

## Different Methods of Watering

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### WICK WATERING

Wick watering has become very popular among African violet growers. The plants receive a constant supply of fertilized water.

**Soil Mix:** The soil mix MUST BE VERY LIGHT. This means you must have at least 50% vermiculite and/or perlite in your soil mix. If you do not have the 50%, your roots will rot.

**The Wick:** The wick MUST BE A SYNTHETIC MATERIAL. You can use 3 -ply knitting yarn, a nylon cord, available in a hardware store, or nylon hose cut in strips. Cut your strips long enough so it will reach from the top of the soil to the bottom of the container.

**Placing the Wick:** Thread the wick through the pot, then place the plant and soil carefully in the pot. Another way is to put the plant and soil in the pot and then thread the wick through the hole in the bottom of the pot to the top, using a darning needle or any thin pointed object.

**Reverse Osmosis:** The easiest method to get your wick and soil moist is to soak the plant with the wick in place. This will start your wick absorbing the water. If the wick is not wet, IT WILL NOT SOAK UP WATER.

**The Container:** Any container that will not rust, and has a cover will work. The containers available through our commercial members are exceptionally nice because they have two holes, one for the wick, and one for filling with fertilized water.

**Problems:** The most common problem is that the plant is not soaking up the water. Resoak your plant and try again. If the plant is "root bound" it will stop absorbing water. The second most common problem is the plant is too wet. In that case, remove the wick and use a thinner wick (1/4" is usually sufficient).

Algae can be controlled using Physan 20.

### MAT WATERING

Mat watering means that you place your plants on a damp mat and the plant absorbs the moisture and fertilizer. The mats MUST BE A SYNTHETIC MATERIAL. Matting material is available through our commercial members, as well as supply houses. You can also buy a cheap blanket and cut it to the size you need. Mat watering works very well for small plants.

**Problems:** The biggest problem is that the mat dries out very quickly. Another problem is if the shelf is not level, some of the plants may not get enough water. Be sure to check the plants on both ends of the

container. If you have any type of insect problem, they will spread quickly with mat watering. Again, algae can be controlled by using Physan 20.

### **TOP/BOTTOM WATERING**

This is the most common method of watering. You simply water the plants either from the top or the bottom when they are somewhat dry. Watering from the bottom takes several hours for the plant to absorb the water in the top of the pot. I feel this is the best method because you know exactly when you watered and what fertilizer was used.

Problems: It is very easy to over water plants which can cause root rot. Also, if you are going to be gone for an extended period of time, the plants will suffer.

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