

## **To all our Violet Friends –**

Tampa AVS is happy to send a weekly “Petal-Lite” for the next 3 months so you can see WHAT’S GROWING AT MY HOUSE. The pictures in this issue and the information comes from Mary Lou Harden. We would like to see what’s growing at YOUR HOUSE, so please take a few pictures and tell us about your plants – we would like to see any plants you’re growing in the gesneriad family. We’ll also be sharing tips from the African Violet Society of America and other violet and gesneriad groups. Please don’t hesitate to submit an article you’ve found helpful. Send pictures and articles to Lynn Bandy at [nybleb@aol.com](mailto:nybleb@aol.com).

## **CAN YOU NAME THIS PLANT?**



Top picture taken from the front side of the plant, showing the lovely lavender blooms.

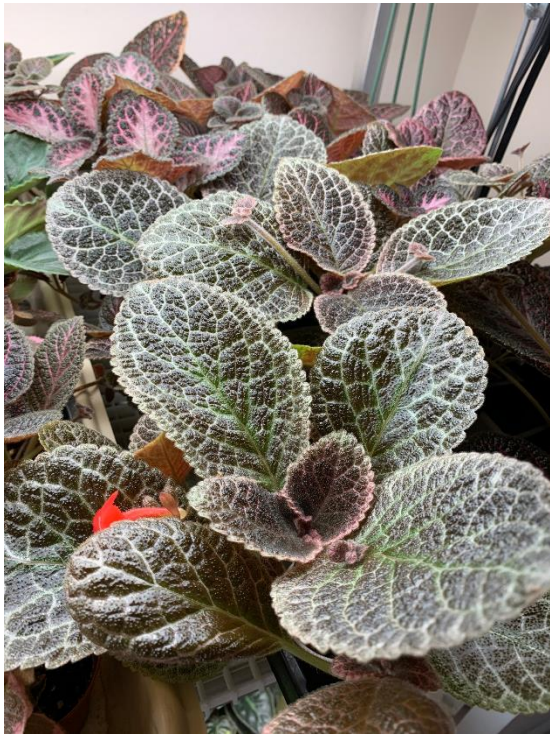


Bottom picture taken from the back side of the plant to get a better view of the girl foliage.

The story behind the plant. When Betty Wise passed away, her family asked that we come and get her plants. As you know, Betty had been ill with cancer for some time. She didn't have a big collection, and although most of her plants were in desperate need of repotting, many of them looked quite good. This violet has been in constant bloom for the past three weeks. However, it did not come with a name. If any of you think you may know its name, please let me know. In the meantime, I'm enjoying its beauty and think of Betty when I see it.

## **HERE'S WHAT'S GROWING AT MY HOUSE:**

### **HAPPY EPISCIAS**



**Episcia Checkerboard in front**

**Episcia Pink Acajou in back**

**Episcia 'My Precious'**



**Following is a portion of an article about Episcias written by Mel Grice, current president of the Gesneriad Society, for publication in The Dixie News in 2010.**

*Episcias* usually have beautifully patterned foliage with various shades of green, copper, and mahogany. Veins on their leaves are often pale green or silver creating interesting contrasts. Less commonly, leaves may be plain green. Flowers may be red, orange-red, yellow, white, pink, blue, or lavender. Interesting leaf and bloom colors, with some combinations not found in the genus *Saintpaulia*, make *Episcias* excellent companion plants for African Violet enthusiasts. Other common names for *Episcias* include “Flame Violet” and “Peacock Plant”.

*Episcias* come from warm areas of the world and demand warmth. They will be damaged or killed if the temperature falls below 55 degrees F. I have discovered that they are difficult to take to AV club meetings in the winter months. They quickly developed blackened areas on the leaves even though they were enclosed in boxes taking them from a warm car into the heated building. Just a few seconds of very cold air damaged the foliage.

Extra humidity seems to encourage blooms. Many people grow them in enclosed terrariums or under clear plastic domes. I have noticed that they also seem to grow faster if they are enclosed, which more closely mimics their natural habitat. My house is kept at 70 degrees all year long with either heat or air conditioning on. There are many plants in the room, which helps to increase the humidity. I do grow and bloom many *Episcias* uncovered, but they receive constant moisture from wick-watering. Perfect drainage is essential since they naturally grow on the forest floor in the litter found there. Extra perlite in the potting soil and a layer of perlite on the bottom of the pot are helpful.

*Episcias* are often grown in hanging baskets because of the numerous stolons, or runners, they typically produce. WARNING – anything hanging has more air circulating around it and will tend to dry out more quickly. Remember, *Episcias* like constant moisture, so you have to be vigilant with the watering can if you choose to grow them this way.

*Episcias* have very shallow, fibrous roots, and are often grown in wide, pan pots or even large saucers that are only an inch or two deep. Propagation is easy with all the stolons a plant produces. You can pin (like with an upside-down U-shaped wire) a stolon to the soil surface and roots will quickly develop from the leaf nodes. Or, you can fill a pan pot with potting soil and insert several stolons around the pot with the number of stolons depending on the size of the pot. Keep the number of stolons down to avoid the pot quickly becoming too crowded. Place the pot in a large plastic bag or under a clear dome and the stolons will root in a few weeks. Gradually expose them to less humid room air if you plan to grow them outside of a terrarium-like atmosphere.

Some growers treat *Episcias* more like their *Saintpaulia* cousins and grow them as a single-crowned plant. They remove all of the new stolons as they grow leaving only the main crown. The remaining leaves usually grow much larger than normal. Growers disbud the blooms until before a show like we do for African Violets and are rewarded with a mass of blooms when the plants are allowed to bloom.

## WHAT ELSE IS GROWING IN MY HOUSE?



For those of you who like to grow trailers, here's VANILLA TRAIL, which is a great bloomer with lots of vibrant pink double blooms. It forms nicely and doesn't require a lot of attention.

And a lovely standard violet named Harmony's News Flash



And another of my favorite Columneas--  
Columnea 'Frosty Hills' is looking quite beautiful!

