

Viola x wittrockiana Pansy¹

Edward F. Gilman and Teresa Howe²

Introduction

Pansy is a biennial grown as an annual. There are numerous varieties with brightly colored flowers both with and without the characteristic “face” or blotch. Pansy performs best during the cool days of spring and fall, and will grow and flower all winter in USDA hardiness zones 8 through 11. The plants need some shade and lots of moisture during hot weather and are not suitable for the summer in USDA hardiness zones 8 through 11.

General Information

Scientific name: *Viola x wittrockiana*

Pronunciation: vye-OH-luh wit-rock-kee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): pansy

Family: *Violaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; annual

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: Mar; Apr

Planting month for zone 8: Feb; Oct; Nov; Dec

Planting month for zone 9: Feb; Nov; Dec

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Nov; Dec

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; edging; cut flowers; border

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: .5 to 1 feet

Plant habit: round; spreading

Plant density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: dentate

Leaf shape: ovate; oblong

Leaf venation: not applicable

Leaf type and persistence: not applicable

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Teresa Howe, coordinator, Research Programs/Services, Gulf Coast Research and Education Center; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Flower

Flower color: yellow; white; blue; pink; purple; orange; lavender; rust or bronze; black

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

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam

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

A rich soil and ample moisture are needed for the production of large flowers. Keep plants in bloom by removing old flowers before seed is formed. Fertilize during the growing season. Occasionally plants will survive the winter in sheltered locations north of hardiness zone 8. The plants grow six to ten inches high and are spaced six to eight inches apart.

Pansy is propagated by seed or cuttings. Cuttings can be taken and rooted in the fall. Seed may be planted in spring or fall. The seed germinates in 10 to 14 days at temperatures between 65 and 75°F. Cover the seed to exclude light. Seedlings are killed by too much sun. In Florida, pansy is planted October through January or February, depending on location.

There are many, many cultivars developed for flower color, face size and color, and plant height.

Pests and Diseases

Aphids suck plant juices and coat the leaves with sticky honeydew.

Cutworms eat the foliage.

Violet gall midge larva attacks the leaves at the growing point, causing a gall to form. The distorted leaves are subject to wet rot. Infected plants are dwarfed and produce few blooms. Remove and destroy infested leaves.

Greenhouse leaf tier webs the flower buds and leaves together.

Violet sawfly larvae skeletonize the leaves and then eat them. The larva is bluish black and one-half-inch long.

Slugs will feed on the foliage but can be controlled with baits.

Mites cause loss of green color.

Anthracnose causes browning and blotching of the leaves. The dead areas have distinct black margins. The petals of infected flowers are abnormal or spotted. Severely infected plants may be killed.

Several leaf spots may be seen and are controlled by picking off infected leaves.

Powdery mildew causes a white powdery growth on the leaves.

The disease called scab is also called spot anthracnose or pansy scab. Symptoms are circular to elongated lesions, one fourth inch in diameter, on all parts of the plant. The spots may be yellowish brown, rose colored, or whitish. Darker green zones may surround the spot. The diseased areas fall out, giving a shothole appearance. The spots may change from irregular to elongated raised scabs on the leaves and stems. When the stems or leaf stalks are girdled, the part above the infection dies. Remove and burn old leaves.

Stem rot attacks the stems at soil level. Diseased tissue becomes black and brittle and contains an abundance of black spore pustules. Infected leaves turn purplish black in spots or streaks. Infected tissues dry up, shrivel, and turn brown.

Rust causes pale green spots on the undersides of leaves. Pustules containing yellowish spores develop on the upper leaf surface. Spots may develop on petioles and stems.

Smut attacks all parts of the plants. Elongated or callus-like pustules develop on the leaf stalks, deforming them. The pustules break open to discharge spore balls. Remove and destroy infected plants early in the season.