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Plant of the month: Native or Ivy-leaf Violet *Viola hederacea*



Native Violet *Viola hederacea* is a fast-growing, matting perennial herb up to 15 cm high, spreading by stolons or above ground stems that develop roots and shoots, thus forming new plants. The leaves are light green and kidney-shaped to 30 mm long, slightly lobed around the edges and forming a rosette at the base. Small, single white flowers with purple centres, on long slender stalks held above the leaves, occur most of the year, although less so in April and May. Fruits are an ovoid capsule containing 4-5 tiny reddish-brown seeds.

Native Violet is a prolific grower once established and makes an attractive ground cover. Larger leaves and flowers are produced in cultivation if extra moisture is provided. At Venus Bay it is a tiny plant when growing naturally and can be confused with another native herb when it is not flowering, Kidney Weed *Dichondra repens*. It is suitable for containers or hanging baskets. Propagation is readily achieved by division.

Native Violet belongs to the Violaceae or Violet family, the name *Viola* coming from the Latin for violet. The species name *hederacea* is from 'Hedera', the Latin name for Ivy and refers to the ivy-like leaves of this plant. This is the most common and widespread of the 6 native violet species found in Victoria. Lorraine Norden (Dip. Hort.) For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.