

## BOOK REVIEW

BRENNNA ESTRADA. 2025. **Pansies: How to Grow, Reimagine, and Create Beauty with Pansies and Violas.** (ISBN 978-1-64326-400-4 (hardcover). Timber Press, Workman Publishing, Hachette Book Group, Inc., 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York, 10104, U.S.A. (**Orders:** timberpress.edu). \$24.95 US, hardcover, 238 pp., color photographs, 7" x 10".

**From the Publisher**

Brenna Estrada is an accomplished flower farmer who has trialed hundreds of varieties of pansies and violas on her farm, Three Brothers Blooms, developing a huge following of growers and floral designers. Her innovative approach to growing in full sun results in pansies with long stems, breathtaking fragrance, and unique color. With the instincts of a collector, Brenna encourages gardeners and flower enthusiasts to see the pansy as a reliable, elegant, showstopping flower that brings drama, whimsy, and diversity to every garden and arrangement.

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In Texas, anyone can see maybe a dozen or so wild growing pansies or violas. What is there not to like about pansies? They are pretty and very hardy. If you have ever seen a wild growing *Viola bicolor* you will never forget it. You will immediately want to take a closer look. The beautiful little flower will make your heart skip a beat. And the common names for *Viola bicolor* are just delightful: FIELD PANSY, WILD PANSY, JOHNNY-JUMP-UP, HEARTS-EASE, CUPID'S-DELIGHT and probably many more. And there is no doubt William Shakespeare recognized the human emotion and experience upon seeing a pansy growing in the wild. "The phrase "pansies, that's for thoughts" is from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*." And less one forget, "the name "pansies" is derived from the French word for "thoughts" (pensée), reflecting the flower's connection to memory and reflection."

At the Fort Worth Botanic Garden|Botanical Research Institute of Texas is an art exhibition (15 Oct 2025–11 Feb 2026) titled "Natural Harmonies: Plants' Musical Influence" that celebrates how the plant world has inspired music across genres and generations. You guessed it! Pansies have not only inspired gardeners, poets, and artists but also composers. Feathered in the exhibition is a pansy (*Viola martia* or March Violet) that inspired Italian composer Alessandro Scarlatti. The caption to the handcolored engraving of *Viola martia* from Elizabeth Blackwell's *A Curious Herbal* (1751): "Composed in 1694 for his opera *Pirro e Demetrio*, Alessandro Scarlatti's aria aria *Le Violette*, presents a scene in which a young man named Mario speaks tenderly to a garden of violets about his unrequited love for a noblewoman. The violets, long associated with modesty and concealed emotion, serve as both confidants and symbolic reflections of Mario's restrained yet fervent longing."

There are many beautiful photographs in Estrada's *Pansies*. Just browsing through the book, you'll appreciate the author's knowledge and passion for the pansy. *Pansies: How to Grow, Reimagine, and Create Beauty with Pansies and Violas* is the perfect book for any botanist or gardener's home.

—Barney Lipscomb,

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