

# The Petal

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



April 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.

## *A message from our President*

Happy April!

We made it through a year of ME! I have to say, for a job I definitely didn't want, it hasn't been bad at all, due to the wonderful TAVS members! You have made the year a pleasure, and I wouldn't say it if I didn't mean it. But, I have "other fish to fry" in the world of African violets, and will be able to spend more time getting them fried right. Trust me when I say I've never been good at fish! So maybe I'll herd cats instead, but whatever I do, I'll still be here, and hoping to be a good "wingman" to my AV bestie, President-to-Be Mary Beth Bryant.

But for April, you'll just have to put up with me! Our Zoom meeting is Thursday, April 2, and as you read this, that will likely be either tomorrow, or today. I apologize for making The Petal late, but things have been busy as usual. We have the USF Botanical Gardens sale coming up in just over a week, and I hope I'm not the only TAVS member

potting up plants to sell! I don't have many: between our show and the Temple Terrace Spring Market, I sold nearly 100 starter plants, with 25% of the proceeds going into our treasury. I'm in the last stages of deciding what to keep and what to sell, but will likely have fewer than 10 plants, including some mature beauties, ready for USF. If possible, I'll head to Peacock Cottage with Mary Beth to pick up sale plants a day or two before the sale.

If you're available, we can always use more helpers at USF. Setup is Friday, April 10 from 10:30AM until were done. The process takes about 90 minutes, but we need 4 people minimum to get the tents up and the tables arranged. The official notice said they'd be in touch to let us know our setup time, but so far we've heard nothing. So, unless we notify you otherwise, those who can be there should plan to arrive around 10AM. Saturday and Sunday we have to be ready to go by 8AM, with the sale starting at 8:30AM for Botanical Gardens members only.

# A message from our President (cont.)



Hours are the same both days, with closing at 3PM. Things get VERY busy, so if you have ANY time, please come and give the regulars a hand. Make sure to wear your name tag if you have one, as it may keep you from having to pay to get in.

I've begun working on the "Grow It to Show It" program, and will be brainstorming with the other volunteer mentors (Mary Beth Bryant, Sandy Schultz, and Tammi Fitzgerald) shortly. I anticipate some printed info to start, followed by selection of specific plants to set everyone up for success, and some hands-on work together.

Finally, Mary Beth, Tammi, Sandy, Joan and I will be attending the AVSA Convention in Dallas, and Mary Beth and I plan to come back with a full schedule of programs for the upcoming year! (And more plants. What's the point of going to Convention if you're not going to come back with plants you don't have room for?)

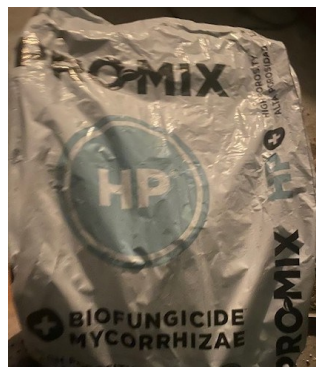
That's all the news I have for now, except that I promise we haven't forgotten about getting those shirts embroidered. Would those who spoke up at the March meeting saying you could provide info on places to get it done PLEASE send the info to me ([ssoto4@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:ssoto4@tampabay.rr.com) or text to (813) 760-5190.

Thanks! It's been a blast!

*Sandi Soto, President*

In our January issue, Tom Schaefer asked "Has anyone ever heard of using a good fungus called mycorrhizae with their plants [gesneriads]? ... I just wondered if any of our members have heard or tried it."

The answer came from Michael Kilcomons who responded: "I'm definitely not an experienced member, but I incorporate mycorrhizae in my soil mix. I use Promix HP with biofungicide and mycorrhizae. I also add additional mycorrhizae to this mix as well as dried granular molasses to provide a carbohydrate boost to the mycorrhizae."



## 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**



**Zoom/Evening Meeting -  
Thursday, April 2 @ 7pm**

Join us as we review the year and remember all that we have accomplished!

**Join Zoom Meeting:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82347875399?  
pwd=V7NQYJQHKou2Kai7jXZrrFkI6KjWHV.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82347875399?pwd=V7NQYJQHKou2Kai7jXZrrFkI6KjWHV.1)  
Meeting ID: 823 4787 5399  
Passcode: 332059

**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!



Birthday wishes go out this month to:

- 🌸 Jim Matula - April 4
- 🌸 Mary Lou Harden - April 9
- 🌸 Lynn Bandy - April 17

Send us an email and let us know how you are doing if you cannot attend the meetings.



**Day Meeting -**

**Friday, April 17 @ 10am**

**Hillsborough County Agricultural Extension  
Service (HCAES)**

**5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584**

Annual meeting with year-end wrap up and Sandi Soto will give a short program on dressing for mite eradication.



**MEETING  
MINUTES**

**Tampa African Violet Society**

**March 20, 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, Michael Kilcomons, Sandy Schultz, Joan Reynolds, Stu Swayze, Fern Azarian, Elaine McArthur and Jim Boyer. Guests and garden club members included Becky Finley, Kathleen Coyne and Beverly Jones.

**INSPIRATIONAL:** "I could be a morning person if morning started at noon."

**PROGRAM:** Show round-up and awards presentation by Tammi Fitzgerald. There were 91 horticulture exhibits, 13 design entries from 9 exhibitors. TAVS received a score of 98.85 from AVSA and a certificate. In horticulture, 89 entries were awarded blue ribbons and 2 received red ribbons. All 13 design entries were awarded blue ribbons.

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes from the January meeting were approved as published in The Petal. There were no minutes from the February meeting as we were all at the show.

**OFFICERS' REPORTS:** There was no treasurer's report and no officer's report. Nominating Committee: The following members were nominated, nominations were closed, moved by Jim Boyer, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tammi Fitzgerald. Our new TAVS officers are:

- President – Mary Beth Bryant
- Vice President – Sandi Soto
- Treasurer – Glenn Shelton
- Recording Secretary – Sandy Schultz
- Corresponding Secretary – Celia Howe

The new TAVS officers will take office at the close of the April in-person meeting.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** No new news on embroidery for the club t-shirts, we're still looking for an embroiderer.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Mentors for Grow to Show:** Sandi Soto asked for mentors for TAVS's new Grow to Show initiative to assist novice growers in growing show-worthy plants with weekly reminders and 15 minutes allotted for Q&A after in-person meetings.

Consideration may be given to buying proven winners to help mentees have a solid start with growing show-worthy plants. Mentors: Mary Beth Bryant, Sandi Soto, Sandy Schultz and Tammi Fitzgerald. Mentees: Fern Azarian, Michael Kilcomons, Elaine McArthur, Angela Newell and Amy Paternostro, and soon to be members Becky Finley, Kathleen Coyne and Beverly Jones.

**USF Plant Sale:** The USF Plant Sale is this weekend, April 11 and 12, with set-up on April 10 at 10:30AM. We will have plants from Peacock Cottage as well as member-grown plants. If selling plants for the first time, contact an officer for details.

Virtual Circle is returning to AVSA this fall.

Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society is meeting on March 21 at the Seffner-Mango Public Library.

Annual dues are due – Fern asked about the possibility of using Venmo or Zelle to transfer funds instead of writing a check. The question was raised as to whether the club would incur a fee for using one of these money-transfer services.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** at 11:18 am followed by a raffle.



**"Pinkie"**

Episcia Pink Dreams

Photo by Tammi Fitzgerald

## 2026 TAVS Show Round-up & Awards Presentation by Tammi Fitzgerald

Name, Awarded Entries & Roles in Show	Cash Amount	Extras
<b>Sandi Soto (Classifications)</b> Best in Show – S. 5b clone Grotei silvert 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection – LIK-Tanets Flamingo, Eva, Ma's Debutante Best AVSA Mini/Semimini Collection – Jolly Magic, Rob's Slap Happy, Rob's Oolong Best AVSA Species Collection -- S. 5b clone Grotei silvert, S. 5b clone Difcilis, S. 5b clone grandifolius #299 Best DAVS Standard Collection – Hunter's Tranquility, Sharon Gartner, Maggie Lee Best Semiminiature – Anna's Harmony Best Miniature – Tiny Tim Best Species - S. 5b clone Grotei silvert Best Chimera – Island Charm Best in Sections 4, 5 and 7 – Anna's Harmony, Tiny Tim, Smooch Me	\$200	Urban Roots Gift Basket (Est Value \$60)
<b>Glenn Shelton</b> 2nd Best in Show – Steffano's Azure Diamonds - \$25 from AVCF Best AVSA Standard Collection -- Steffano's Azure Diamonds, Sharon Gartner, Wrangler's Dixie Celebration Best Standard -- Steffano's Azure Diamonds	\$75	
<b>Sandy Schultz</b> Best Trailer – Rob's Boolaroo Best in Section 6 -- Rob's Boolaroo	\$30	2 Sm Oyama Pots (Jo's Violets)
<b>Mary Beth Bryant (Sales/Overall Support)</b> Best Streptocarpus – Dale's Polar Canary Best in Section 3 – Cajun's Rum Boogie	\$30	Lg Oyama Pot (Jo's Violets)
<b>Michael Kilcomons (Support)</b> Best Novice – Streptocarpus Tequila Sunrise Best Club Project, Novice – Rob's Slap Happy - \$25	\$25	Linden Lyons Gift Card (\$20); Lg Oyama pot (Jo's Violets) & Optimara Guide
<b>Jim Boyer (Classifications &amp; Judge Coordination)</b> Best Club Project, Seasoned Grower – Rob's Slap Happy	\$25	
<b>Mary Lou Harden (Support)</b> Best Gesneriad – Primulina 'Max Timer' - \$25 - TBGS Best Design – "Fascinated by the Fascinator Hat" 2nd Best Design, Natural Garden Best Interpretive Flower Arrangement Best Interpretive Plant Arrangement Best Container Garden Best Natural Garden Best Terrarium Best Dish Garden Best in Section 8 -- Primulina 'Max Timer'	\$150	
<b>Pat Rutzke (Designs &amp; Support)</b>		Viola's Violet's Gift Box
<b>Celeste Christman (Focal Point &amp; Sales)</b>	\$20	
<b>Fern Azarian (Education)</b>	\$20	
<b>Tammi Fitzgerald (Clerk &amp; Support)</b>	\$10	Optimara Guide, food & watering tray
<b>Angela Newell (Clerk &amp; Support)</b>	\$10	Lg Oyama Pot (Jo's Violets)
<b>Celia Howe (Photographer &amp; Support)</b>	\$15	Optimara Guide, food & watering tray
<b>Jean Krauchik (Hospitality &amp; Support)</b>	\$15	Optimara Guide, food & watering tray
<b>Elaine McArthur (Publicity &amp; Support)</b>	\$10	Lg Oyama Pot (Jo's Violets)
<b>Joan Reynolds (Greeter/Support)</b>	\$10	
<b>Stuart Swayze (Support)</b>	\$10	
<b>Sheryl Herold (Cashier)</b>	\$10	

## THANK YOU, AWARD DONORS!

We thank the following for your generous support, both financially and through the provision of supplies, of our 2026 Show:

- ✿ Jim Boyer
- ✿ Celeste Christman
- ✿ Tammi Fitzgerald
- ✿ Mary Lou Harden
- ✿ Celia Howe
- ✿ Michael & Elaine Kilcomons
- ✿ Jean Krauchik
- ✿ Elaine McArthur
- ✿ Amy Paternostro
- ✿ Joan Reynolds
- ✿ Pat Rutzke
- ✿ Sandy Schultz
- ✿ Glenn Shelton
- ✿ Sandi Soto
- ✿ Stuart Swayze
- ✿ Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society
- ✿ Lyndon Lyon African Violets
- ✿ Jo's Violets - Jo Schrimsher
- ✿ Optimara
- ✿ Urban Roots, Tampa
- ✿ AV Council of Florida
- ✿ Laura Perdomo, The Peacock Cottage
- ✿ Viola's Violets & Gifts
- ✿ TAVS



thank  
you

Submitted by:

Mary Lou Harden

Tammi Fitzgerald

2026 Awards Committee



## PUMPKIN BREAD

Submitted by Elaine McArthur

Makes 4 small loaves or 2 regular loaves

3-1/2 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp baking soda

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp nutmeg

3 cups white sugar

1 cup vegetable oil

4 eggs

2/3 cup water

2 cups pumpkin (1 small can)

Optional: 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Mix all ingredients together. If you choose, add your chopped walnuts or pecans to the batter, or sprinkle nuts on the top when in loaf pans before baking. Grease loaf pans and fill about 1/2 way up -- I use 4 small loaf pans or 2 regular size loaf pans.

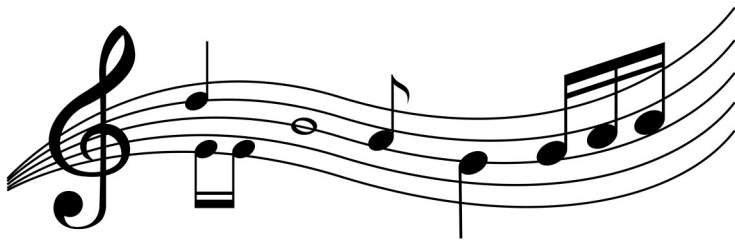
Bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Test for doneness by inserting a cake tester into the center of the bread. If the batter is not completely cooked, continue to check every 5 minutes until the cake tester comes out clean. Remove from oven and their pans and cool completely on wire rack.

This bread freezes very well and is a great recipe to make in advance. Wrap it in plastic wrap, aluminum foil and then seal in a large Ziploc to freeze.

## “Grow It to Show It”

In anticipation of TAVS’s new program, here is a summary of AV varieties receiving the greatest number of awards in shows throughout 2025. Perhaps one of these varieties will be your “Best in Show” winner at our next TAVS show! [excerpted from AVM Vol. 79 No.2]

VARIETY	TOTAL # OF AWARDS
<b>STANDARDS</b>	
Buckeye Cranberry Sparkler	9
Sharon Gartner	8
Jersey Snow Flakes	8
The Alps	7
<b>SEMI-MINIATURES</b>	
Rob’s Fuddy Duddy	11
Little Pro	6
Precious Pink	5
<b>MINIATURES</b>	
Jolly Orchid	9
Hunter’s Whitetail Fawn	8
Hunter’s Chickadee Chirps	6
Rob’s Jitterbug	5
<b>TRAILERS</b>	
Rob’s Boolaroo	7
Pixie Blue	7
Rob’s Gundaroo	5



### MY FAVORITE THINGS

(adapted from Sound of Music)

By Mary Lou Harden

Petals and pedicels and seedlings for growing,  
Petioles and Axils and Cultivars for showing  
Bundles of Chimeras tied up with strings. . .  
These are a few of my favorite things.

Variiegated two-tones and semi-double blossoms  
Doubles and singles and Suckers playing possums,  
Fantasies and Mutants and wasps without wings,  
These are a few of my favorite things.

When the Thrips come,  
When the Mold grows,  
When the Mealies attack,  
I simply remember my favorite things,  
And then I don't feel so bad.

**The 80th Annual AVSA Convention is only  
7 short weeks away!**



**Dallas, Texas**

**May 25 - May 31, 2026**

# 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:

**www.tampaafricanviolets.com**

Join us on Twitter:

**Twitter.com/TAVSviolets**

Visit us on Instagram:

**Instagram.com/tampaafricanviolets/**

Find us on Facebook

**Tampa African Violet Society**

Sandy Schultz

Petal Editor

**sandylovesviolets@gmail.com**

The Petal is published monthly by the Tampa African Violet Society.

Disclaimer: While the information and recommendations in this publication are believed to be correct and accurate, neither the authors or editor, nor the Tampa African Violet Society can accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Tampa African Violet Society makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the materials herein.