

# The Petal

Monthly publication of the  
Tampa African Violet Society (TAVS)  
[www.tampaafricanviolets.com](http://www.tampaafricanviolets.com)



February 2026

The Tampa African Violet Society is an affiliate of the African Violet Society of America (AVSA), the Dixie African Violet Society (DAVS), the African Violet Council of Florida (AVCF) and the Gesneriad Society.

## It's almost show time!!

**Hats Off to Violets**

Presented by the  
**TAMPA AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY (TAVS)**  
February 20-21, 2026

**SHOW HOURS**  
Friday, February 20 - Noon to 5pm  
Saturday, February 21 - 9am to 3pm

**PLANT SALE HOURS**  
Friday, February 20 - 9am to 5pm  
Saturday, February 21 - 9am to 3pm

Temple Terrace United Methodist Church  
5030 E. Busch Boulevard  
Tampa, FL 33617

## A message from our President

Happy February! Are we cold enough yet? I don't know about you, but I certainly am! And it's not just the cold, but that unlike most years, it refuses to go away for a day or two to let us warm up. If there's a good side to this, it may prevent our African violets from blooming too early for the show; on the flip side, it may prevent our African violets from blooming in time for the show!

As I write this, our show is 3 weeks from tomorrow. I keep hearing from people who plan on entering more plants than they have in recent memory (at least in MY recent memory). That would be great! At least two members are hoping to have collections, and I'm excited about that. If my plants cooperate, we COULD have 3 AVSA standard collections, 2 or more mini/semimini collections, a species collection, and a Dixie standard collection. Fingers crossed that they all show up on the tables for our judges!

## A message from our President (cont.)

I seem to remember a meeting a few months ago where we all potted up leaves. Then we never talked about how those leaves were progressing. Let's all try to attend the Zoom meeting on February 5 at 7PM, and bring your leaf pot to the computer so we can see what's growing. This would be a painless way to report, without having to go out in the cold. And yes, it will still be cold!

VP Mary Beth and I will present a program to the Moonlighters Garden Club on February 3, I'm having a constellation removed from my forehead February 4, and we Zoom on February 5. Don't forget that for those who'd like to see a design constructed online, Scott Amman will be our guest speaker/designer! With any luck, I should also be able to find the video on constructing a dish garden, which means if you don't feel comfortable coming up with an artistic design, you can try your hand at a dish garden, which sounds easier to me. I mean, we all know what gardens look like, right?

Finally, getting back to our show, remember: no February meeting at the Extension Office; Friday February 20 "meeting" will mean being together at TT United Methodist Church for our show. Those who can, please meet at the same church Thursday, Feb. 19 (1PM – finish) to help with show setup. Setup help will be needed for many

many hours, so come when you can, and leave when you need to. ALL help is appreciated. If you're entering plants, bring them Thursday! See the show schedule for the entry hours.

That's it for now! *Sandi Soto, President*



Birthday wishes go out this month to:

February 4 - Deanna Hinds

February 20 - Anita Adlin

Send us an email and let us know how you are doing if you cannot attend the meetings.  
nybleb@aol.com or mlhard@verizon.net



*Michaelmoelleria vietnamensis*  
Photo by Mary Lou Harden

## Our Meetings

Our meetings are held the first Thursday of the month via Zoom at 7pm and the third Friday of the month at 10am at:

**Hillsborough County Agricultural Extension Service (HCAES)**  
5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584-3334



Former member Angelina Grundhoff (on behalf of herself and George) sends greetings to the Club and best wishes for a successful show. Angelina suffered a stroke several months ago and is recovering from its effects.

Lisa Villabol had surgery in December and is recovering. She lost most of her violets during her illness. She hopes to be able to come see the show.



**Day Meeting -  
No in-person meeting will be held  
in February.**

**Members are encouraged to come  
to the show at Temple Terrace  
United Methodist Church on  
Friday, February 20.**

**Our next in-person meeting at the  
HCAES will be Friday, March 20.**

**Zoom/Evening Meeting -  
Thursday, February 5 @ 7pm**

Scott Ammann will demonstrate how to put together a design for show. He brings a lot of energy and fun to everything he does, so you do not want to miss this Zoom!

**Join Zoom Meeting:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9324792391?  
pwd=ZzBkTmxZTmRJOEY0SmxZbHNnU1Evdz0  
9&omn=89930177350](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9324792391?pwd=ZzBkTmxZTmRJOEY0SmxZbHNnU1Evdz09&omn=89930177350)

Meeting ID: 932 479 2391

Passcode: TAVS

**Mary Beth Bryant** will be hosting the virtual night meetings via Zoom! We will have a program to begin and lots of time for any questions. Then we will open it up and do some show and tell. So get your precious blooming babies camera ready; I know we all want to see some flowers! Club business meeting will follow.

What's that you say? You don't know how to Zoom? No problem. You don't need to have a Zoom account or download anything permanently to your computer, tablet or phone. Be on the lookout for an email from Mary Beth/Mary Lou a few days before the meeting with a link to access the meeting. Hope to see you then!



# MEETING MINUTES

Tampa African Violet Society

January 16, 2026

Day Meeting

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 10:18am by President Sandi Soto, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MEMBERS ATTENDING:** Sandi Soto, Mary Lou Harden, Tammi Fitzgerald, Celia Howe, Irene and Michael Kilcomons, Mary Beth Bryant, Sandy Schultz, Joan Reynolds, Stu Swayze, Fern Azarian, Jean Krauchik, Pat Rutzke, Elaine McArthur, Jim Boyer and guest and newest member Amy Paternostro.

**INSPIRATIONAL:** "If you don't have wrinkles, you haven't laughed enough."

**PROGRAM:** Jim Boyer presented a program on show entries for next month's show. He handed out and reviewed the Exhibitor's Form. Jim shared his email address and phone number and encouraged members to call him if they had questions about whether their plants are show worthy.

February's Zoom meeting will be on preparing a show design from scratch, followed by a PowerPoint presentation on design. There was a reminder that there will be no in-person meeting in February – instead, members were encouraged to come to the show on Friday, February 20.

**SHOW & TELL:** Celia Howe brought in her project plant.



**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes from the December meeting were approved as published in The Petal.

**OFFICERS' REPORTS:** Sandi Soto presented the treasurer's report in Glenn's absence, Mary Beth Bryant noted that she met two people at the HCAES extension office earlier in the week to repot their violets. Unfortunately, they were unable to attend today's meeting.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** TAVS show – The church will be open at 1pm on Thursday, February 19 for set up, classification starts at 2pm. Sandi reviewed committees for the show and Mary Beth and Sandi will head to Peacock Cottage to pick up violets the Tuesday before the show. Lists for food and drink and show awards were passed around. Members discussed how show is being communicated to the public. Sandi will email the show schedule to members. Tammi collected shirts for embroidery of name and club logo.

## NEW BUSINESS:

**Nominating Committee** – The Nominating Committee usually reports in February but a motion was made (MLH) and seconded (FA) to postpone the report until March. Motion carried. The report will be published in the March issue of The Petal. The Nominating Committee will consist of Mary Beth Bryant, Fern Azarian and Sandy Schultz.

**Temple Terrace Garden Club Spring Market and Centennial Celebration** – TAVS has been invited to participate in Temple Terrace Garden Club's March 8 Spring Market and Centennial Celebration. A motion was made (TF) and seconded (JK) to participate. Motion carried.

**AVSA Award** – A motion was made (MLH) and seconded (SS2) to contribute a \$100 award to the 2026 AVSA Convention in Dallas for Best Design. Motion carried.

Mary Beth Bryant noted that she received a question about our show from our website, noting that our website has been getting traffic. Elaine McArthur volunteered to update our Facebook page – she will find out from Glenn who has administration rights for our page.

Sandi Soto noted that Tallahassee just received club designation from AVSA.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** at 11:45 am.



## BEEF STEW

With all the cold weather we've been suffering through, this is one of my favorite hearty meals. The aroma is amazing and I start it the day before I plan to serve it. It is made with less meat and more vegetables than the original recipe. Best served with warm cornbread and a green salad. Revised from a recipe published on [onceuponachef.com](http://onceuponachef.com) - Sandy

Serves 6

1.5 pounds boneless beef chuck, well-marbled, cut into 1½-inch pieces

2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 medium yellow onions, cut into 1-inch chunks

7 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1½ tablespoons tomato paste

2 cups dry red wine (plus more day 2)

2 cups beef broth (plus more day 2)

2 cups water

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon dried thyme

1½ teaspoons sugar

5 large carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks

1.5 pounds red potatoes cut into 1-inch chunks

1 cup frozen peas



Preheat the oven to 325° and set a rack in the lower middle position.

Pat the beef dry and season with the salt and pepper. In a large Dutch oven or heavy soup pot, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil over medium-high heat until hot and shimmering. Brown the meat in 3 batches, turning with tongs, for about 5 minutes per batch; add one tablespoon more oil for each batch. (To sear the meat properly, do not crowd the pan and let the meat develop a nice brown crust before turning with tongs.) Transfer the meat to a large plate and set aside.

Add the onions, garlic and balsamic vinegar; cook, stirring with a wooden spoon and scraping the brown bits from bottom of the pan, for about 5 minutes. Add the tomato paste and cook for a minute more. Add the beef with its juices back to the pan, add the wine, beef broth, water, bay leaf, thyme, and sugar. Stir with a wooden spoon to loosen any brown bits from the bottom of the pan and bring to a boil. Cover the pot with a lid, transfer to the preheated oven, and braise for 2 hours.

After the stew has braised, I remove the pot from the oven, let it cool off enough to transfer pot to the refrigerator and refrigerate the stew meat overnight. About 3 hours before I serve the stew, I reheat and bring to a boil, then simmer and add the potatoes and carrots, along with more broth and wine (I use an entire bottle of a mixed red blend), cooking until vegetables are tender. When the vegetables are tender, I add the frozen peas and let simmer another 15 minutes while I bake up a batch of cornbread. Super yummy!



While most members will see this as an everyday occurrence, for us this plant marks an extraordinary milestone. It's the first time we had a plant flower that we started from a leaf cutting. Yes, this was a cutting we believe Glenn brought to one of the summer TAVS meetings. It was started in water initially since we didn't have any perlite! - Michael Kilcomons





I ordered these African Violets Standard in four inch pots in February 2025 from Linda's Secret Garden, a central Florida grower. They arrived in excellent shape. "Mindi Brooke" has bloomed faithfully and is gorgeous. The second pic is "Rivermist Venus" and I got her because her variegated foliage is beautiful! She is just starting to bloom.

I top water using a watering can with a slender spout that can get under the leaves, and I dab off any water that might spill on the leaves using tissue. They sit in an east facing window. I used to use grow lights, but I have found they do better without. I used to use chlorine free water, but now I alternate with chlorine tap water every other time I water - based on information from one of the Zoom presentations. I use Miracle Grow Blooming Houseplant Food for African Violets mixed into the watering can per directions once a month. I water my violets about every 10 days. I make sure they dry in between watering.

I am a beginner and I am learning so much! Hope this helps and may encourage other beginners to give it a go. - Briony Tomalesky

# THANK YOU!

A hearty thank you goes out to Briony Tomalesky, Michael Kilcomons and Mary Lou Harden for their submissions to The Petal.



## WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

- 🌸 How did you become interested in gesneriads?
- 🌸 Do you have a great recipe to share?
- 🌸 How about some growing tips and hints?
- 🌸 Take pictures of your beautiful plants!

This is YOUR newsletter - your tips, stories, photos and recipes make this newsletter special. Send your newsletter input via email to Sandy at The Petal [sandylovesviolets@gmail.com](mailto:sandylovesviolets@gmail.com)



And now, some beautiful blossom  
shots of AVs grown by

Sandi & Sandy..



**Raspberry Rain** (10925)  
08/30/2017 (P. Sorano)  
Photo by Sandy Schultz



**K's Simply Put**  
Photo by Sandi Soto



**LiK - Tanets Flamingo** (10098)  
08/07/2009 (G. Lazarenko)  
Photo by Sandi Soto



**Peggy Rios** (7935)  
10/08/1993 (H. Pittman)  
Photo by Sandy Schultz



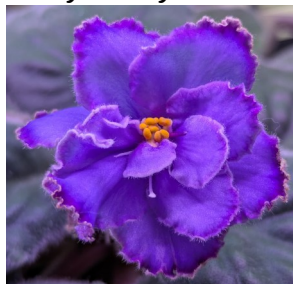
**Buckeye Clockwork Orange**  
Photo by Sandi Soto



**Tiger** (3433)  
06/01/1978 (L. Fredette)  
Photo by Sandy Schultz



**Suncoast Lavender Silk** (7239)  
11/04/1989 (S. Williams)  
Photo by Sandi Soto



**Blue Dragon** (9516)  
12/17/2005 (P. Sorano)  
Photo by Sandy Schultz

# Become a **MEMBER**

Tampa African Violet Society (TAVS)

Annual membership (April 1 to March 31)

Current dues are \$15 per year, includes an annual Yearbook and monthly newsletter, **The Petal**.

Send an email to Glenn Shelton if you're interested in becoming a member:

**Floridainorchidsss@gmail.com**

Checks payable to Tampa Africa Violet Society can be sent to:

Glenn Shelton, Treasurer  
7142 62nd Ave, North  
Pinellas Park, FL 33781

Visit us at:

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**Tampa African Violet Society**

Sandy Schultz

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