

# Did You Know?

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## *Violet species, Viola spp.*

- The genus *Viola* includes between 500 and 600 species in the violaceae or violet family, including violets, pansies, heartsease or Johnny jump-ups, other species, and many hybrids within the family.
- *Viola* hybridize freely, which can make identification challenging.
- While the flowers across the species vary in color, they generally have four unlike petals arranged in pairs and a fifth lower lobed petal with a spur, on top of an individual stem.
- Pansy is generally the common name reserved for the hybrid *Viola* × *wittrockiana*, whose complex origin includes at least three species.
- Violet, *Viola odorata*, has been used in the perfume industry as a fragrance source.
- The fragrance of violets is said to be “flirty” since it seems to come and go. The presence of ionone causes humans to not be able to detect the fragrance for moments at a time.
- Violet, *Viola odorata* and heartsease, *Viola tricolor* are two species with a history in herbal medicine for respiratory issues and many other issues including liver disorders and bad tempers according to Hippocrates.
- The flowers of violets, heartsease, and pansies can be candied and added fresh to salads, desserts and other dishes. The leaves are also edible and can be added to fresh greens or soups. *V. odorata* has a sweeter flavor and is the most popular to be added to sweets and teas. The mild pea flavor of *V. tricolor* pairs well with either sweet or savory foods.
- *Viola* flowers flavor violet liqueurs such as Crème Yvette, Crème de Violette, Parfait Amour, and The Bitter Truth Violet Liqueur. The Aviation, Blue Moon, and Violet Fizz are classic cocktails made with violet liqueur.

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