

# Viola and its many uses

**V**iola is a type of flowering plants in the violet family *Violaceae*, with around 400 to 500 species distributed around the world. Most species which are commonly called violets, pansies or heartsease are found in the temperate Northern Hemisphere, and also found widely in divergent areas such as Hawaii, Australasia and the Andes in South America.

Most *Viola* species are small perennial plants, some are annual plants and a few are small shrubs. A number of species are grown for their ornamental flowers in borders and rock gardens. The garden pansy in particular is most often used in the spring and autumn/winter bedding and pot plant. *Viola* and *viola* are terms used by gardeners and generally in horticulture for neat, small-flowered hybrid plants intermediate in size between pansies and violets.

## Features

*Viola* species typically have heart-shaped, scalloped leaves, though a number have palmate leaves or other shapes. The vast majority of *Viola* species are herbaceous, and a certain number of them are acaulescent in habit, as in they lack any noticeable stems and the foliage and flowers appear to rise from the ground.

The remaining ones have short stems with foliage and flowers are produced in the axils of the leaves. The acaulescent species produce basal rosettes. Plants always have leaves with stipules that are often leaf-like.

The flowers of the vast majority are zygomorphic with bilateral symmetry. The flowers are formed from five petals, four are up swept or fan-shaped petals with two per side, and there is one broad, lobed lower petal pointing downward.

The shape of the petals and placement defines many species, for example, some *Viola* species have a "spur" on the end of each petal while most have a spur on the lower petal.

Solitary flowers end long stalks with a pair of bracte-

oles. The flowers have five sepals that are persistent after blooming, and in some species the sepals enlarge after blooming. The flowers have five free stamens with short filaments that are

cultivars and hybrids have been bred in a greater spectrum of colors. Flowering is often profuse, and may last for much of the spring and summer.

One quirk of some *viola* is

species whose common name includes the word "violet".

Common blue violet *Viola sororia* is the state flower of Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Illinois, and New Jersey.

hybrid seed strains have been developed which produce compact plants of reasonably consistent flower coloring and appearance. Bedding plants are usually discarded after one growing season.

On the other hand, there are hundreds of perennial *viola* and *viola* cultivars which often do not "come true" from seed. Those that do not come true from seed are propagated from cuttings.

Cultivars of *Viola cornuta*, *Viola cucullata*, *Viola odorata*, are commonly grown from seed. Other species often grown include *Viola labradorica*, *Viola*.

Newly opened *Viola* flowers may be used to decorate salads or in stuffing for poultry or fish. Soufflés, cream and similar desserts can be flavored with essence of *Viola* flowers. The young leaves are edible raw or cooked as a somewhat bland leaf vegetable.

## Decoration

A candied violet or crystallized violet is a flower, usually of *Viola odorata*, preserved by a coating of egg white and crystallized sugar. Alternately, hot syrup is poured over the fresh flower and stirred until the sugar re-crystallizes and has dried.

This method is still used for rose petals and was applied to create flowers in the past. Candied violets are still made commercially at Toulouse, France, where they are known as *violottes* de Toulouse. They are used as decorating or included in aromatic desserts.

The French are also known for their violet syrup, most commonly made from an extract of violets. In the United States, this French violet syrup is used to make violet scones. *Viola* essence flavors the liqueurs *Crème Yvette*, *Crème de Violette*, and *Parfait d'Amour*. It is also used in Parma Violets confectionery.

*Viola* species are also used for medicinal purposes. The flowers, leaves and roots of various are rich in vitamins A and C.

They also contain a type of antioxidant called an



Crystals Apricot



Violasoralba



Yellow Violet



Blue Violets

oppressed against the ovary, only the lower two stamens have nectary spurs that are inserted on the lowest petal into the spur or a pouch. The flower styles are thickened near the top and the stigmas are head-like, narrowed or often beaked. The flowers have a superior ovary with one cell, which has three placentae containing many ovules.

After flowering, fruit capsules produced are split open by way of three valves. Many species also produce self-pollinated cleistogamous flowers in summer and autumn that do not open and lack petals.

The nut like seeds have straight embryos, flat cotyledons, and soft fleshy endosperm that is oily. The seeds are often spread by ants.

The color of the flowers vary in the genus ranging from violet, as their common name suggests, through shades of blue, yellow, white, and cream, whilst some types are bi-colored, often blue and yellow. Many

the elusive scent of their flowers along with terpenes, a major component of the scent is a ketone compound called ionone, which temporarily desensitizes the receptors of the nose, thus

**Violets are also used for Medicinal purposes.**

**The flowers, leaves and roots of various A and C. The Viola odorata is used as a source for scents in the perfume industry.**

preventing any further scent being detected from the flower until the nerves recover.

The genus includes dog violets, a group of scentless species which are the most common *viola* in many areas, sweet violet *Viola odorata* that named from its sweet scent, and many other

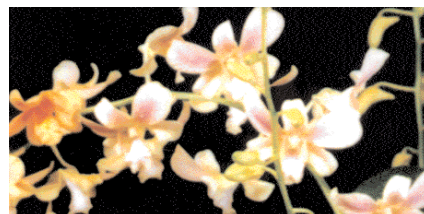
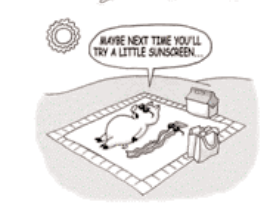
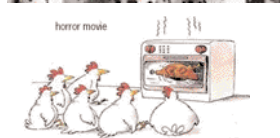
Australia is home to a number of *Viola* species, including *Viola hederacea*, *Viola betonicifolia* and *Viola banksii*, first collected by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander on the Cook voyage to Botany Bay. The *Viola* comes in handy for many purposes and mostly for the ones mentioned below.

The modern garden pansy *V. wittrockiana* is a plant of complex hybrid origin involving at least three species, *V. tricolor* (wild pansy or heartsease), *V. altaica* and *V. lutea* (mountain pansy).

The plants known to gardeners as "violets" are common bedding and pot plants world wide. In 2005 in the United States, violets including the pansies were one of the top three bedding plant crops and 111 million dollars worth of flats of violets were produced for the bedding flower market.

Pansies and violets used for bedding are generally raised from seed, and F1

## The funny side...



Dendrobium Iranganie Serasinghe

## Orchid to be named after Iranganie

A flower exhibition to celebrate veteran film artist Iranganie Serasinghe is

being held at Viharamahadevi park. A special hybrid orchid

variety named after Dendrobium Iranganie Serasinghe was presented to her yesterday.

## Give Brownny a home

**A**ccording to the latest counts, Sri Lanka is home to ten million dogs of which more than 600,000 are living in the streets. This is still on the rise even now due to the irresponsible owners.

Embark recently lent a helping paw to a helpless injured stray dog that lived near the Kotte bridge. When the team had brought it in for treatment, it had no fur on its body but now after all the treatments being given you can see this guy all furred up.

Brownny is the very recent dog that Embark rescued and are now calling out for someone who will be able to give a good kind home to him. Brownny was treated by Embark for various conditions it was going through



When Brownny was brought in



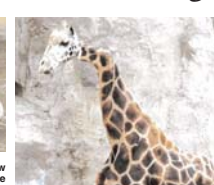
After Brownny was treated by the Embark team

Please send us your rescue stories and animal jokes to demids@gmail.com or to 'Flowers n Pets', No. 35, D.R.Wijewardene Mawatha, Colombo 10

## Where nature went wrong



This unusual six-legged Cambodian cow was found resting at the farm near to the Cambodia city, Phnom Penh on October 7, 2003. The monks from the local pagoda who scared of getting bad fortune that would bring by the cow, later named it as 'Cham Leck', literally means 'strange'.



This was Gemina, a giraffe which was found to have a dominant crooked neck joining to its body at the Santa Barbara Zoo. Unfortunately, it died on January 9, 2008.



This tortoise was seen on June 24, 2007, in Hualbei which is located in the eastern part of Anhui Province of China. The local media reported that its gourd shaped resembling a large fruit with a hard skin and soft juicy flesh inside was the result of a gene mutation. That means the gene mutation has contributed to its aberration, a condition of a temporary change from what is normal or acceptable among its species.

This seven-legged lamb was photographed when it was found on July 31, 2007, at the farm at Methven near to Christ Church which is situated in the South Island of New Zealand. The veterinarian, Steve Williams believed that this deformity was caused by a misprint in embryo formation. Due to this scientific reason, the lamb was being born polydactyl (or with many legs). He further remarked that this is a common condition that may have occurred once in every several million sheep



Scientists have long found the double-headed fossil. From the laboratory sample, this aquatic reptile was identified died at its very young age before forming into a fossil. This extinct adult reptile was diagnosed to grow as long as one meter. Its relatively long neck marked its unusual feature among its species.