

AFRICAN VIO-LET-TER

Central California African Violet Society

Affiliated with the African Violet Society of America

Vol. 32, no. 5

May 2010

MEETING: Monday, May 17; 6:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Senior Center, Manchester Center

REFRESHMENTS: Lisa & Parish, Teri and Michelle

PROGRAM: Project Plants—please bring your plants of “Ma’s Spanish Eyes”, and Lola will conduct a practice judging of them. Don’t worry if your plant doesn’t look like a show-stopper, as Lola says hers just meets the definition of “alive”. Remember to bring the score sheets that were passed out last month.

Also, Katharyn and Alisa will present a proposal for a website for the club, and would like your input on this.

RAFFLE: Lola will bring plants for the raffle. A few of them will be leftover sale plants; the rest are starter plants from her collection.

SAY HELLO TO THIS NEW MEMBER: Parish P. Welcome!!

Lola and Renee attended the Central Coast club meeting on May 8th. Lola did a mini judging seminar for them, and both gals donated items for their raffle.

Laverne helped judge the big rose show in San Mateo on April 24-25. She entered a kinetic arrangement with yellow roses in the Design Division.

Mary Louise was busy with the Master Gardeners’ Spring Home Tour on April 24th.

SHOW AND SALE ROUNDUP: We had a successful event on April 24-25. Many, many thanks to those members who helped with setup and teardown: Lola, Sue, Renee, Lisa, Parish, Michelle, Katharyn, Alisa, Don, Jeanette, and Laura. Alisa produced the most gorgeous poster that we used in one of the display windows, and Katharyn came up with a very attractive and creative arrangement for the other front window. We had a nice display table, also. The exhibitors were Lisa, Sue, Don and Renee. Lisa brought a number of plants, including a gorgeous trailer that would be a blue ribbon plant in any show. On Saturday afternoon, Renee did a repotting demonstration for a small but enthusiastic audience. Alisa brought the plant she had used in the poster, and another lady brought a basket she’d had for 5 years that had 2 violets and a palm in it, plus two violets in self-watering planters. The basket was especially challenging for Renee to deal with. But everything got repotted. Vendors were Don, Lisa, Lola and Michelle.

The sale grossed a bit over \$1,500—which is pretty good for us. Vendors’ checks will be available at this meeting. If any of the vendors can’t be at the meeting, your check will be mailed to you.

MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS: The Sierra Vista Community Room was an excellent venue for us, with plenty of room, a storage room, bathroom and back door. The only drawback might have been the ghastly yellow walls (the space was formerly a toy store.) That isn’t the most desirable background color for a violet show.

(However, not everyone thought the walls were awful: a little girl came in with her camera to photograph the wall. Her dad explained that she had to take a picture of ‘something yellow’.) Most of the show visitors seem to have come to the Mall specifically to attend our event, though we did get some passers-by who stopped in. We had intervals with no customers interspersed with busy periods. Foot traffic in the west end of the Mall will increase once Kohl’s opens in the former Mervyn’s store. Several of the vendors—Lisa, Michelle—used print-outs from AVSA’s “First Class” program for their plant labels. This includes a plant description and a color

CHOOSING A FERTILIZER

A well-balanced fertilizer is essential if a grower is utilizing a constant feeding program. Be selective; do not purchase the first fertilizer you see on the shelf, and avoid cheap or on-sale products, as well as those products without clear labeling as to their content. Also to be avoided are those products in which the nitrogen sources are predominantly urea based, i.e., urea nitrogen.

A suitable fertilizer for a constant feeding program must contain evenly balanced proportions of the primary elements as well as smaller or micro- proportions of the secondary and trace elements. Every fertilizer recommended as suitable for gesneriads will undoubtedly serve its purpose. The following distinctions, however, are worth noting.

Fertilizers with high or relatively high nitrogen concentrations will be especially good for leafy gesneriads or those grown as foliage plants. Formulas that include large proportions of phosphorus will promote good root systems as well as stimulate blooming in flowering gesneriads. And fertilizers with large proportions of potassium impart vigor and resistance to disease to all types of gesneriads.

Suitable fertilizers for constant feeding programs will have the approximate total of their primary elements equaling less than 25, e.g., 7-9-5, 8-7-6, etc. Fertilizer formulations that exceed this amount are not necessary nor required to grow good gesneriads. Such formulas should be used with care and caution, especially those where the sum of their primary elements reaches or exceeds 60, e.g., 20-20-20, 17-40-20. (From: Puget Sound Gesneriad Society newsletter, Nov, 2004)

TO BAKE OR NOT TO BAKE

It is common to find, in various introductory works on violet culture, a recommendation that potting mixes be baked for awhile in order to destroy any "baddies" that might be lurking therein to slay your plants.

It is important to emphasize that the potting mix should be pasteurized, not sterilized. The most common way has been to place your mix into a pan (such as a foil roasting pan covered with cooking foil.) Preheat the oven to 180 degrees; place a meat thermometer into the soil; put the pan into the oven and heat until the meter reads 180 degrees. Bake for 30 minutes.

To get rid of nematodes; bake at 120 for 30 minutes; to get rid of most bacteria/fungi, bake at 150; to get rid of most insects, bake at 160; to get rid of most plant viruses, bake at 160; to get rid of weed seeds, bake at 180.

Microwave: 20 to 30 seconds can pasteurize your potting mix. A product called Terrazole, a fungicide, can control bacterial and fungus diseases (use as directed). It does not control insects or weeds.

In a panel discussion at the 2000 AVSA Convention, three top growers all confessed that baking your soil was not necessary, as long as you maintained good cultivation practices.

DALE MARTENS' SOIL RECIPE FOR WICK-WATERED PLANTS: Dale Martens, well-known grower, hybridizer, author and presenter, wicks all her plants. Here is her recipe: 1 cup purchased African violet soil; 1 cup vermiculite; ½ cup perlite; ¼ cup horticultural charcoal.

She writes, "If the purchased product is heavy, then I use 1 cup of perlite, rather than ½ cup. This mix is very light. I like charcoal and find lots of nice roots when I use so much of it. I use acrylic yarn for wicks. Some have asked me about the fact that there are commercial soils with fertilizers in them already. Well, if you look at the amount, it's not much, so I still use ¼ tsp of fertilizer per gallon of water IF the plant is not a seedling or young transplant. In that case I use 1/8 tsp per gallon."

(From an April 24, 2010 email to the AVconnection online discussion list)