



African Violet Care

African violets have five basic needs: steady warmth, careful watering, good light, high air humidity, and regular fertilizer. This sounds more difficult than it is. Once potted and sited properly, the keys are watering and fertilizing.

LIGHT: Bright light but avoid direct sun. A north or east facing window is typically ideal, or about 3 feet from a southeast or west window. Leaves that are thin and deep green and which appear to be reaching upward indicate too little light. If you want to keep violets in a window where there is direct sun, use sheer curtains or blinds to lessen the impact of the sunlight. To keep plants from leaning in one direction, rotate the pot $\frac{1}{4}$ turn weekly so that different sides of the plant face the window.

TEMPERATURE: Ideal temperatures are between 65° and 75°F during the day (minimum of 60°F in winter) and 65° to 70°F at night. Avoid cold drafts and keep in mind that African violets dislike sudden changes in temperature. Remove violets from the windowsill at night during winter or place cardboard/similar between them and the window to prevent night chilling. Chilled violets turn dark within 24 hours, become water-soaked, then wither. Growth and flowering slows when temperatures exceed 80°F. Air-conditioned rooms will keep them happy in summer.

WATERING: The key things are to **keep the crown dry, keep cold water off of the leaves, and to use room temperature water.** Water when the top inch of soil feels dry to the touch. Many prefer to water African violets from the bottom by either planting them into a special pot made for African violets, essentially a pot within a pot that allows the grower to water into the bottom pot from which the plant draws water through a permeable inner pot. Or, the potted plant can be set into a deep saucer, water poured into the saucer which is then drawn up through the hole in the bottom of the pot. After an hour or so, drain the excess water from the saucer. If you bottom water, flush the plant with water from the top about once a month to prevent excess salt accumulation.

If you water from the top, push the watering can spout under the foliage and try to avoid pouring water into the crown of the plant. Water until water starts to drop out of the pot's drainage hole.

FERTILIZING: During the growing season (spring, summer, fall), apply a complete, water-soluble fertilizer formulated African violets or for blooming houseplants (but not a "bloom booster") as directed on the label. Do not fertilize in winter (unless you are growing the plants under lights). Lighter-than-normal green leaves can indicate a need for fertilizer.

SOIL: African violets should be planted in soil formulated specifically for them or a mix that is equal parts peat and perlite.

HUMIDITY: African violets prefer humidity to be between 40% and 50% and like additional humidity when grown indoors, particularly in winter. You can run a humidifier near a plant, or use a humidity tray (aka pebble tray). This is a tray with a layer of pebbles, gravel, glass rocks, or similar spread across it. Set the potted plant on top of the pebbles and add water to the tray. The water level should be below the pot so that the plant is not sitting in water. As the water evaporates from the tray, it will provide humidity to the plant. It is better **not** to mist the plants when providing extra humidity.

TIPS: Except for trailing types, do not allow extra crowns to develop. African violets should be grown single-crowned. Repot violets every year in spring in fresh soil. Most standard African violets will require a 4-5" pot at maturity. For miniature types, use a 2.5" pot.

Helpful Resource:
African Violet Society
of America.
www.avsa.org

