



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Exacum affine***<sup>1</sup>

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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.