



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Exacum affine¹

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Introduction

The German Violet is a 6- to 12-inch-tall annual that is popular for its beautiful blue flowers and shiny green foliage. The tiny leaves of this rounded plant are ovate in shape and densely cover the stems. Lovely blue flowers with bright yellow pollen masses in their centers appear in the spring and summer. These fragrant flowers will densely clothe this plant if it is grown under the proper cultural conditions. *Exacum affine* creates a nice ground cover and is quite charming when grown in a container.

General Information

Scientific name: *Exacum affine*
Pronunciation: ECK-suh-kum af-FYE-nee
Common name(s): German Violet, Persian Violet
Family: *Gentianaceae*
Plant type: annual; biennial
USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 7: Jun
Planting month for zone 8: May; Aug; Sep
Planting month for zone 9: Apr; Sep; Oct
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Nov; Dec; Jan
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: edging; border
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: .5 to 2 feet

Spread: .5 to 1 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see
Leaf type and persistence: not applicable
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: blue
Flower characteristic: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 6 to 12 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: not applicable
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

This annual requires a partial shade position in the landscape. It needs a light, well-drained soil that has plenty of peat and perlite. German Violets are tender to cold and should be protected in the winter months. These plants require a moderate amount of fertilization and watering.

Propagate the German Violet by seed. The seeds of this plant are quite tiny and germinate in two to three weeks.

Pests and Diseases

Gray mold is a major problem with German Violet seeds, and the broad mite is a damaging insect. Worms and mites may also be occasional problems.