

# Coming up African violets

By BETTIE BRADLEY  
Times Community Editor



Ruth Neate stands amidst her tropical jungle, created with the help of her husband. Ruth concentrates on African violets and gesneriads.

Tulips are pretty flowers. Daisies are nice. However, there are two flowers that don't just attract flower lovers — they cultivate addicts. Gardeners with roses are a special breed. For the serious rose enthusiast, "I never promised you a rose garden" becomes a threat. African violet enthusiasts, another breed apart, often make it an almost-full-time hobby.

There is an African Violet Society of Canada and several Mississaugans are members. Their annual convention will be held at Civic Garden Centre in Edwards Gardens at 444 Lawrence Avenue East this Friday and Saturday, May 26 and 27.

Ruth Neate, of Indian Road, has her own plant room that measures 13 by 18 feet, turning her basement into a tropical jungle. She grows mostly African violets and gesneriads.

Ruth has a few hanging baskets, but concentrates most of her work under fluorescent light.

Entire families tend to get involved. In Ruth's case, her husband designed and constructed the plant room and also built the plant stands that house her collection.

She is an African violet judge and an occasional contributor to the African Violet Society of Canada magazine Chatter.

Marjorie and Alex Blenkarn like competition — and they're not at all adverse to competing with one another. They often enter shows individually, which is exactly what they plan to do at this week's show.

The Blenkarns winter in Florida, but it hardly interferes with their violet culture — they simply take their plants with them. An inspection by the department of agriculture before they leave Canada and by the equivalent authority in Florida before they return home ensures that no unwelcome pests or diseases are transported along with the plants.

Unlike the Blenkarns, who get a kick out of competing with each other, John and Doris Brownlie of Silver Creek Boulevard work together.

John and Doris are both school teachers and both are qualified African violet judges, having judged many shows in the USA and Canada.

They are often winners and are expected to be strong contenders for awards in this week's show.

On Friday the national convention and show will be open from 2 p.m. until 9 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. There will be displays of plants and a commercial sales room. Admission is \$1 and non-violet-addicts are also invited.



John and Doris Brownlie work as a team. Both are qualified judges of African violets and their local awards have included best-in-show, junior

queen, best gesneriad, best miniature as well as the gold rosette for group-of-three registered plants at the American African Violet Society.



Marjorie and Alex Blenkarn are African violet specialists who, when they winter in Florida,

take many of their plants along with them.

## May-December marriages:

### This one worked

By CONNIE RAE  
Times Staff Writer

Who says May-December marriages don't work? After reading last week's Times Telescope, a reader called to inform us that she had one that did work.

She declined to give her name, because she said nobody knew of the age difference, and while she wouldn't mind people knowing, she felt there was still enough social prejudice that her husband might.

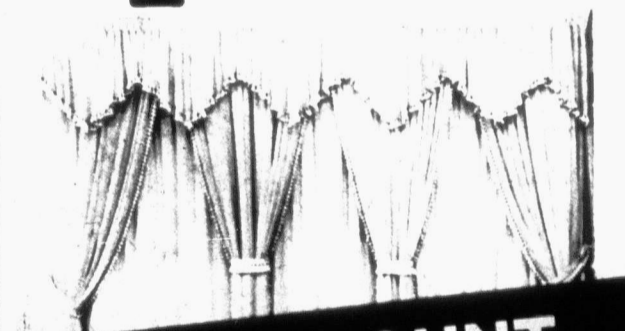
She's been married for nearly 20 years to a man who is 10 years younger than herself and the couple have two children. What's more, she has a child from a previous marriage and has two

grandchildren. Although she is over 50, she feels younger than her husband because she's "still a kid at heart." She's active in sports and she and her husband chuckle when people refer to him as her "old man." They ascribe to the philosophy of "what people don't know won't hurt them."

She looks upon men her own age as "ancient." And what does her husband call her? He calls her babe, of course.

She'd love to tell the world who she is, but feels Mississauga is just not ready for that, so she phoned to ask us to let our readers out there know that, yes, May-December marriages can work and they can be great.

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