove larger crowns as well, allowing several new suckers and crowns to form in the resulting gaps. Your goal doesn't have to be perfect symmetry, but try for some balance in the overall shape of the plant.

### Pruning and training (*Saintpaulia pendula*)







The Violet Barn's "Rob" Robinson says, "Ugly now means beautiful later!" For the most beautifully shaped plants, Rob suggests leaving only the crowns at the tips of the stems and pruning all other foliage. Repot the plant, and arrange the runners evenly along the surface of the potting mix, pinning them in place if necessary. You'll end up with fuller foliage than before, as well as a bounty of blooms. Flower stalks originate near an African



violet's crown, so the more crowns on your trailer the greater its bloom potential.

Trailing African violets often go through an awkward adolescence. Grooming and pruning a trailer can result in a half-naked, scraggly plant that makes you wonder just what you've done to it. One of my favorite plants needed to have its crown pinched out before it began suckering. Then, the plant spent a year looking like a tall totem-pole of suckers. Finally, the plant started putting on some lateral growth, eventually filling out and spilling over the sides of its pot.

## Making your African Violets Flower

THERE are a number of reasons for African violets refusing to flower. Although the most frequently quoted reason is "lack of light", that is by no means the only possible reason. Consider the following, all of which are equally important.

### *The Reasons*

1. It is unreasonable to expect a plant that is not healthy to flower abundantly, so consider the health of the plant. If it is wilting, or has yellowed or lack-lustre leaves, don't expect much from it in the way of flowers.
2. If there are any infestations or diseases in the African violet, the result may well be reduced flowering.
3. If the plant is not growing strongly it will not flower. Flowers are produced from the leaf axils (the bit where the leaves meet the main stem). If no new leaves are coming, there is nowhere from which flowers can come.
4. If a rosette variety of African violet should be allowed to produce lots of side-shoots (suckers), it will often stop flowering. All African violets except the trailing types should have one central growing point with all the leaves and flowers radiating out like the spokes of a wheel. If the growing point is damaged or removed, the plant will stop flowering until it has grown another crown.
5. If you have not repotted your plant in the last twelve months, it may continue to flower to some extent, but is unlikely to do as well as plants that receive regular attention.
6. If you have not applied any fertiliser to your plant it cannot continue to be healthy and flowering.
7. If you have consistently used only a fertiliser with high nitrogen content your plant will produce strong leaf growth at the expense of heavy flowering.
8. If the plant has suffered from being too dry too often the tiny root hairs that draw moisture and fertiliser from the potting mix will die and the plant will not flower.
9. If the growing conditions are not satisfactory, the plant will not flower well. That means appropriate light, temperature and humidity.

SOUNDS complicated? Not really. A person who hasn't satisfactory food, clothing and shelter won't thrive either. Pot growing produces unnatural conditions for plants, and, where in the ground they may fend for themselves to some extent, in a pot you need to give them a helping hand. So here is what to do.

WILTING, yellow "off-colour" African violet plants can be caused by poor watering practices, insect infestation, and too little fertiliser, potting mix that holds too much water or is otherwise unsatisfactory. Plants that seem otherwise healthy but have a plethora of leaves growing in an untidy pattern choking the production of flowers just need a little grooming.

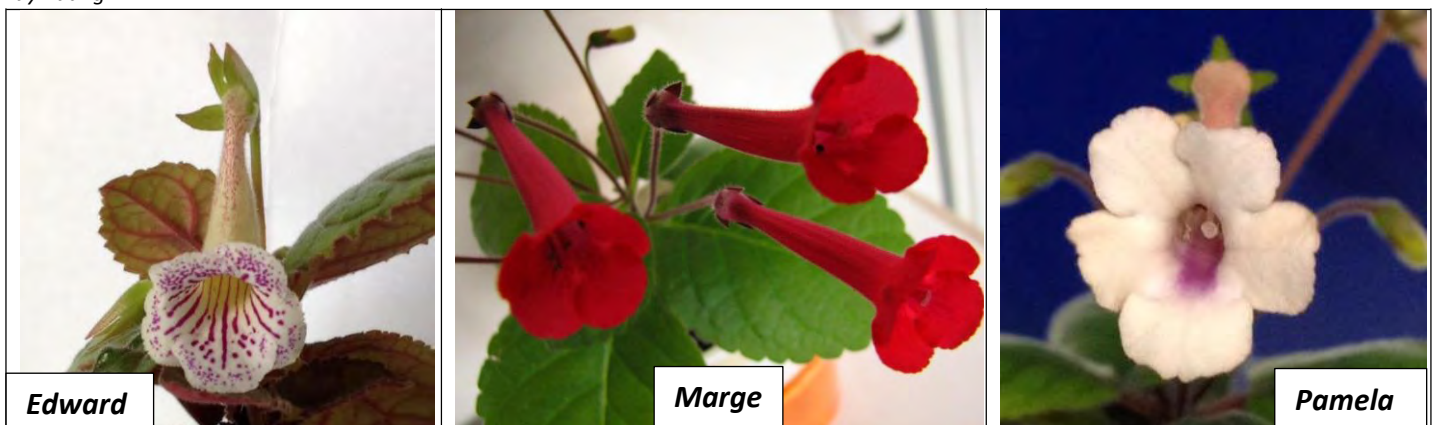
## What to Do

1. **Repot** your plant. This will stimulate growth. **Do** it in the warmer months of the year, preferably spring. **When** repotting, remove all crowns except the centre one, and outside leaves that are old, tired or unlikely to produce flowers. Remember that flowers will come from the axils of newly grown leaves. Break the old potting mix away from the roots. **Trim** the roots so that the African violet can be replanted in a squat pot no wider than 100 mm across. Any bare stem where leaves have been removed should be scraped gently to expose green tissue. **Repot** in a clean pot with the bottom leaves level with the new potting mix. Best results will be achieved if African violets are repotted each year.
2. **Keep** your African violets evenly damp and fertilised to get satisfactory growth. **The** easy way to do this is by wick-watering. **For** a plant that has been repotted, use plain water for the first few weeks. After that, appropriate liquid fertiliser should be used, diluted in the water each time the plant is watered, or in the wick-watering reservoir. **Fertilisers** high in phosphorus promote flowering and should be preferred. There are many suitable African violet fertilisers on the market.
3. **Examine** your African violets regularly for any signs of pests or disease. **Common** problems are thrips (in the flowers), mites (too small to be seen by the naked eye, they destroy the centre of the plant), and soil mealy bugs (slow moving creatures, which infest the root system, where they suck the sap of the plant). **If** thrips are present in the flowers, remove all flowers and buds and keep them removed for a month or two to break the thrips cycle. **Plants** suffering from mites or mealy bugs are better destroyed. A leaf may be taken for propagation. Disinfect and wash well before planting.
4. **African** violets are grown as indoor plants because they thrive in conditions similar to those enjoyed by most people. **Temperatures** of 18-25 degrees Celsius are ideal, but a much wider range than that can be endured. **Humidity** of at least 55% is satisfactory, but for reasonably short periods the plants can survive much lower. **For** adequate light, use the brightest position you can find in your home, just short of direct afternoon direct sun. **Within** 450 mm of a window is satisfactory. A lace curtain, venetian blinds or similar can be used to break up direct sun, so that the plants are not scorched.

*This article appeared in the November 2006 edition of the Central Coast African Violet Club's Newsletter, now disbanded.*

## Hybridizing with mini Sinningias

Andy Kuang



Sinningia is a genus of flowering plant in the family Gesneriaceae, the African violet family. It is probably the most popular and easiest of all gesneriads to grow after the African violet. There are about 74 species of tuberous perennials and small shrubs native to the rainforests of South America.

Since the first mini Sinningia hybrid Dollbaby was created in 1963 crossed between pusilla and eumorpha. It opened a whole new world to the mini Sinningia growers and hybridisers.

Sinningias size varies from 2-3 cm micro mini to 8 cm medium size and the large size. There are different range colour flowers with different markings. Mini Sinningia hybrids can flower all year round if they grow in the right conditions. Hybridising mini Sinningias is fun, you can create different sizes and different colour mini Sinningias, and some hybrids even have scent.

Firstly you need to setup a plan to decide what results you are going to achieve. For example, I want to create a nice compact plant with bright red flowers, or I want my hybrids to have a perfume smell.

Secondly, after you set up your goal, you need to select the parent plants to achieve what you want. Select the plants with the strong desire characteristics. If you want red colour flower seedlings, you need to select both parents with red flowers, purple and blue are the most dominant flower colour. Normally select the seed pod parent with nice rosette symmetry leaf pattern and pollen parent with strong flower characteristics.

Then you need to grow your selected plants to the flower stage.

When the seed pod plant flower fully open, use one hand hold the calyx gently and lift the tube of the flower slowly upward by another hand, pulling at the same time to remove the flower tube. Now you can see the stigma and anthers. Use the scissors to cut off the anthers to avoid self-pollinating. After about 4 days, check with your flowers; when you see the stigma is open up and shining, at this stage the stigma is ready to accept the pollens. Use the paint brush or any other handy tool to apply the pollen from your selected plant to the stigma. I usually apply this two to three times to make sure that some pollen sticks on the stigma. You now need to mark the flower with a colour string so that you don't accidentally remove it. Write down the records of both parents' details and the date of the cross.



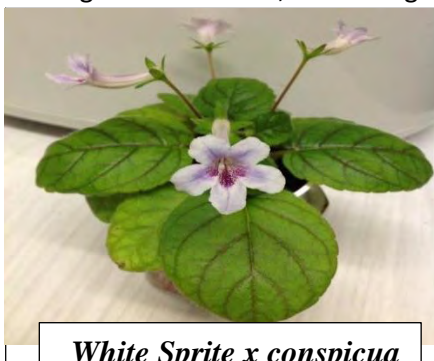
Sinningia 'Leucotricha'

Quite often it is hard to get two of your Sinningia parents to flower at the same time. You can collect the pollen and store them for future use. I find the pollen is still viable in one year if you store them covered in dark paper and in cool conditions. It depends on the weather, in the hot summer season; seed pod will turn brown and split in about 30 days. In the cooler weather, seed pod may need little bit longer to mature. After you harvest your seed pods, let them dry out about 2 weeks, then you can collect the seeds. You can sow the fresh seeds or store them for future use. Here are some of my own experiences hybridising with mini Sinningia.

I use some of the species as pollen parent to cross to the mini Sinningia. I have done these hybrids: Orion cross araneosa,

create Sinningia Marge with beautiful red flower. PK's Nicole cross guttata, create Sinningia Edward with very nice flowers with lots dots and lines on the throat. I also use the micro mini Sinningia species pusilla White Sprite as seed pod parent cross with other mini Sinningia and species and create some remarkable results. I cross pusilla White Sprite with a seedling of (Texas Zebra x leucotricha) and create a beautiful small size Sinningia Pamela with delicate peach pink flowers. I cross pusilla White Sprite with lemon scent cream yellow flower species conspicua. I got a few seedlings from this cross; they are all looking similar. The size between the micro mini and the large one, all with pale mauve flowers with some purple markings on the throat. I can smell the lemon scent from one of the seedlings.

I have tried to create some petal double mini Sinningias, but the results are not good as I expected. I used double Sinningia Orion as seed pod parent cross with some other mini Sinningias and I only get about 10% of double Sinningias. The best result is Orion cross with Mark Twain and I have one seedling with big purple fully double flowers, another cross between Orion and a red seedling and I got a red double seedling. Hybridising with mini Sinningias is lots of fun, I encourage all of you have a go and create some beautiful hybrids of mini Sinningias.



White Sprite x conspicua



Orion x Mark Twain



Orion x Red Seedling



## 2016 Competition Table Results

These will be published for February in the March, April edition as our meeting for February will take place after publishing this edition. Below is a list of the classes that are applicable to the Open, Intermediate and Novice categories:

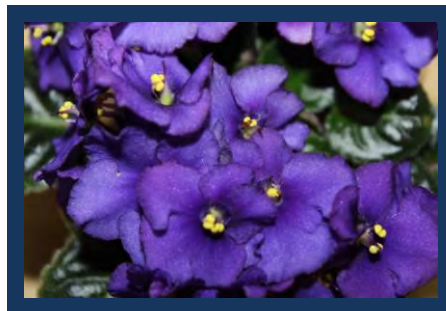
*February 2016 Judged by J. Woodley*

### Open Class

2	AV-Multi Colour	1 <sup>st</sup>	Kiwi Dazzler	R Lee
3	AV-Variegated	1 <sup>st</sup>	Oracle	A LaRosa
		2 <sup>nd</sup>	Heinz's Perfection	A LaRosa
4	AV-Miniature	1 <sup>st</sup>	RD's True Blue	R Lee
5	AV- Semi-Mini	1 <sup>st</sup>	Minuet	J Bateman
		2 <sup>nd</sup>	Plumberry Glow	A LaRosa
6	AV-Trailing	1 <sup>st</sup>	Jay's Ice Castle	A LaRosa
9	Gesneriad-Fibrous root	1 <sup>st</sup>	Petrocosmea Stone Amethyst	J Bateman
		2 <sup>nd</sup>	Streps #RL4	J Meadowcroft
		2 <sup>nd</sup>	Primulina HISAKO	R Lee
11	Gesneriad-Tuberous	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Sinningia <i>conspicua</i>	P Fry



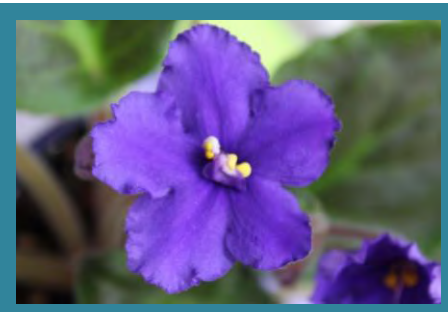
Kiwi Dazzler



RD's True Blue



Plumberry Glow



Mary Craig



Taffeta Petticoats



Optimara Monet

### Intermediate Class

18	AV-Multi Colour	1 <sup>st</sup>	Taffeta Petticoat	G Currie
		2 <sup>nd</sup>	Opt. Monet	G Currie
19	AV-Mini, Semi-Mini	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Minuet	E Bateman

### Novice Class

21	AV-Single Colour	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Mary Craig	J Meadowcroft
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### Progressive Points Tally 2016

#### Open

A. LaRosa	10
R Lee	8
J Bateman	6

#### Intermediate

G. Currie	5
P. Fry	2
E Bateman	2

#### Novice

J Meadowcroft	6
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#### Note

Awards are given only where an exhibitor has accumulated five or more points. Our Monthly Table Competition is so very important; Reiko is again to be assisted by Ann Cowie organising the layout, judging, and compilation and









reporting of the results. Please enter as a Novice in 2016 if you did not in 2015. Our judges particularly Norma Dougall and June Woodley are also an important part.

**2015/2016 African Violet Society of WA Committee**

Executive			
<i>President</i>	Eric Bateman	<i>Vice President</i>	Peter Fry
<i>Secretary</i>	Jacqui Bateman	<i>Treasurer</i>	Diana Osler
Positions of Importance			
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Aileen LaRosa	<i>Competition Table</i>	Reiko Lee
<i>Trade Table</i>	Ernie Laidlaw	<i>Mentor</i>	Pat Humphreys
<i>Librarian</i>	Alison Fox	<i>Caddy</i>	Don Bulloch
<i>Raffles and Attendance</i>	Margaret Green, Barbara Johnson	<i>Gesneriad Council</i>	Sarah Pratt
<i>Website Administrator and Violet Talk Editor</i>	Eric Bateman	<i>Photographer</i>	Eric Bateman

**THE AUSTRALASIAN AFRICAN VIOLET COMMUNITY**

Did you know?

**Petrocosmea** is a genus of the family Gesneriaceae, the African violet family. Most of the **species** within this genus are endemic to high-altitude areas in Western China, although some are native to other parts of Asia. It is a rosette forming genus that generally grows on wet mossy rocks or forests.

What was that you said?

What a desolate place would be a world without a flower!  
It would be a face without a smile, a feast without a welcome.  
Are not flowers the stars of the earth, and are not our stars  
the flowers of the heaven. - A.J. Balfour



Grown by J. Bateman

**Success Assured!**

Enrico, a keen gardener in his mature years, was concerned about an operation that his doctor had advised.

"Are you sure that I will be able to keep on gardening after the operation?"

"**Absolutely,**" the doctor replied.

Will I be able to dig in the garden?"

"**Perfectly,**" said the doctor.

"Will I be able to get down on my knees to thin out seedlings?"

"**Of course,**" replied the doctor. "**No worries.**"

"And when it's all over and I'm out of hospital, will I be able to grow African violets?"

"**Certainly,**" was the confident reply!

"That's marvellous!" exclaimed the gardener. "I've never had any luck with them before."

Well 2016 is the leap year and today is the 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016. Leapin' Lizards, one might say, and the photo is Yesterday we enjoyed sharing the WA Horticultural Council's Garden Clubs and Societies Fair at South Perth Civic Centre. Lots of people from around Perth's suburbs came to see what gardeners were able to produce for them in the way of beauty and of course a bargain.



The recent hot spell did have an effect with many plants not reaching their peak when showing blooms. The quality of plants was outstanding and Helen Martin-Beck (WA Horticultural Council) said that it was a terrific two days and awesome with the number of visitors on both days. Episcias and trailers also proved popular, with some of our plants only showing leaves supplemented with a description and photo of the blooms that could be expected.

Our stand was modest but full of quality plants for choice by the public. Aileen LaRosa, Jacqui Bateman and Reiko Lee were the main providers with support from Pat Humphries, Diana Osler, Peggy Stacy and Joan Meadowcroft chipping in with more plants. Alison Fox, Audrey Wiltshire, Pauline Ellerker and Joan Edwards also assisted with the plant and trade sales. A big thank to everyone who volunteered their time for the Society.

The event is also conducted again September and is once again anticipated to be another success due mainly to the most experienced and successful growers we have in Reiko and Aileen.

This was a dry run for our main event in May and with the weather anticipated to be much milder, the experience included refining our accounting processes and handouts to the public. One of the highlights was the comradery with other clubs and Societies with friendships continued and new ones made. We will be venturing out to other clubs to make presentations on African violets which makes for a busy diary.



Main Hall in front of Canteen



Jacqui and Alison demonstrate potting on



Looking back from our position



*Music Box Dancer*



*Crazy Lace*



*Jolly Orchid*



*For Sale!*