

Plant Exchange

Plants Bring Joy To The Day

Share tips from your outdoor or indoor plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or just let us know what you enjoy most about the plants and people who grow them. Contact news@yankton.net Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.

Thanks to all readers of Plant Exchange and to those who shared plant skills this past year. Their talents and insights are the heart of this effort.

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

Plants can be a celebration marker for the actor on opening night or a spouse on an anniversary. Early settlers brought flower seeds from homes they left behind to plant as reminders when they settled in the Midwest. Some families keep memories alive with plants from the funeral of a loved one. Care of plants, like care for a pet, can bring order and joy to the day.

TAKING CARE OF PLANTS

Mary Albrecht of Yankton has enjoyed plants and a busy lifestyle for many years. She is blessed with four grandchildren and is proud of her daughter's public service. Nancy Wenande is the mayor of Yankton. Mary has many friends who share her plant, antique, and scrapbooking hobbies. Recently she retired from family-owned Paul's Quick Stop on Summit Street, which gives her more free time.

Mary enjoys outdoor plants but African violets and hoyas are among favorites for indoors. "I was always fond of African violets. My mother had some," Mary said. When her mother moved to the nursing home, Mary took care of them along with a table full of her own. African violets are considered low maintenance plants that grow in limited space and have blue, purple, lavender, pink, red, or white petals and green or variegated leaves.

AFRICAN VIOLETS

Mary takes care with delicate, often fuzzy African violet leaves that can be bruised in handling. In weekly watering, she is careful to keep water of the leaves and crown of the plant. "I put the plants in a pan or saucer [of water] for the water to come up from the bottom of the pot," she said. "It takes three or four hours to get through all the plants. I leave each one in the pan until the soil is moist when I touch it. Soil turns from gray to black [when moist]." Some of the violets take water faster.

She uses a small watering can with a long thin spout. "I water about every Saturday or Sunday." She may water more frequently in winter due to dry air. She fertilizes by instructions. When she waters, she also monitors each plant, trimming spent blooms, and rotates the plant to receive light.

"These violets, my daughter Patti had when she was in hospice," Mary said. "She always watered them by filling a glass ball that releases water slowly, so that's the way I water them."



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Mary Albrecht of Yankton has grown African violet houseplants for many years. She monitors, waters, and occasionally fertilizes them. She enjoys their wide range of flower colors.

She centers a rubber mat on an antique wooden table as her workspace. She has accumulated specialty items for working with African violets. Some pots designed for African violets can be watered at the base of the pot. In the drawer beneath the table of violets is plastic tubing to fit on the rim of containers so that fragile stems aren't injured in handling. She places a nail file-like tool under a leaf until soil dries.

Wall of windows in her southeast facing living room and sunroom appear to have been chosen with growing plants in mind. In winter she moves plants back from the window when the sun's angle is more direct. "I keep the heat and air conditioner registers closed by the plants," she said.

While a windowsill of indirect light offers enough natural light for versatile African violets, they may be grown under wide spectrum fluorescent light with fifteen-hour days. Some place plants on gravel in a pan with a little water to increase humidity near the plants. Plants or their pots do not touch water. Some grow violets in a terrarium or glass bowl with higher humidity than surrounding air. A winter alternative is a room humidifier. Added humidity is preferred but not required.

Mary found an African violet relative at a late October Sacred Heart Monastery Holiday Fair. "This is a *Epiciscia cupretta* 'Flame Violet' African violet." We see the medium-sized plant with patterned leaves displayed alone on a handwork scarf on an antique wooden table.

Care for the 'Flame Violet' is similar to other violets. However the 'Flame Violet'

reproduces with small plant offshoots or stolons. "You can lay the new plant on soil while it is still attached to the parent plant. After the new plant roots, you can cut the attachment," she said.

Mary enjoys free time in her sunroom with potted plants all around, including a shelf-lined wall. "I picked my house for the sunroom and washer/dryer as you come in the back door," she said.

TROPICAL HOYAS

Among her sunroom plants are hoyas vines with waxy evergreen, multi-colored leaves. Mary's hoyas have green leaves, some with cream edges, some speckled, some pink and cream, some all cream, all on the same plant. She places pots of hoyas at different heights and lifts the vine to show the fragrant porcelain-like flower clusters. Hoya bloom varieties include pink with magenta edging, yellow with red edging, and yellow, orange, and purple flowers.

In the tropics, these milkweed family relatives are epiphytes and grow on other plants such as trees without harming them, as do some orchids. In this soil-less setting, other parts of the plant take on root function. Hoyas are also considered low-maintenance plants that prefer but do not require high humidity.

Mary keeps photos of her own favorite flowers and of friends' flowerbeds in her scrapbooks. She has photos of some of her plant containers that are repurposed antiques. Her scrapbook photos are decorated with paper flowers. "With all the flowers around me, I am seldom sick," she said.

December Plant Tips

Jan Byrkeland is Manager of Hy-Vee Floral at Hy-Vee Food Store, 2100 Broadway in Yankton. Thanks to Byrkeland for her winter houseplant care tips. "Seasonal light levels start to fall at this time of year, with even lower light levels inside the house," Byrkeland said. Consider adjusting your plant care regime, since the light energy source for plants is reduced.

- Avoid overwatering plants. Plants benefit from allowing the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Dry soil allows enough oxygen to penetrate to the plant's root system. Oxygen is just as essential for good plant growth as water. Monitor the plant to see when to water.
- Water thoroughly and less frequently. Put the houseplant in the sink and water until water runs from the bottom of the pot. Then water once more and allow the excess water to drain away. Houseplants need much less water than outdoor plants.
- Indoor humidity levels are lower in winter, so misting the plant might be required.
- Avoid over fertilizing plants during the winter during the lower light conditions when plants don't naturally grow as much.
- Cacti thrive better if they are kept cool during the winter months. Lower temperatures encourage the development of sturdy plants and stimulate flower bud development. Between 45 - 55 degrees F is best. Cacti still require high light conditions in winter.

Gardener To Gardener

Share what you find useful for gardening.

Terry Winter of Yankton is a seasoned gardener. Space and time confine what plants he overwinters but he chooses to care for the amaryllis year round after the bloom is gone, in order to see it come again when it's bleak and snowy. "I must have thirty amaryllis plants. I can't throw one away," he said. These are his steps for year round amaryllis care:

- If you start amaryllis as a bulb, decide when you prefer the bulb to bloom and a while ahead, put the bulb in a pot not much bigger than the bulb. Set the plant in indirect sunlight and water and fertilize as a houseplant [and enjoy its bloom].
- Trim off stem once amaryllis bloom is done. The plant will put out new leaves. Water as a houseplant and keep plant in indirect sunlight and enjoy leaves.
- After last frost of spring, I set my amaryllis plants under a tree in shade. In sun they will burn. Water, fertilize, and care for them like other container plants.
- I bring the pots in, in early fall and put them in the basement behind the furnace. All the foliage dries up. [You can take the bulbs out of the pot for storage and repot them before they bloom again.]
- Ahead of when you want it to bloom at Christmas or in late winter, remove dried foliage [from the bulb]. Remove a bit of soil and add fresh soil. Set the plant in indirect sunlight and water and fertilize as a houseplant.

Dibbles & Bits

African violets are considered easy care indoor plants. Because of their small size and moderate light requirement, violets can be grown in a pot of potting soil on a windowsill with weekly watering. See Purdue University Extension bulletin for more information: www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-10.pdf

If you burn firewood for heat or aesthetics, these commonly grown SD trees give off most energy (in descending order): Burr oak, mulberry, honeylocust, sugar maple, black walnut, apple and crabapple, birch, and red cedar/Rocky Mt. juniper. Other factors of woods such as smoke, sparks, and aroma, as well as availability, impact wood value for the fireplace. Dr. Ball, Extension Forester, SD Cooperative Extension, pointed out that oak wood has twice the energy value as cottonwood trees, which are far down the list. See information at Dr. Ball's October 23rd Pest Update: <http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/tree-pest-alerts/>

Embrace The World Of Grassland Beauty



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARY ANN KING
Mary Ann King of Yankton grows Karl Forester ornamental grasses in her yard that reflect the beauty of native grasses that she finds along the Missouri River on fall walks.

BY MARY ANN KING

A morning walk left me most appreciative of the wild and prolific native grasses along the Missouri River. Within a short distance I saw at least ten varieties of thriving grasses. I find the waving grassland to be peaceful, much like waves on the ocean. As a farm child, the front lawn of Bromegrass was left to grow tall so we could play hide and seek. Within its blades and tufted heads was a living world of butterflies, fireflies, ladybugs, caterpillars, frogs, and grasshoppers. In fall Dad harvested the grass for cattle feed. It was a place a fun and wonder.

In recent years I have embraced the grasses in my "Riversedge" garden. Low maintenance, hardy, and colorful, it is the perfect match for our Dakota climate. When using perennials in garden beds and annual grasses in patio pots, I have found a variety of plants available in the market place. Visit Bluestem Nursery website for at least fifty reasons why ornamental grasses are so

popular. You will get information to help you plan and turn your garden into a "grass-scape".

Currently my landscape has Blue Fescue 'Elijah Blue', Calamagrostis 'Karl Forester', and the Gold Japanese Forest grass *Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'*. Patio pots are filled with annual fountain grasses Pennisetum macrostachyum and Pennisetum purpureum along with Isoetes cernuus, a fiber optic grass.

Ornamental grasses are classified as cool or warm season grasses. Cool season grasses begin showing growth when temperatures rise above freezing and slow down in the hotter months. Warm season grasses require warm soil temperature for several weeks before they sprout, so do not be fooled that there has been winterkill. These grasses are real "show-offs" in the fall and winter seasons.

Some ornamental grasses are clump forming and others spread by runners. Both are great performers when their characteristics are put to use. Other

ornamental grasses are sod-forming or have deep roots. These grasses put out short rhizomes and spread annually. They are not considered invasive.

Two websites that provide information and seeds for large area grasslands are www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov and www.hearneseed.com. Homeowners that live on an acreage could transform the "lawn-scape" into "grass-scape" for a hardy, low maintenance ocean of prairie grasses. According to Natural Resources Conservation Service website, native grasses can hold soil in place, protect stream banks and shores, filter pollutants, offer food for livestock, cover for wild life, and heal the land after wildfires, mining, floods, and drought. Grasses beautify our surroundings.

A world of grasses waits to show color, texture, and real Dakota hardness, should you wish to embrace their beauty. Waving grass-scapes will bring a quiet peace that can be enjoyed at sunrise or set with a cup of coffee.

Plant Exchange: Blog With Us!

This blog is an interactive site for people of our USDA Zone 4-5a region to exchange ideas about plants. Want to read some past Plant Exchange features you missed or share a comment about plants?

- What were landscape challenges and rewards experienced by Yankton Federal Prison Camp horticulturist this past season?
 - See examples of container plant design by an area gardener.
 - How does a local gardener overwinter container plants?
 - Find ideas for small space vegetable gardening from a local gardener.
 - Want to see what's blooming here and in England or Australia now? See "Garden Bloggers Bloom Day" on December 15th link.
- Check our blog at: www.brendakjohnsonplantexchange.wordpress.com

MEETINGS

INTERCHANGE

Interchange met at noon on Nov. 25, 2013, at Minerva's. Ann Clough, presiding officer, called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Guests were Karen Payer from Avera Mission Care; Sheri Conte Rodgers of CASA with information on a friend-raiser for SECASA; and Jackie Quinn of YAA with information on the Parade of Homes and Crimson Door at GAR Hall.

Hosess was Jamie Schaefer, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, who introduced Mary Peshelka fo Avera Hospice. Ms. Peshelka spoke of the Hospice Care Program — the goal of quality of life for patient, family and caregivers.

Next meeting is Dec. 2, 2013 at noon at Minerva's. It will be the Christmas Party.

SONS OF NORWAY/ LILLEHAMMER LODGE

On Nov. 9, 2013 the Lillehammer Lodge #1- 633 of the Yankton area met at Christ the

King Lutheran Church in Yankton. The meeting was opened by Pres. Carol Broderson, by leading the group in the national anthems of Norway and the US; also the pledge to the US flag. The minutes of the last meeting were read by Secy. Diane Reese and approved as read. The treasurer's report was given by Clarice Holm and approved. There were a few items of interest read from other lodges events.

Zone 6 director Richard Phillips presented a video review of possible Lodge activities and goals. He also encouraged the continued stamp-cutting project and recording hours spent on Lodge activities.

The guest speaker, Jacob Hoffner of Yankton, spoke on starting an aerial crop spraying business in Yankton in 1988. He also spoke on the history and growth of the use of the Yankton airport for personal and various businesses and how it continues to grow and change. He related some of the services that have been in use over the

history of the airport. John Grindvold led the group in the Norwegian table prayer and June Munkvold (birthday lady of Nov) led the lunch line for coffee time. The next meeting will be Dec. 14 with a meal to be shared at 1 pm at Christ the King Church.

KYNT
AM 1450
MORNING COFFEE
WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY
Friday, December 6
7:40 am World Of Work (Ryan Hage, David Allen)
8:20 am Yankton Area Arts (Jackie Quinn)

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