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*Saintpaulia*

*Gesneriaceae*

*Saintpaulia* commemorates a German administrator, Baron Walter von Saint Paul-Illaire (1860-1910), who was at the time Governor of the African province (in what is now Tanzania) where the African violet (*Saintpaulia ionantha*) was found.

Today in their natural habitat authorities note that the remaining twenty-odd primitive species of African violet are under threat of extinction. These plants cannot survive under the strong African sunshine and their shade has been removed. In recent decades the forests where they found shelter have been cut down by local people for firewood and (unless there has been progress since writing this) little interest appears to have been shown in declaring a designated preservation area to offer the remaining wild plants some protection. In 1998 the World Conservation Monitoring Centre issued the first global list (referred to colloquially as the 'Red List') of threatened plants and African violet has been included.