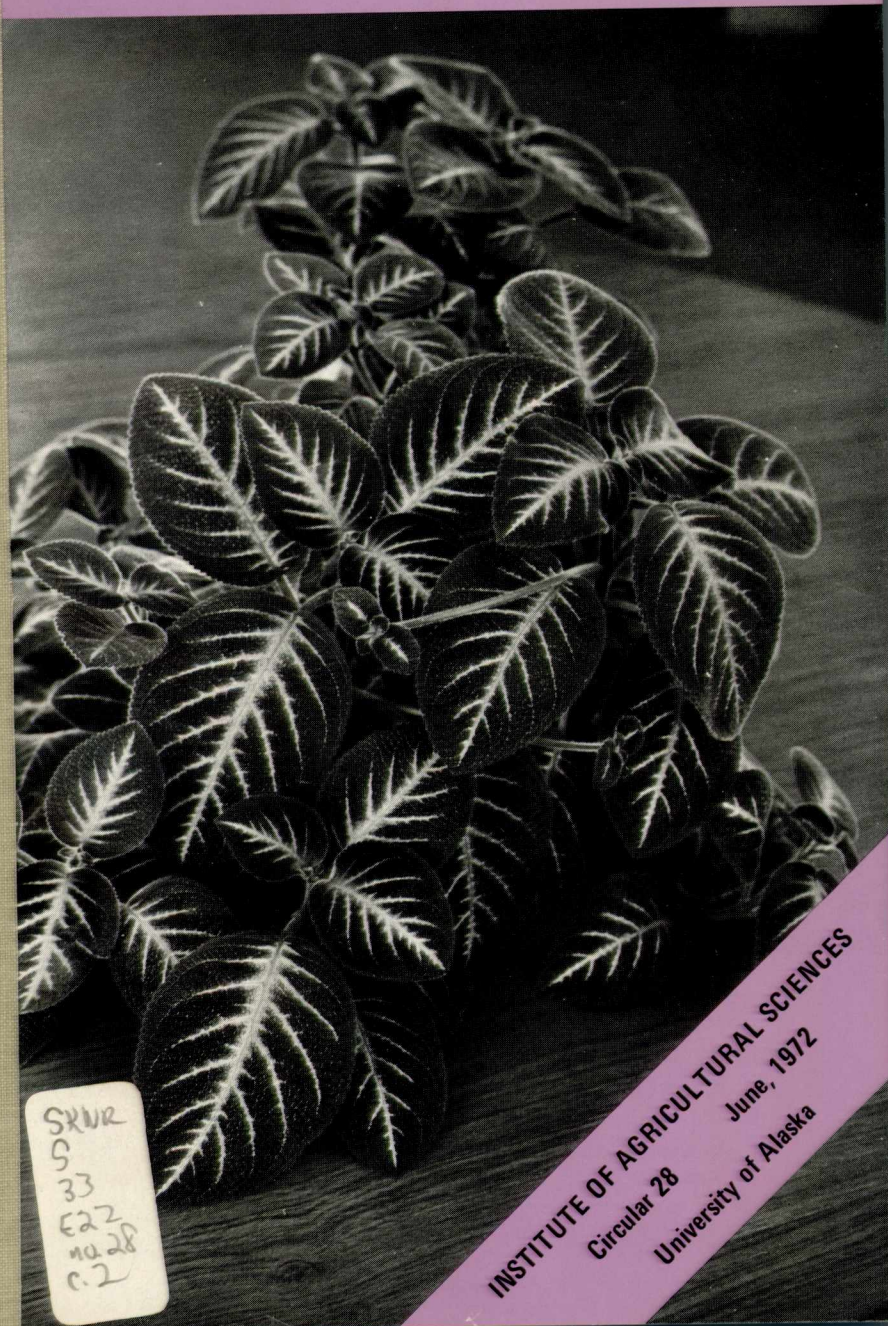


Flame Violet

house plant suitable for Alaska's long winter, low light conditions

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A house plant
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Episcia (Flame Violet) has proven to be an excellent plant for office and home conditions in Alaska where sunlight is limited during the long winters. A native of Central and South America, *Episcia* is a tropical pubescent creeper or trailer. This attractive cousin of the African-violet in the family *Gesneriaceae* is suitable for pedestals, hanging baskets, or pots.



Figure 2. Episcia reptans grown in a greenhouse in a hanging basket that is completely covered by the plant. The creeping nature of the long stolons makes this an ideal plant for hanging baskets.

COVER PHOTO

Figure 1. Episcia reptans, the true Flame Violet, grown under normal winter office lighting and temperature. The leaves are larger and more showy on this plant than they are on the plant shown in Figure 2, which was grown in the greenhouse under higher light intensity.

Figure 3. This hanging arrangement of some different kinds of *Episcia* give a nice variation. The small-leaved one is *Episcia dianthiflora*, the one with the light-colored foliage is *Episcia cupreata*, and the other is *Episcia reptans*. All of these came from a packet of mixed seed that was obtained from a national seed company.



Tests at the Institute of Agricultural Sciences showed that plants had larger, more attractive leaves when grown under conditions of normal winter office lighting than when grown in the higher light intensity of summer greenhouses or under fluorescent lights of high intensity. *Episcia* also does well on shelves with fluorescent lighting.

There are several species and varieties of *Episcia* providing a wide selection of leaf colors, sizes, and shapes. All are trailing in nature through extension of runners or stolons (see photo). *Episcia reptans* most popular of the Flame Violets has broadly ovate, quilted brown-green leaves and bright silvery-green veins (Figures 1 and 2). The flowers of *Episcia reptans* have a long blood-red corolla tube with fringed edges and pink throat inside. Other kinds are shown in Figure 3. The small-leaved *Episcia dianthiflora*, with glistening white, deeply-fringed flowers, and the silver-green-leaved *Episcia cupreata* offer nice variation in plant type.

Episcia can be propagated by seeds or cuttings. They also root quickly if a stolon is pinned into a neighboring pot of moist soil. Other cultural conditions are similar to those required for African-violets. A potting soil consisting of one part garden loam, one part sand, and one part peat moss is a good basic mixture.

