

# JOIN \* LEARN \* GROW

## African Violet Society of America

### AVSA Weekly Growing Tip

January 9, 2017

#### Greetings!

Welcome to the African Violet Society of America's Weekly Growing Tip email. We hope you benefit from our experience and expertise!



"Cabbage Patch"

#### Are These Baby Violets in Trouble?

A question and this photo was sent to AVSA from Marilyn Miller, a [Growing Tip](#) reader:

*"I have babies coming up from a leaf from "Ethel's Explosion" and the baby leaves are almost white. Is this because of a missing nutrient or just the nature of some plants? I have my plants under lights and feed them every watering. I am using 12-36-14 fertilizer half strength every time I water. Also have a similar problem with another leaf, "Cabbage Patch", only those baby leaves are a pale pink. Any ideas? Otherwise they seem healthy."*

The babies could be in trouble, if the clump were to be divided today. But the solution to the problem is a bit more complicated. It helps to know more about the two varieties involved:

#### ["Ethel's Explosion":](#)

- It is described by [Fancy Bloomers](#) as an [Ethel Champion](#) hybrid. *"Semidouble to double, medium pink stars, with blue fantasy markings. A narrow white edge also surrounds the flower. Crown variegated with lots of yellow and green. Standard growing foliage."*

#### ["Cabbage Patch":](#)

- [First Class](#) (the AVSA software database of registered African violets) lists this hybrid as *"Cabbage Patch (E. Champion) Double light pink ruffled. Crown variegated dark green and ivory, plain. Standard"*

Notice that both varieties are [crown variegated](#). Dr. Jeff Smith, researcher and columnist for the [African Violet Magazine](#), notes:

"The variegated babies aren't really that different than what you see in the youngest leaves in the crown [of a mature plant]. They are often variegated especially if it's one of the crown variegated cultivars. **Young expanding leaves just aren't producing the chlorophyll to green up until they get bigger.** Meanwhile, the mother leaf is providing them with "food" to support the growth... The mutation for variegation just requires the leaves to be more mature before the chloroplasts fully form and make chlorophyll. That's probably a genetic problem, not a nutrient or cultural problem. However, giving the leaves the best cultural conditions such as warmer temperatures and a good supply of magnesium isn't going to hurt."

When violets are too cold, the leaves develop chlorophyll at a slower rate. Marilyn shared that her violet room is kept at 70-75° F, which is close to ideal. For other growers, however, it might be helpful to move similar clumps to a higher (and warmer) location in the room.

A lack of magnesium will inhibit the production of chlorophyll. Treating with Epsom salts may help. To add magnesium to your violets, stir 2 tablespoons of Epsom salts into a gallon of hot water. Cool the solution to room temperature, then water into the top of the pot.

In addition, Dr. Smith had an interesting suggestion:

"If someone notices that there is a multitude of babies being made, they might consider plucking some out to reduce the competition between the babies and provide less strain on the mother leaf. She'll probably produce 1-2 babies faster than spreading out her energies over 8-10 babies. That's going to require some delicate surgery especially since non-green leaves will bruise easily. I wouldn't recommend trying in most cases, but it might be something to consider in some instances if your goal is only to get 1-2 babies from a leaf as fast as possible."

To answer our question, "Are these baby violets in trouble?", crown-variegated babies would be endangered if they were separated from the mother leaf now. Time will likely solve the problem. Reducing the number of babies may help them mature and become green sooner. Adding a solution of Epsom salts may also help. We hope Marilyn will let us know how these babies are doing in a few months!

You may [contact us](#) with your violet questions or comments at any time.

Please share this tip with anyone who might be interested and invite them to [sign up](#) for their own weekly email from the African Violet Society of America.

Sincerely,

Joyce Stork  
AVSA Membership & Promotion



## News from the [African Violet Society of America](#)

- The [AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges](#) is now available in both electronic and hard copy. Buy today for the spring show season!

Registration information for the [Orlando AVSA Convention](#) should be available by the fourth Monday in January. The holidays made it difficult for committee members to verify all details until venue officials returned to duty.

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)



Follow AVSA on Facebook and join the conversation!