Sometimes when you learn a new hobby, you also learn a new language. Many terms used when reading or discussing African violets were foreign to me as a new violet hobbyist.

I did not know the language and found it confusing. To save you from a similar experience, here are some need-to-know terms for the new violet hobbyist:

What are violets? The Gesneria (ges-nair-ee-ah) family is a vast and varied group of flowering plants, including African violets, Streptocarpus, Aeschynanthus, and Gloxinia, among others, that have become popular as houseplants.

Saintpaulia (saint-paul-ee-a), commonly known as African violets, are a genus of up to thirty species of herbaceous flowering plants in the family Gesneriaceae.

Are they big plants or small plants? African violets come in different sizes. These plants can be classified as one of several sizes based on its above ground diameter. Although the size per category is not set in stone, here are some general guidelines:

**Single crowned plants:**
- **Micro-miniature:** very small leaves (a hybridizer’s term used to describe the very small growing plants)
- **Miniature:** up to 6 inches in diameter
- **Semi-miniature:** up to 8 inches in diameter
- **Standard:** over 8 inches in diameter
- **Large:** a term hybridizers use to denote large growing varieties
- **Trailers:** violets that have more than one crown (need at least three crowns to win a blue ribbon) and come in all the sizes listed above.

What else do I need to know when talking to other violet enthusiasts? According to Growing To Show (2008), a violet enthusiast can define the following terms:

**Hybridization:** Taking pollen from one violet and transferring it to the stigma of another to obtain seeds. The hybridizer breeds violets and the resulting plant is called a hybrid.

**Vintage violets** were introduced at least twenty-five years prior to the year in which it is to be entered in a show.

**Terms to describe the plant:**
- **Sport:** A plant that shows marked change from the parent plant; usually a natural mutation.
- **Crown:** A center of growth with all the leaves originating from that center radiating out like spokes on a wheel.
- **Chimera:** Blossoms with stripes that radiate from the center.
- **Peduncle:** The stalk supporting flowers.
- **Tailored:** A plain African violet leaf on which the areas between the veins are slightly raised. (May also be called “quilted.”)
- **Optimara:** Popular trademark for African violets introduced since 1977 to the present, by Holtkamp Greenhouses.
- **Wasp:** Blossoms are single and each lobe is very narrow and separated from the others.
- **Petiole:** The stem of the leaf attaches the leaf to the main stem.
- **Girl (leaf):** Deeply scalloped leaves, usually rounded or heart-shaped with white to yellow marking at the base of each leaf (has nothing to do with the sex of the plant).
- **Longifolia:** Narrow, pointed, strap-like leaves with either plain or wavy edges.
- **Supreme:** Leaves are thick, hairy, and quilted, with strong pencil-like petioles.

Now that you know some of the basic terms, I would encourage you to join AVSA and become part of a violet club to extend your terminology and discover the fascinating world of violet hobbyists.