

Violets enjoy cool, damp humus soils. Their natural habitat is in shady hedgerows or banks sharing similar conditions to the wild strawberry and primrose. Try to imitate these conditions when planting in the garden.

Dappled shade under deciduous trees and shrubs is the ideal position where they will be able to avoid hot, dry summer conditions, but will be exposed to the winter sun which will encourage flowering.

Parma violet

Tender double violets. These are sweetly scented violets with small, pointed, glossy leaves and a compact habit. However they require protection from frost.



Viola odorata

Hardy single violets. This is by far the largest group of cultivars that are mostly scented and have a diverse colour range from more familiar purples and blues to white and pink. Do not require protection from frost



Large flowered Devon type violets

Listed separately from the odorata cultivars because of the smooth leaf texture, vigorous growth habit and large scentless flowers, seem to make them a group of their own.



Viola sororia

This species is non-scented, however has a good resistance to Red Spider Mite. The shiny leaves are of a large size and die back in winter.



Other

This is a large group that includes many other species such as sulfurea and hederacea. The flower type and foliage vary greatly between species.



Parma violets are not quite as hardy as the odorata and other types and are probably best treated as pot plants. On purchasing your plants in the autumn or winter, pot into containers just big enough to contain the roots, using a peat or peat substitute compost;

Plants that are purchased in the spring or summer can be potted straight into a large pot e.g. 6 - 9 inches, using a soil based compost like John Innes No.2.

The plant will attempt to throw runners during the growing season, these should be picked off to allow the plants energy to go into flowering.

The plants should be kept in a shady part of the garden until the end of October when they can be brought into an unheated glass construction, e.g. frame, glasshouse etc. A high potash feed such as liquid tomato feed should be used from September onwards, to increase flower bud and quality.

Your Parma violets should flower from the autumn through to the following spring - a delight in appearance and perfume. They can be brought into the living room for special occasions and they can be picked to form posies for the lapel or house.

These species (*Viola Odorata*, Devon Type, *Viola Sororia* & Others) of violet are hardy and do not require protection from frost. If you purchase your odorata or other violet plants described above during the spring, March -April- May - June, it should be possible to plant your violets straight away, in a similar position as described above. If this is not possible a North facing slope or in the shade of the house would also do. Choose a good compost, either commercial or your own garden compost and a handful of bonemeal to fork into the soil where the violet plants are going, then firm the plants in. Planting in groups of the same variety is preferable although economics do not always allow this.

Plants that are purchased anytime during autumn or winter are best potted into pots just large enough to take your plants, with any peat or peat substitute, multi purpose compost and kept in a cold unheated glass construction until they can be planted out in the spring.

If you intend to keep your violets in pots, they should be potted into 9 inch containers (approx) using John Innes Compost No. 2.

A brief guide to violets
www.grovesnurseries.co.uk

