

Growing African Violets

by A. R. Buckley
When Baron Walter von Saint Paul found a little blue-flowered, hairy-leaved plant in a grotto in the Usambara region of South Africa, little did he realize that it was to become the most popular house plant in the world. Saintpaulia ionantha (Usambara violet) was named in his honor. It was later called African violet in America and this name has been the popular one ever since.

Today there are so many African violet cultivators that the list compiled by the American African Violet Society contains thousands of names and yet is by no means complete. There are kinds with miniature, medium and large flowers, all of which may be single, semidouble or double and occur in tones of blue, pink, lavender, wine, purple and white.

Some have two shades of the same color or two colors in one flower, or flowers of one color splashed or flecked with another color. There are also novelties with star-shaped flowers. The petals may be fringed, wavy or ruffled. Leaves are smooth, corrugated, fringed or waved on the edges, round or pointed, flat or cupped, solid green or variegated with creamy white.

The rise in popularity of the African violet is due not only to the development of new varieties, but to the

adaptability of this beautiful house plant to the high temperatures and generally dry conditions of our homes.

Since the plant responds particularly well to special care, home gardeners find it a challenge to grow bigger and better plants than their neighbors. By careful cultivation it is possible to keep the plants flowering most of the year.

Four important things are needed for the successful growth of African violets. These are: proper light conditions, the right kind of soil, humidity and watering.

The best location in the home is one where sunlight is enough to produce ample blooms without causing yellowing or burning of the foliage. Full sunlight will produce more blooms, but the foliage tends to yellow and the plants take on an undesirable appearance. In winter, lack of sunlight will produce nice green foliage, but very few, if any, flowers.

The best location seems to be a large window facing west, where the sun shines in late afternoon and the plants are shielded from its direct rays by awning or curtains.

An easterly window will produce fine plants provided they are shaded when the sun is at its highest point.

A south window in winter is excellent, but in summer the excess sunlight

will produce yellowing of the plants unless they are shaded.

A north window is adequate during the summer months provided the room is bright and the days grow longer, but as the days grow shorter the plants should be moved to a window with a southern or western exposure.

African violets grow very well under fluorescent lights. Today, under such fixtures collectors and hobbyists are able to produce plants of exhibition quality.

The soil for these plants should be open - that is, containing peat moss or well decayed leaves. Unless you have the right kind of soil, it is better to buy specially prepared African violet soil sold by seedsmen and department stores. At the Plant Research Institute a mixture of equal parts pasteurized soil, peat moss and sharp sand is used. For my own personal plants I like to add some live sphagnum moss to this mixture.

Although the African violet will withstand dry home conditions, it often suffers from bud drop and brittle leaves. Better flowering plants will result if adequate humidity is provided. Place pots on a shallow layer of sand or gravel in a tray and keep this constantly moist. Occasionally spraying the foliage with an atomizer

filled with lukewarm water helps maintain humidity.

Watering is very important in the growth of African violets. Over-watering will eventually encourage crown rot, and too little water will cause the plants to wilt so badly that they may never recover. Generally, the plants need watering more in winter than in summer in our heated homes, especially if they are placed near radiators. Our plants are usually watered twice a week during very cold weather and once a week during the rest of the winter, but of course not unless the plant needs it.

The best way to tell if a house plant is dry is to feel the soil in the top of the pot. If unsure of water requirement, re-examine the following day and water them if necessary. This is preferable to over-watering. Too much water will retard blooming, but lush leaves will probably result.

African violets may be watered from the bottom to avoid getting cold water on the leaves. An occasional heavy watering from the top will leach excess mineral salts that may have

accumulated in the soil. The water at room temperature when watering from the top. Cold water may cause a sudden drop in leaf temperature, which will result in unsightly yellow rings on the leaves. The same effect often occurs when bright sunshine falls on a leaf for a period and then the sun is suddenly cut off.

Barbecued Pork Chops:—Select 4 or 5 loin, rib, shoulder butt pork chops that are about 1-inch thick. Brown them nicely in a heavy skillet; season with salt and pepper. Add 2

tablespoons finely chopped onion and ½ cup each of barbecue sauce and undrained crushed pineapple. Cover and simmer for 45 to 55 minutes or until very tender, turning occasionally.

Barbecued Pork Chops

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Farm Records And Analysis

CANFARM
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ESTATE PLANNING
After working a lifetime to assemble a farm unit, most are concerned with an orderly transfer to the next generation if the family wishes to farm. Adequate insurance, legal advice, accountant services and farm management information must be combined to insure the continuation of an ample income for each generation. Gifting of money or shares, depending on the operating agreement, can be used to decrease the estate.

CASH FLOW
Will there be enough cash flowing into your business each month to more than cover the outflow? When should loans be made and repaid?

FINANCIAL POSITION
Net worth of the farm operator and equity within the business are used to determine the financial position. Increase in net worth is essential for business strength.

capacity are essential when approaching a lending institution.

OPERATING AND TRANSFER AGREEMENTS
Many family farms are carried on from father to son. As farms become larger and more involved there is often a need for some type of working and transfer agreement between father and the younger members of the family.

As we move from sole ownership, a simple income sharing agreement will aid as a first step in bringing younger members of the family into the business. Slightly more involved, but more business-like, are legal partnerships which are frequently the next step. Still larger and more involved farm businesses may find incorporation their most suitable business arrangement.

FARM BUSINESS ORIENTED PUBLICATIONS
Prepared by the Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food and available at the Cayuga Office.

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING
Where can credit be found? What will it cost? Projections for income, expense and repayment

GROUP APPROACH SHORT COURSES

ONTARIO FARM RECORD BOOK
This blue book has been by many farm families for up to 20 years. The book, in its present form, is suitable for tax purposes. Farm operators from all counties take advantage of the opportunity to have their business analyzed by a computer at the University of Guelph. Information gathered over the years provides a strong base for future planning.

Most counties conduct winter short courses on various aspects of farm business management. Today we see theories put into practice on practical farms.

FARM MANAGEMENT GROUPS
Farm people have always enjoyed sharing information over the fence. Groups of farm operators keeping Canfarm or other types of records, meet together to discuss the keeping of records and, if they wish, the analysis of their business based on the records.

INDIVIDUAL SERVICES
All of the above programs and services are available to any individual farmer through the Cayuga Agricultural Office. At all times business information is kept strictly confidential.

BUDGETING
A partial budget considering change in costs and receipts can determine profit potential of a change in your business.



Tobacco irrigation on a district farm. (Staff Photo)



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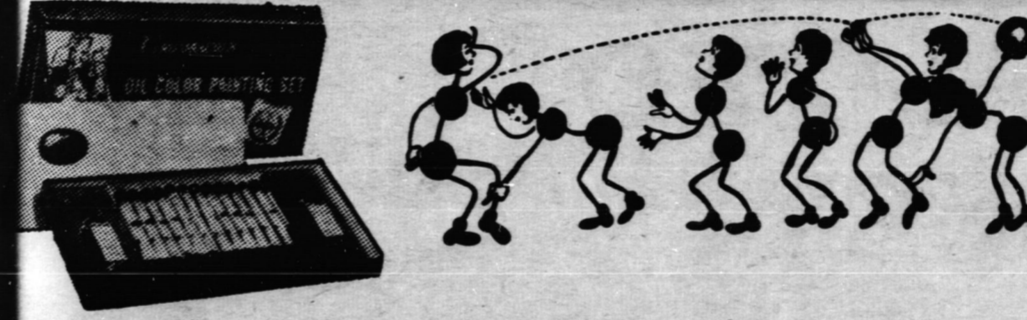
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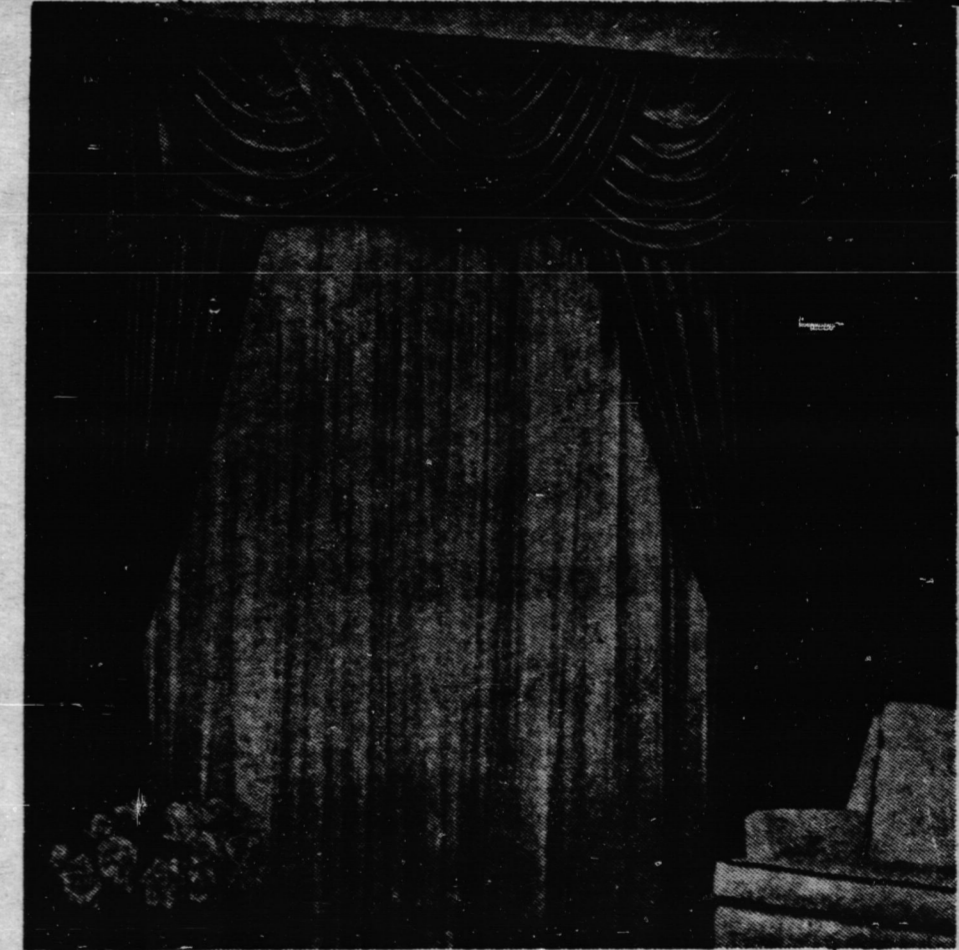
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