

Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

Volume 35, number 3

January 2007



PRESIDENT'S GREETING

I hope the Holiday season and New Year find you and your plants healthy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing president Laurene Jones for her dedicated service for the past four years. Our club has seen many changes over these past few years, as our membership has both waxed and waned. Last year the club voted to change our meeting schedule to nominal by-monthly meetings (schedule posted below). As many of you know, our National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society has agreed to host the National Gesneriad convention in 2009. Although this is a big commitment, we know that we have the talent and energy to pull this off, but we will need everyone's help.



Alsobia 'Cygnet'

The newly elected board of directors is full of enthusiasm and great hope for this year. We are coming up with new ideas to re-vitalize the club and add excitement to the meetings including the reinstatement of the "Little show" and "What's Blooming" at each meeting as well as opportunities to win door prizes simply by attending meetings, details below. I would also like to thank our outgoing Petal Tones editor, John Boggan, for his hard work over the past 8 years! Please help me to welcome our new Petal Tones editor, Mark Zukaitis, whom many of you know from the Gesneriphiles Digest. Mark is a long time gesneriad enthusiast, you can see more information about him in the "Greetings! From the Editor" column, as well as newsletter deadlines. My hope is that this year we can re-ignite our passion for gesneriads and our enthusiasm to get together to discuss them. For this I need help from all of you. Please pass this newsletter on to anyone you know who may be interested in gesneriads.

Happy growing, Carol Hamelink

MONTHLY PLANT RAFFLE

We all have extra goodies that are too good to toss but that we have no sales outlet for. Bring them to the meeting and we will share them with each other. Everyone who attends the meeting will be given a raffle ticket. Extra tickets can be purchased at 3 for \$1. After

the business meeting tickets will be drawn until all the donated plants, cuttings, rhizomes, tubers, pots, soil, whatever are gone. If we run out of tickets, the donated items on the table will be available for a "grabfest" (first to grab it keeps it). This will be a great way for us all to share our collections and get new treasures.

MONTHLY LITTLE SHOW

Are you frustrated by never having your best plants in flower to coincide with the annual show? Do you want

to learn more about how plants are judged, and earn ribbons towards a special prize to be given out in December? Then bring that show plant to our meeting this month. We are re-introducing the Chapter Little Show at this month's meeting. Rules: Any Gesneriad worthy of being shown is allowed into the show. Plants should be clean, bug and disease free (of course!) and entered in any of the horticulture classes used at our show in September. Judging will be done competitively, just as in a standard Gesneriad show, with "imaginary ribbons" awarded to the winners in each class. Judging will be done by a team consisting of whoever we have at the meeting who's a qualified judge. If no judges attend the meeting, the general membership will award 1st, 2nd and 3rd place ribbons based upon their knowledge of the plants shown. And unlike a normal judged show, the judging will be done "in the open" so that you can hear the discussions as the judges praise (or criticize) the entries. All comments will be

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valuable insights on how to grow your plants better. Sweepstakes for the most blue ribbons and Best of the Year for the highest score will be awarded at the end of the year. Please limit your entries to 3 plants per grower per meeting.

Also, each month will feature two design classes. All are encouraged to enter designs - we need the practice for National in 2009. The design titles for this month are:

"Winter Blahs" - a small design no more than 8" in any direction.

"Florida Vacation" - an underwater design.

Judging will take place immediately after the business meeting, while we are getting ready for the monthly program / speaker.



Kohleria warszewiczii

WHAT'S IN BLOOM

We all have a favorite plant that flowers when we least expect it. It may not be show quality, but it's probably worth sharing. Bring the plant along and you'll be given a few minutes to tell the rest of us how you grow it, what makes it special to you, and get ideas on culture from other members who may also be growing it. Plants grown for special foliage can be shown here too!

Jim



Pink flowered Episcia species that Mauro Peixoto has growing under one of the benches in his greenhouse

FEBRUARY EPISCIA PROGRAM

The February NCAC TGS meeting features a talk on growing Episcias by Lee Linett. Many of us grow these lovely plants for their beautiful foliage, but a quick web search reveals a much greater potential that includes a surprising capacity for creating unusual shapes as well as beautiful blooms in shades of orange, pink, purple and even yellow. Join us in February as Lee shares tips on how to grow a prize winning Episcia in as little as six months. The meeting will also include a plant sale and swap, so you can add some Episcias to your gesneriad collection. Stay tuned for the February issue of Petal Tones which will include an article by Lee on growing Episcias that provides a taste of her February program.

DECEMBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The December NCAC-TGS Holiday party was once again held at the National Arboretum. The meeting was well attended with great food and a large selection of raffle plants. No one went home empty handed unintentionally! Many thanks to all who donated plants and cuttings.

The candidate slate put forward by the nomination committee was elected into office. The new officers for the next 2 years are:

President:	Carol Hamelink
Vice president:	Jim Roberts
Secretary:	Jim Christ
Treasurer:	Larry Skog
Directors:	John Boggan John Rountree Denice Whitman

SPRING IS COMING SOON

Achimenes mexicana is a beautiful scaly rhizomatous gesneriad from Mexico. The flowers are a nice purple slipper shape, similar to *Achimenes dulcis*, or *Sinningia speciosa*.

If you grown *Achimenes mexicana* or any scaly rhizomatous gesneriad, this time of year is a great time to bring Rhizomes for the plant sales table. *Achimenes mexicana* is a graceful plant – it has always grown as a single stem for me, with soft alternate leaves and those beautiful large blue-purple flowers. If you like fuzzy plants you would enjoy growing this plant with its gentle, crystalline indumentum.

This is the time of year to share *Achimenes* rhizomes! It won't be long before they begin to initiate growth. For me *A. Mexicana* starts in March and flowers sometime beginning in June, with long lasting flowers. This is one of my favorite gesneriads.

Upper Right, *Achimenes mexicana* with *xKoelikohleria* (now *Glokohleria* 'Pink Heaven')



Achimenes mexicana

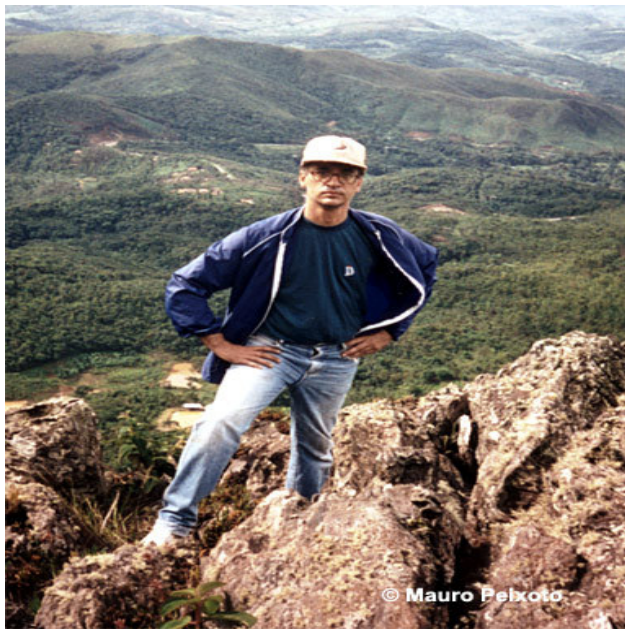
2009 CONVENTION NEWS

Lee Linett and Nell Hennessy are Co-convention chairs. The biggest need right now is still to find a hotel. Projected dates are July 8-11. Laurene Jones will handle the goodie bags.

Carol Hamelink, outgoing Secretary



Episcia 'Raspberry Tart'



BRAZIL PLANTS SUPPORT CLUB

Mauro Peixoto cultivates and collects seeds from Alstroemeriaceae, Amarylliaceae, Araceae, Aristolochiaceae, Begoniaceae, Cactaceae, Gesneriaceae, Iridaceae, Orchidaceae, Passifloraceae and Velloziaceae plant families found growing in Brazil. In order to generate funds to help him in this endeavor he has started a support club whereby people can support his efforts and receive seed packets throughout the year. Last year our NCAC-TGS joined Mauro's seed club at the Sustaining Membership level. For the contribution of \$60 we received from Mauro 18 seed packages last year.

We currently have 10 club members who have participated in receiving these seeds. If you have not received any seeds, are an NCAC-TGS member and would like to grow from seed, please contact me at hamelinkc@yahoo.com to sign up. I have been appointed point person who collects the seed requests from the club members, receives the seeds, divides them up and sends them out. This is a great opportunity to try new varieties, as Mauro's list is generally very long. I already have seedling up from planting seeds in early December. It looks like I will have a lot of Sinningias in the near future, so if you've missed out on the earlier seed divisions, let me know and I'll save you some seedlings.

This year the club has decided to renew our membership at the Preservationist Membership level. For \$125/year we will now receive 36 seed packages this year (12 packages 3 times this year). This is a great way for all of us to increase the varieties we are currently growing in preparation for hosting the National TGS convention in 2009. Please contact me if you would like to participate by selecting and growing out Brazilian gesneriad seeds.

Carol Hamelink

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

February 10, 2007: Lee Linett will give a presentation on *Episcia* at the National Arboretum at 10:30 a.m. – You will not want to miss this!

April 14, 2007: 4/14 Program at 10:30 a.m. To Be Determined

June Summer Picnic! Day and Location to be determined

September 8, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum, program TBD

October 13, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum, program TBD

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum, **Christmas Party**

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you Carol and Jim and the Board for voting to allow me to help out with the newsletter! Our discussions regarding form of mailing were fruitful and the responses I did receive from membership regarding e-Mailing Petal Tones rather than go to the expense of copying and posting them was encouraging. Of course, for those members who do not have e-mail the newsletter will continue to be forwarded via U.S. Mail.

Personally, I'm really excited to be involved with a chapter again, and especially the NCAC chapter! I haven't been a member of a local chapter since I lived in New York and was a member of the New York chapter, where there were many, many enthusiastic people who were so generous in sharing their experience and knowledge with me. Being part of a chapter was very important to me then. There was always a large crowd and lots of excitement. The little shows were large and interesting, the raffles were lots of fun for everyone and the presentations were something we all looked forward to. For some reason though, I've heard that attendance has dropped off at the New York Chapter. I hope I am wrong. This is happening not only in the New York chapter but the National Capital Area Chapter as well. This is unfortunate. Even though I have not been involved with a chapter myself, but continued growing plants on my own, the fellowship and sharing of plant material, exhibiting our plants to be admired by others and engaging in various other activities is a very important part of keeping in touch, and up to date with what's growing, what's new and if you don't get *Gesneriads* magazine, what's not *Koellikeria* (now *Gloxinia*) or *Dalbergaria* (now *Columnea*). I don't know, maybe it is a function of the internet. What with *Gesneriphiles* and all the photographs people post in addition to the generosity of the members of *Gesneriphiles* in sharing

their plants people no longer see any need to be involved with the chapter – to make the effort to come to the Arboretum. This would only seem to make sense, but in light of the fact that we are hosting a Convention in 2009 we need lots of participation, and a vigorous and healthy chapter provides much more than what the isolated endeavor of communicating solely via our computers can ever hope to provide. At any rate, I would like to hear from as many people as possible with regards to how the Gesneriad Society has impacted your quality of life, perhaps for a future article. If I write about this topic I promise not to use names so go ahead, drop me a line.

To the members who have recently stopped attending our gatherings, I would like to ask, what is the essence of the hobby for you. What most gives you pleasure and fulfillment with regard go growing our plants? Exactly why do you, personally, grow your plants and study the natural history of Gesneriads (and other plant families as well). What would characterize the ideal chapter for you? It would be interesting to hear from people regarding these issues, particularly because so many of us have been involved for 30+ years without becoming jaded or bored. There is a lot to look back on and remember, and a lot to look forward to (especially the 2009 convention). Let me know what YOU think by e-mailing me at mzukaitis@msn.com or writing to Mark Zukaitis, 422 George Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 (Cell: 410-206-5307).

Obviously this newsletter is going out to people who

have not attended recently along with the corps group who is currently active, and so I would like to take this opportunity say please come and join us – and bring something wonderful to enter in the newly reinstated Little Show and share with us the interesting and informative presentation that Lee Linett is giving on Episcia at the February meeting!

PLEASE NOTE: PETAL TONES WILL BE PUBLISHED THE FIRST WEEK OF EVERY MONTH. PLEASE SUBMIT ARTICLES BY THE THIRD WEEK OF EVERY MONTH.

Surely there are times when you have something flowering, but alas and alack! These things happen off schedule for meetings and are out of bloom by the time you can enter in a little show! Never fear – take digital photos of your treasures when they are at their peak – and send the pictures to me with an article in your own words as to how you grew your plant, what attracted you to it in the first place – some natural history, what you like about that particular genus, etc. Have you been reflecting on how grateful you are to have access to the never-ending source of wonder, beauty and amazement we all know and love . . . express yourself! We all want to know what you have to say – what you think about your plants and the experience of living with them, nurturing them, procuring them. God knows we do love to trade, shaer and buy plants! I am planning to really get a lot of that off my chest, myself in the near future. . .

Happy growing and see you ALL at the February meeting!

Mark Zukaitis



Episcia 'Pink Panther'



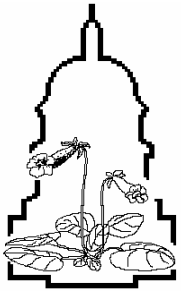
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National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC), a chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc. "The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars." (NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981)

NCAC meets four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

AGGS website: <http://gesneriadsociety.org> **NCAC website:** <http://members.aol.com/aggsncac>

Membership: John Boggan, jkb25@cornell.edu, (202) 328-8145



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Episcia 'Tiger Stripe' – grown by Carol Hamelink

FEBRUARY MEETING AGENDA

Hi Everyone. We're doing things a little differently for the February meeting. We can discuss at the business portion of the meeting whether we would like to continue future meetings in this manner. We're going to start the meeting with the talk on Episcia by Lee Linett, because we have already posted the time of this talk as 10:30. So please try to arrive on time! A brief overview of the schedule is as follows:

- Welcome:** 10:30 AM
- Talk on Episcia:** by Lee Linett 10:35
- Refreshments:** 15-20 minutes- please use this time to complete your design and horticultural entries for the Little Show

JUDGING OF THE LITTLE SHOW

"What's in Bloom" growers talk about their plants.

Brief overview of April meeting talk by Bob Stewart

Raffle of Plants and Sales Table open to all

Board Meeting open to all NCAC club members

FUTURE PROGRAM TOPICS

The Chapter needs your help. We want to provide programs that interest and stimulate you. We want you to look forward to the meetings that we have, not just come because there's nothing else going on that weekend. To that end, we would like feedback from you on what you would like us to provide for programming.

Below is a quick listing of potential topics. If you are interested in hearing a speaker on any of them, please send a quick e-mail back to us. We can't guarantee we're going to find a speaker for any of these topics, but we'll try. Also, if you have any speaker suggestions, pass them on to us.

- Dish gardens
 - Terrariums
 - Trained Gesneriads (bonsai, sculpted)
 - Natural Plantings
 - Hanging plants (growing large epiphytes well)
 - Terrarium plants (high humidity, small growing plants)
 - Saintpaulia species
 - Any specific genus – you name it for us:
-
- Alternate growing media (leca stones, long fiber sphagnum, bark slabs)
 - Alternate growing methods (hydroculture, wick watering)
 - Growing from seed
 - Asian Gesneriads
 - Photographing Gesneriads
 - Gesneriads in the Wild
 - Hybridizing Gesneriads
 - Judging – Hold a Judge's School at the Arboretum
 - Alpine/ Winter Hardy Gesneriads
 - Other topics????

We would like to balance the arts and plant culture in planning the meetings. Please consider this list or any other ideas you may have. We will bring this up at the February board meeting, so if you cannot make the meeting, feel free to email your ideas to one of your elected officers. I think we can attract some quality speakers from many places on the east coast; we know a lot of them. And most Gesneriad experts love talking about what they love!

PRESIDENT'S GREETING

Now that the holidays are a distant memory, and spring still a ways off, I find myself spending more time fussing with my gesneriads. Before I started growing plants indoors on light stands, I spent this time of year poring over catalogs and planning outdoor gardens. Now, I'm perusing web pages looking for something new and different to grow inside.

Over this past year I have added several new genera to my collection, so for many of them I don't really know what will work best for their winter dormant periods. The new challenges for me this year are *Eucodonia* and *Gloxinia erinoides*. They both went dormant this month after I had to treat them for powdery mildew. I did find healthy rhizomes in the pots, and I'll keep them barely moist until I see new growth. Several of my petrosmeas have just finished blooming, and have either started to die back or to sucker, either way the beautiful rosettes are ruined, and I'm starting them over as well.



Episcia 'Pink Acajou'

The *Achimenes* from the planters outside were harvested several months ago before the first frost and are now in a large bowl waiting for spring. When I see the first of them starting to sprout, I'll be potting them up. I did notice that the top layer had turned green- they were white or slightly pink when I pulled them out of the soil, so I've covered them to give them a darker environment. The ones that were growing on the light stands are still in pots. One of these days, I'll dig them up and be excited by the number of rhizomes.

It is during these cold winter months that I am very thankful for the *Chiritas*, *Kohlerias*, *Episcias*, and *Saintpaulias* on my shelves. No dormant period, and even the occasional bloom. This, for me is the best part of gesneriad floriculture- blooms in the middle of winter. Second would be the endless potential to start over. Gesneriads propagate so easily that there is always another chance. So what if the plant was too far from the light and it got leggy – I can cut it back and let it branch out, or restart it completely from cuttings.

Each time there is renewed hope and optimism for the plant to reach its potential, and, unlike my outdoor gardens, it doesn't even require spring.

Happy growing, Carol Hamelink



Gloxinia erinoides (Smithsonian) – Leslie Brothers

VOLUNTEERS FOR REFRESHMENTS FOR FEBRUARY MEETING NEEDED

We, the newsletter editor and NCAC club officers, have been busy sending out the newsletter and a flyer advertising Lee Linett's talk on *Episcias* for our February show. We hope to have a great showing of interested colleagues. If you can help by bringing some refreshments to share, that would be appreciated!

SINNINGIA PIRESIANA

This plant grows epiphytically on the trunks of trees in Sao Paulo State in Brazil – a very interesting fact about several *Sinningias* growing in Brazil, their native land. It is hard for me to imagine what it must look like, a potato-like tuber stuck to the side of a tree – especially when they are dormant! All that color cascading along the trunk of a tree must be something to see when in bloom! *S. piresiana* is a member of a group within the genus *Sinningia* known as *Dircaea*.

For more information Visit Alan Lavergne's informative and beautiful website - **Sinningia and Friends** - <http://home.earthlink.net/~sinnvenner/homepage.htm> for more complete information about the entire genus – *Sinningia* – including beautiful photographs, interesting natural history, and much, much more) The *Dircaea* Clade is a grouping within *Sinningia* of species that were moved from the old genus *Reichsteineria*. The name was changed from *Reichsteineria piresiana* to *Sinningia Piresiana* by Alan Chautems in 1990. Their flowers look similar to *Sinningia douglasii* (formerly *Reichsteineria verticillata*) to which it is closely related, and they are beautiful the way they are presented in a terminal cluster in the middle of the slightly hairy, pleasantly green umbrella-like arrangement of four leaves at the top of an

eight inch or so, very stiff stem (similar in growth habit to both *S. douglasii* and the more familiar *S. leucotricha*). The article in *Sinningia and Friends* describes the plant as having three whorls of leaves, but so far mine has had only one. Maybe this year! Paul Kroll, a friend I met in Gesneriphiles, sent me a tuber but I do not know how old it was when I received it. It did not flower that first year under my care, but did the second with a few flowers. Last year, it's third year was a nice display and this year I can't wait to see what it will do! That is what I love about growing these plants – as time goes on they just get better and better.



Sinningia piresiana

After it finished flowering last summer the leaves looked pretty good through fall, when both leaves and stems just fell off all at once, without ever turning completely yellow. At this point I stopped watering totally and put the pot away from the window, in a place where I can keep an eye on it.

This week I noticed new growth just showing around the "growing point" on the top of the tuber and gave it a thorough drenching with a one-half strength solution of Sea Mate – an organic liquid seaweed product with 20-20-20 fertilizer. Once it starts into growth it moves very quickly and is quite amazing to watch. This *Sinningia* is usually available through the AGGS Seed fund and would be very well worth growing and hybridizing with. It is definitely one of my favorites!

PRESENTATION NOTES

EPISCIA – GROWING FOR SHOW

By: Lee Linett

One of the popular names for Episcias is "Peacock Plant," no doubt due to the variety of foliage colorations, and whether you grow them at home to add a spot of color here and there or you grow Episcias to enter in flower a show as we recently held, just a few steps will ensure they'll come through with flying colors.

This is how I grow Episcias under my growing conditions:

1. Temperature range: 70-80 degrees F.;
2. Atmospheric humidity: 40% - 60%;
3. Water: Evenly moist, Not Wet;
4. Potting medium: Must be well-draining (1-1-1 works well). You can also use Metro Mix or Pro Mix B with an addition of 1/2 part plain kitty litter;
5. Pot: Either plastic or clay; I like to use azalea pots;
6. Fertilizer: 1/4 strength every watering with a variety of fertilizers. Flush with plain water every fifth watering;
7. Light: For a 2-tube 40 watt fluorescent set-up, I use one cool white plus one daylight with the Episcias placed 4" – 6" from the tubes. North East and East facing windows also provide good light. Fluorescents are on for 14-16 hours per day.



Miscellaneous Episcia Hybrids

To grow a show plant, you must start with healthy cuttings that should not have more than two sets of almost-mature leaves.

- Fill an azalea pot (4" – 6" in diameter) with your potting mix to within 1" of the pot rim. Tap the pot to

settle the mix and water with warm water to thoroughly moisten.

- Poke a hole for each cutting and sink each cutting to just below the bottom leaves. Firm the mix around each cutting and when the pot is full, water from the top, let drain, and enclose in a glass covered terrarium or plastic bag.

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- Put the potted cuttings at the end of the tubes or out of direct sun for a week and then remove from the terrarium or bag. Note: Humidity should be at least 40%.

- Leave the potted cuttings at the end of the tubes for another week; by this time they will be rooted and well on their way to the show.

- For the next 2 months, remove all stolons that form as well as any flower buds that pop up. The plan is, grow nice leaves as large as possible on a plant (several cutting in a pot are considered to be one plant) that is as symmetrical as possible.

- If you are using a 1-1-1 mix, you will have to begin fertilizing as soon as the cuttings have rooted; if using a soil-based mix, wait a month after roots form.

- For the entire time up to show, you will need to adjust the amount of light the Episcia receives by moving the pot closer to the center of the tubes. Broadly speaking, Episcias are not high light growers, nor do they do best in low light conditions. However, for good flower production they should receive more light than if grown only for foliage.

- At the end of the 2-3 months, allow stolons to form, but only at the bottom. Continue removing stolons that form at the top and middle and remove flower buds. Because Episcias are fairly symmetrical plants, you want to maintain this symmetry with the largest leaves on the bottom along with the largest stolons. Removing the competing stolons that grow higher up on the plant at this point will ensure this.

- At the end of 3 months, stop removing stolons except for those that spoil the symmetry; allow them to grow out to their full potential. You will see that the stolons produced are shorter, sturdier and have larger leaves.

- In another week, allow flower buds to form if you are planning to show the Episcia with flowers. Note: The larger, older stolons should also have flowers or buds showing color.

I have found that Episcia 'Temptation' and E. 'Silverdust' grow in sort of cascading style that begins almost as soon as the plant/cutting has rooted and will grow this way no matter what you do; most of the stolons are produced at the top of the plants and tend to cascade downwards, but with a bit of judicious leaf realigning, you can maintain symmetry as best as possible.

In 5 months of growing, it is possible a bottom leaf or two will have to be removed – remember the 1" space you left in the pot? That is so you can add some fresh potting medium if needed which always looks good before a show although, for Episcias, you should not be able to see anything but leaves when you look down at the plant sitting on the table.

You will notice that I have not addressed the subject of pests and diseases, so suffice it to say that Episcias are subject to the same pests and diseases that affect other gesneriads and can be treated with the same remedies. Cleanliness and common sense go a long way in keeping your Episcias healthy: isolate newly-acquired plants; keep the growing area clean and make sure all potting and grooming material is clean/sterilized; do groom your Episcias as needed; keep the air moving with a small whisper fan; dust the lights.

Over the years I have grown dozens of Episcias and am always willing to try new ones yet I always return to the same ones which have proven very reliable for flowering, foliage, and ease of growth: 'Acajou'; 'Cotton Candy'; 'Keewee'; *lilacina* 'Malay Ebony'; 'Malay Ruby'; 'Pink Panther'; 'Plum Country'; 'Tricolor'; 'Tropical Topaz'; 'Temptation'; and *xantha*.

For something different (as in – you don't know what you'll get), try growing from seed. The Gesneriad Society has mixed Episcia seed and there is every chance you will be able to grow some really nice plants.

NOTE: When transporting Episcias, A.V. rings are useful for keeping leaves and stolons from touching the bottom of the box – or you can snuggle the pots into Styrofoam peanuts to cushion them. De-static the peanuts by placing them in a large bag with two or three unscented dryer sheets, shake them around, and let sit

in the bag a half hour. Rings of tightly coiled newspaper also will stabilize pots in a box; use tissue paper underneath leaves and stolons to protect them. Bubble wrap should be placed as a "top covering" over the plant(s) in the box when transporting in cool weather.

Perhaps *Episcias* could be the plant-of-the-month for February to go along with the talk.

I would encourage people to bring their *Episcias* for demonstration and to bring cuttings or stolons to



Episcia 'Strawberry Patch' – grown by Carol Hamelink

exchange, sell or for the raffle. This is a great way to increase your collection and acquire new varieties.

There are just two things to keep in mind when entering *Episcias* in a show:

- 1. Foliage MUST be distinctive (either by means of color, pattern or texture) to enter in the foliage class, and**
- 2. Flowers should be evenly distributed around the plant for the flowering class.**

In the home, grow *Episcias* for spots of color and enjoy them in hanging baskets, terrarium plantings, strawberry jars, or just cascading over their pots!

* * *

FEBRUARY LITTLE SHOW

Since it has been a while since the club held monthly Little Shows, here is a quick explanation of how we're going to run them. Entries for the February Little Show will begin immediately after the main program each month, during the social event. You will have 15-20 minutes to enter your plant (s) and arrangements. That means that the arrangement should be mostly assembled before you get there or you'll have a hard time finishing it. We will use the schedule from the Fall show as a guide in placing plants. If you don't have your schedule, one will be at the meeting each month to help you place your plant in the correct Class. Since judging is competitive, two *Chiritas* in flower in the Little Show will be judged against each other whereas two plants

from different genera will most likely each be in its own Class and each could win a Blue ribbon. Except for the two listed Arrangement Classes, the show is primarily for horticulture exhibits. From month to month these arrangement classes could include terrariums, dish gardens or other artistic classes to give us all practice. The two arrangements for this month are:

"Winter Blahs" - a small design no more than 8" in any direction.

"Florida Vacation" - an underwater design.

The winner of the most blue ribbons at each Little Show gets to write the Arrangement Schedule for the following meeting.

Judging will be done by a team or teams of any and all TGS registered judges who are present at the meeting. Comments by the judges will be made out in the open so that all can learn how judging is done, what to strive for in growing show plants, and how to remedy flaws that the judges may find. "Virtual" ribbons will be awarded to the winning plants. Awards for the most ribbons will be given out at the December Christmas Party.

One last thing: This is a Little Show. Please don't bring 20 plants! Try to choose 2-3 plants that best represent the prize-winners in your collection. We're not going to turn away any entries, but we do have a limited time for this program each month.



Episcia 'Unpredictable Valley'

WHAT'S IN BLOOM?

Remember to bring along a plant to each meeting to share with the group. This need not be of show quality but should be something special. Either bring it because it has some special trait, is blooming for you for the first time, or is something with great foliage that is just not growing in "show form." We're not going to be judging these plants, but we all want to see what's out there that doesn't make it to shows. Some plants just never bloom at the right time, or are difficult to grow into nice symmetrical shapes, or always drop the bottom 12

inches of leaves off the stem before putting out a dozen flowers at the tip. We want to see "What's in Bloom!" For this month's meeting I'd like to suggest that we all bring an *Episcia* so that the public gets an idea of how varied and beautiful this genus can be. Remember to keep them warm. February is not an ideal time to carry *Episcia* out into the cold.

PLANT RAFFLE

Please bring along extra seedlings, full grown plants, cuttings, pots, soil mix, and other supplies for the monthly raffle. We all have extras of something. This is a big hit at the Christmas Party and there's no reason why we can't do it every meeting.



Achimenesantha 'Caligula' – grown by Christian Feuillet

PLANT SALE

If you plan to sell any plants or supplies at the meeting, please place two identical labels in the pot. One will be pulled to give you credit for the sale, and the other will go home with the new owner. I suggest keeping the prices on the low side since we're selling to each other, not the general public.

TIPS FOR UNDER WATER DESIGN

So you're thinking about entering an underwater design in the February Little Show, but don't know where to begin. I am in the same boat, so I called Laurene Jones and asked for advice. Let me share some of Laurene's answers to my questions. Remember, you aren't the only one who has never attempted an underwater design before, so you may as well try it!

First, as is common advice for anything new, experiment. I did this last weekend and found that things I thought would be a problem weren't, but things I had never even considered ended up being very distracting. I'm not going to go into the



Kohleria 'Peridots Kitlope'

basic elements of design – that's a topic for another time. Instead, I'd like to answer some basic questions I had before I could even try an underwater design.

Start by selecting a container. For the February Little Show, there are no restrictions on the container shape or size. Just remember that the container defines the volume you are working in, so choose a container that is consistent with the size and shape design you are considering.

Construct your design in an empty container. As with any design category, your design should fit your container. Your design must not touch the sides of your container or break the water surface at the top. The design should be anchored firmly to the bottom of your container. This was easier than I expected – that pliable green florist clay works very well. I'm told you can glue your design to the bottom of your container, but I have not tried that.

Once you are happy with the way your design looks in the empty container, it's time to add the water. I was concerned that adding the water would be difficult, but it went fairly easily. Just don't pour it onto the design. Instead, pour the water down the sides of the container slowly. If your container is round, you will have to pour the water onto something that deflects it to the sides of the container. Room temperature water is best. Water that is too hot or cold will shock your plant, and may discolor the leaves or even kill the plant.

My container was a round bowl, and I found that, when filled with water, round bowls distort and magnify their contents. A design that looked the right size when empty appeared too large for the bowl when I added water. When I got a design of what appeared to be the correct size for the bowl looking from eye level through the water, it appeared to be very small for the bowl when looking down from the top (without the curvature distortions).

Another problem I encountered was that the blossoms on my Aeschynanthus, which stood up well in the air, tended to droop in the water. I thought about using wire or some other device to hold the blossoms in place. Unfortunately, the magnification from the glass bowl will emphasize any mechanics you use to anchor pieces of the design. The rule for mechanics (those structural support things) is that it does not have to be invisible, but should be minimal and at least not distracting. Choose wire that matches the plant material color. I'm told there are water proof glues that work very well for this. I'm off to the craft store to see if I can find something that might work.

Another problem I encountered was the formation of lots of tiny air bubbles along the glass surface and on all of the design materials. The longer the design was under water, the larger the bubbles got. Plant material

that has very hairy leaves or flowers will tend to exaggerate the problem, as the hairs will trap the air. Although this is not supposed to count against a design, it is certainly not attractive. I'm told that boiling the water and letting it cool overnight may eliminate a lot of this. (Boiling the water drives out dissolved gases, which are what cause the bubbles.) There is also the rumor that some fish aquarium products may eliminate this as well, so I'm off to the pet store to explore this possibility. Using distilled or de-ionized water is yet another option, as it will eliminate the dissolved gasses and also prevent the blossoms from discoloring due to dissolved iron or other materials in the water.

A final thing to consider is that white blossoms tend to fade too quickly and can appear transparent over night. This is not an issue for the February Little Show, since we are filling and judging within a very short time. However, it can be a serious problem for traditional shows where you often must enter the design the night before the judging. Even when you fill the design shortly before judging, if the show lasts several days, a design with white blossoms may not be very attractive at the end of the show.

Good luck and I hope you'll try an underwater design.
Carol Hamelink

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

April 14, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum, Bob and Dee Stewart will give a talk on Soil and Water

June Summer Picnic: Date and Location TBD

September 8, 2007: 10:30 AM

October 13, 2007: 10:30 AM

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM **Christmas Party**

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to thank our membership for the positive feedback about the new format of Petal Tones

I have received a couple of responses from people and thanks – about what you like to grow, why you grow it

and how you grow it – to those of you who have not yet sent me an e-mail with this information, please do send it to me as it will go a long way with regard to deciding on programs and topics for the group, not to mention topics for articles and photos in Petal Tones.

Don't forget that in this format, the sky is the limit as far as member participation is concerned. Rather than be frustrated about a plant that is a real show winner, all dressed up and no place to go – way off schedule for a little show. Take a photograph of it and send it to me with your comments! We would all very much enjoy hearing about it.

WHAT WE GROW

So far I have received information from Mike Salapka and Shirley Huffman who are growing the following:

Mike Salapka is growing Achimenes, Aeschynanthus, Alsobia dianthiflora, Chirita, Columnea, Episcia hybrids/species, Nematanthus, Saintpaulia grandifolia, S. ionantha, Sinningia and Streptocarpus.

Shirley Huffman is currently growing, among other things, **Achimenes** 'Tiny Red', A. 'Purple King', **Aeschynanthus** lobbianus **Alsobia** dianthiflora, **Chirita** 'Aiko', C. 'Diane Marie', C. 'Betty', C. 'Keiko', C. 'Chastity', C. 'Hisako', C. 'Moonlight', C. 'Silver Surfer', C. 'Stardust', C. gemella, C. longgangensis, C. sclerophylla, C. sinensis latifolia 'Dwarf', C. spadiciformis, C. tamiana, C. USBRG98-083, C. 'Hisako', **Codonanthe** carnosa, **Columnea** gigantea (dalbergaria), C. 'Rudolph Valentino', **Episcia** 'Blue Heaven', E. 'Kee Wee', E. 'Pink Acajou', E. 'Pink Panther', E. 'Silver Skies', E. 'Strawberry Patch', E. 'Suomi', E. 'Tropical Topaz', **Eucodonia** 'Adele', **Gloxinia** lindeniana, **Kohleria** 'Brazil Gem', K. 'Dark Shadows', K. 'Emily Roberts', K. 'Green Goblin', K. 'Laura', K. 'Manchu', K. 'Silver Feather', K. 'Snakeskin', K. hirsuta, **Nematanthus**, **Petrocosmea** flaccida, P. forestii, P. minor, P. rosettifolia, **Sinningia** leucotricha, S. cardinalis, S. schiffneri, **Saintpaulia** variegated, minis and semi-minis and trailers, **Streptocarpus** 'Christmas Morning', **X-Codonanthus** 'Aurora', **XGloxohleria** (XKoellikohleria) 'Goblin', and XG 'Pink Heaven'.

It would be interesting to know what the rest of you are interested in, specifically. For one thing, if everyone knew what the other members were growing, it would provide an even greater opportunity to obtain things some of us might be looking for – we could publish a wish list in Petal Tones and people could bring in those plants on the list or similar ones for the raffle, the plant sales table, or could contact the individual privately and possibly arrange an exchange. This type of thing is what makes gathering together *in person* rather than sitting at our computers on Gesneriphiles (which I admit I am addicted to myself) and achieving the same results, but with no real contact, and the fellowship just isn't the same. How often I have wished I could meet some of the wonderful people I have met on Gesneriphiles in person, but they live so far away I'll never know them personally! When we gather together and share in the

fellowship (and food) of the group and its activities, we meet equally wonderful and generous people – and it's nice to be able to see your faces and hear your voices!

Looking forward to seeing all of you on February 10, 2007.

Mark Zukaitis

Brazil Seed Club Membership Protocol

Although I posted a short article on the club's membership to Mauro's Brazil seed club in the last Petal Tones issue, I have been asked for more details. If you're a member of the NCAC TGS and would like to participate in this seed club, please send me an email and I will add you to the list. Three times a year, I get the seed availability list forwarded to me from Larry Skog. I then distribute this to everyone who has emailed me and asked to participate. Participants then select their top 6 seed orders and email that to me. I compile the list and select the top most favorites to send on to Larry to place our order. Sometimes everyone selects different items and there are no clear favorites. In that case, I take the top seed request on each individual's list and from that make the list to give to Larry. This way, everyone should get something they want and other varieties to try as well. Be sure you send me your list in your order of preference. Once Mauro sends me the seeds, I divide them amongst all of the participants and mail them out. Although we do not have any requirements at this time for participants to share seedlings with the rest of the club, this is a great idea. I know that after sowing the first batch of seeds we received last year, that I have an over abundance of several of the varieties. As soon as these get a bit larger, they will be added to the raffle table at one of the future meetings.

Carol Hamelink

THE FOLLOWING PHOTOS ARE FROM MAURO PEIXOTO'S WEBSITE. A FEW GOOD REASONS TO CONSIDER HIS BRAZILIAN PLANT CLUB!



Episcia cupreata 'Red'



Episcia fimbriata



Sphaerorrhiza (Gloxinia) sarmentiana (Gardner ex Hook.) Roalson & Boggan



Sphaerorrhiza (Gloxinia) burchellii (S.M. Phillips) Roalson & Boggan

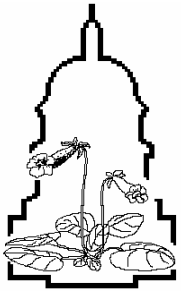
National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC), a chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc. "The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars." (NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981)

NCAC meets four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

The Gesneriad Society website: <http://gesneriadsociety.org> **NCAC website:** <http://members.aol.com/aggsncac>
Membership: John Boggan, jkb25@cornell.edu, (202) 328-8145



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Petal Tones

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The Gesneriad Society

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Episcia 'Unpredictable Valley' Grown by Jim Roberts

PRESIDENT'S GREETING

I hope you all enjoyed the last club meeting as much as I did. We had a couple of new people join and were delighted to see some long time members as well. The raffle table had an impressive amount of plants and related goodies. Thanks to everyone who contributed! We had a lovely Little Show last month and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in April with their new lovelies. I apologize for taking so long to get the Little Show judged. We have decided to try to do that in the back of the room during the program to try to speed things along. This means you'll need to get your plant entered and your designs finished before the talk at 10:30. I encourage everyone to participate. This is a great learning experience for those entering the plants, as well as those of us judging them. If you have a plant that you like, bring it along. The gesneriad family is so large there's a good chance that we haven't all seen it before. If you have a plant that can't wait until the next meeting, take a picture of it and send it along to Mark for the newsletter. Chirita 'Vertigo' was blooming nicely on my stands last week, but the blooms are dropping fast, so it won't wait until April. Although the plant doesn't yet have a beautiful rosette, it has large beautiful variegated foliage and large sturdy bloom stalks. Despite my lack of photographic skills you can hopefully see the plant's potential in the photo below.

Although winter clearly hasn't given up the fight yet, I'm hoping this snow storm today was the last! Just last week, after that prolonged cold spell, it was beginning to feel like spring. The plants are even starting to wake up. The Achimenes rhizomes are beginning to grow, and the *Seemannia purpurascens* rhizome sprouts have broken the surface this week as well. I grow a lot of Episcias in an easterly facing window. When they start to perk up, I'll know spring is truly here. Here's hoping that's right around the corner. Happy growing.

Carol Hamelink

DESIGN CLASSES FOR APRIL MEETING

"Spring is Sprung": 12" x 12" arrangement of planted gesneriad, design must show motion. If you plan a hanging design, please bring your own set up for hanging.

"Miniature Magic": 5" x 5" arrangement of planted or fresh cut gesneriad material.



Arrangement: "Winter Blahs" by Carol Hamelink

FEBRUARY LITTLE SHOW RESULTS

Thanks to everyone who brought in plants for our first Little Show in a number of years. There were 12 entries which gave our panel of judges a real work-out in the short time that they had to evaluate them.

HERE ARE THE RESULTS:

SWEEPSTAKES in horticulture tie to **Carol Hamelink**

BEST IN SHOW to Carol Hamelink for K.'Green Goblin'

BEST IN ARTISTIC to **Carol Hamelink** for *Winter Blahs* with 94 points-Carol gets to write decide the 2 classes for Artistic/the Arts for our next meeting.



Kohleria 'Green Goblin' grown by Carol Hamelink

FINAL TALLY:

Section B Class 9 Kohleria in Bloom:

K. 'Green Goblin'-Carol Hamelink-96 points-Blue

K. 'Emily Roberts'-Carol Hamelink-94 points-Red

Section C Class 15 Columnea in Bloom:

C. sanguinea 'Gigantea'-Lee Linett-85 points - Red

Section D Class 28 Saintpaulia Trailing:

S. 'Rob's Toorooka'-Shirley Huffman-93 points-Blue

Section E Class 35 Variegated Leaf Episcia:

E. 'Unpredictable Valley'-Jim Roberts-96 points-Blue



Columnea Sanguinea 'Gigantea' grown by Lee Linett

Section E Class 34 Episcia Grown For Foliage:

E. 'Chocolate Velour' -Carol Hamelink-95 points-Blue

Section E Class 36 Petrocosmea for Foliage:

P. *forrestii*-Shirley Huffman-93 points-Blue

Section E Class 38 Other Gesnies Grown for Foliage:

Drymonia serrulata 'Bronze'-Jim Roberts-86 points-Red

Arrangement 8" 'Winter Blahs':

Carol Hamelink-94 points-Blue

Jim Roberts-93 points-Red

Arrangement 'Underwater 'Florida Vacation':

Carol Hamelink-82 points-Red

Jim Roberts-72-points-White

Congrats to all who entered. Judges for the show were Carol Hamelink, Lee Linett and Jim Roberts. Maybe we need to get some more accredited judges in the group. The judges did not judge their own plants or arrangements, but it would certainly help to have full panels of three at all times.



K 'Emily Roberts' hybridized by Jim Roberts, Grown by Carol Hamelink

UPCOMING MEETING DATE

April 14, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum - Lee and Bob Stewart will give a presentation relating to the following:

"Water and Soil Basics"

This will be an interactive talk covering a variety of topics in water quality and soil mixes for growing gesneriads. Some of the topics included will be:

1. what should be tested for, what minerals might be missing;
2. how plants absorb water and what they do with it;
3. pH, soluble salts
4. drainage
5. mix ingredients, and capillarity.

Questions from the audience are encouraged during the talk and will steer the discussion.

Anyone who wishes can bring a sample of their water (in a clean well-rinsed small glass jar) and samples of their soil mixes for Bob Stewart to test

**GLOXINIA 'DRAGONSONG'
By Jim Roberts**

Our new editor is just what we need. Someone who will bug the heck out of us until we write an article for Petal Tones. Mark has asked me for several articles, including one on a hybrid of mine that I brought in for the "What's in Bloom" part of our meetings in February.

Gloxinia 'Dragonsong' is not a new hybrid, but it hasn't been seen very often in shows like my other popular hybrid, Kohleria 'Emily Roberts'. However, it still holds a special place in my heart. I really like the plant!

'Dragonsong' is a hybrid of *Gloxinia erinoides* 'Red Satin' x *Gloxinia perennis*. Both of these plants had been in cultivation for quite some time, and both had good and bad features. However, I saw some very nice similarities between the two and thought (at the time) that these two species might make an interesting cross. At the time that I made the cross the *G. erinoides* 'Red Satin' was classified with the genus name *Koellikeria*, so I had no idea if the hybrid was even possible. However, there were many other "intergeneric" crosses being done and I figured that I had nothing to lose.

I decided to use the *Gloxinia erinoides* 'Red Satin' as the seed parent in the hybrid. I did this for several reasons.



Gloxinia 'Dragonsong'-hybridized and grown by Jim Roberts

First, *Gloxinia erinoides* 'Red Satin' rarely self-seeded for me, so I figured that if a seed pod did develop from the crossing the chances were good that the pod was going to contain hybrid seed. *Gloxinia perennis* would self-seed almost half of the flowers that opened, so I would have to plant seed from many different pods to see if any contained hybrid seed.

Second, the flower size between the two plants is dramatic. I wasn't sure that pollen collected from the *G. erinoides* would be able to travel the entire distance required to fertilize the seed in *G. perennis*. So it made more sense to use the ample pollen produced by *G. perennis* on the smaller *G. erinoides*.

The third reason is that there was always plenty of available pollen on the *G. perennis*, whereas the *G. erinoides* pollen was hard to come by. If there was any loose pollen in those tiny flowers it was hard to collect.



Euglossine bees visiting *Gloxinia perennis*. Photo Anton Weber

So, I had the direction of my cross chosen. I applied pollen on several *G. erinoides* flowers and to my delight all swelled nicely and were showing signs of a successful pollination after just a couple of weeks. It's been too long for me to remember how long the pods took to ripen, but the seed all turned out to be viable. Knowing that the seed was the result of a cross between two species I did not expect any seed to seed variation and just grew on a few of the seedlings. The rest were tossed in the trash.

The results of my efforts: a perfect blend of the two parents. As anyone who grows or has grown *G. perennis* knows, this is no light garden plant. It can easily reach 3-4 feet tall. It generally only gets a single flower spike per stem, although a pot with many stems can be a spectacular site. The pale lavender flowers don't open very far, but emit a slightly sweet minty smell. This is one of the very few scented Gesneriads.

G. erinoides is much more manageable in the light garden. It can reach 1-1 1/2 feet tall, but that's still smaller than many of the Kohleria that we find a way to squeeze in. The plant has attractive reddish leaves covered with silver spotting (the *G. perennis* has dark bronze, glossy leaves). The plant produces many flower spikes per stalk, but it takes several stalks to make the plant showy. The flowers are very small, two toned red and white slippers. And it too has a subtle scent. You have to get your nose right down in the flower, but it's also a little minty.

The hybrid retained the multiple flower stalk trait of the *G. erinoides*, a flower in good scale to the plant which is mid-sized between the two parents, and has the two tone effect in lavenders instead of red and white.

It also carried over the scent of both parents. I hope everyone at the meeting was able to detect it. When the plant is sitting in a light garden and the air is undisturbed you can actually smell it from several feet away.



Gloxinia erinoides

G. perennis produces huge rhizomes. They often curl around the bottom of a 6" pot several times. *G. erinoides* produces very small rhizomes. The hybrid produces manageable, easy to find rhizomes closer to the size of the *G. perennis* parent. This makes sharing this plant easy. As most of you know, from a single large rhizome you can get hundreds of plants quickly by simply breaking off all the individual scales and planting them on the surface of the soil. Cover the moistened pot or enclose it in a plastic bag. Within just a few weeks the scales will push themselves out of dormancy and start growing.



Gloxinia 'Dragonsong' in arrangement entered by Jim Roberts NCAC Little Show

I named the plant XGlokeria 'Dragonsong' and registered it with AGGS. I had been reading all the Anne McCaffrey Dragon books and the teeth on the bottom lips of the flowers and the airy feel of the plant brought to mind the flying dragons in her series. It is now simply a Gloxinia due to the reclassification of the genus Koellikeria to Gloxinia. I don't have either of the parents at this time, but would like to get them both back.

I've tried to self the plant, but haven't been successful so far. Perhaps the hybrid is sterile. Or maybe it just doesn't produce very good pollen. I'd like to continue to try to hybridize with this plant, crossing it with *G. erinoides* to try get the spotting back on the leaves. And I'd also like to try crossing it with *G. perennis* 'Insignis,' a smaller growing variety of *G. perennis*, to try to increase the flower size a little. Anyone with plants or rhizomes to donate?

I encourage anyone interested in hybridizing to give it a try. Find some closely related plants with traits you like and see what you can do.

DESPERATELY SEEKING!

This is the place to post your wish lists, or plants you'd like to find.

Carol Hamelink's wish list – if anyone has any of these I'd be happy to arrange a trade, or be willing to purchase.

- Gloxinia rupincola*
- Gloxinia sylvatica*
- Streptocarpus 'Crystal Ice'
- Chirita 'Cynthia'
- Kohleria 'Ganymede'
- Sinningia 'Peridots Darth Vader'
- Sinningia *speciosa* 'Tigrina' type
- Sinningia 'Amizade'
- Sinningia Rio das Pedras- no luck at starting seeds!

Jim Roberts' wish list - Gesneria species or hybrids (other than *humilis* or *christii*)

Any Diastema

Any former Trichantha or Dalbergaria alliance members of the Columnea tribe.

I'll trade or pay for any of the above.

Contact me at 443-838-1935

Jim Roberts



Carol Hamelink's Humidity Chamber. Photographed by Carol Hamelink

NEW HUMIDITY BOX

By Carol Hamelink

I'm trying a new humidity chamber this winter. Jim set up a terrarium to force a couple of *Amorphophallus* that were very late

at breaking dormancy. Luckily for me, they quickly became too tall, so I adopted it for all of the high humidity loving gesneriads that are new to me. We put a fish aquarium heater set to 80F in the water reservoir at the bottom to keep it nice and warm. The plants are all wicked, just like on my plant stands, but with the cover in place it's dripping with moisture (see photo below). The pink *Episcias* are really taking off, growing better than they have in the bubble bowls I used last year. I got a couple of *Nautilocalyx* starters at the national convention last summer and a few *Gesnerias* from fellow club members that are thriving in there! It's fun trying new plants, as well as new ways of growing.

See page 4 for her photo (ed.)

KOHLERIA GREEN GOBLIN

By Carol Hamelink

Basic soil mix: 1 part Promix potting soil, 1 part perlite, 1 quart horticultural charcoal per 5 gallons 1:1 mix. Since *Kohlerias* don't like to dry out, big pots (larger than 4 inches) get two wicks. I try to monitor them to make sure the wicks are continuously working and the plants stay moist. *See the photograph of Carol's Little Show entry of K. 'Goblin' on page 2. ed.)*



Grown and Photographed by Carol Hamelink

CHIRITA VERTIGO

By Carol Hamelink

Same basic soils mix as for *Kohlerias*, but lightened even further with the addition of more perlite. *Chiritas* don't like to stay wet and prefer to be on the dry side. I still wick them, but monitor and take them off of the wicks every couple of weeks to let them dry out.

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

Lee Linett's *Episcia* presentation was received with great interest at the February 10, 2007 meeting. Her talk covered everything from types and varieties of *Episcia*, their culture, and how to groom them for show. Not least in importance was the suggestion to wipe the pot off with a half-and-half solution of vinegar and water to get the white mineral deposits off, then finishing with a light coat of oil to give the pot a nice, clean look.

I hope you send me your wish lists! What a great opportunity to both obtain and share plant material with other members.

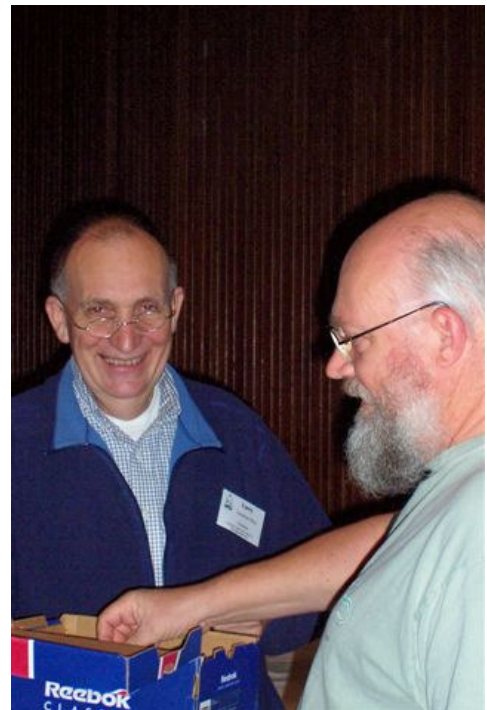
One DEFINITE on my wish list is Jim Roberts *Gloxinia* 'Dragonsong'! The photo does not do it justice. The plant has a truly magical quality – a rare wildflower from an ancient and mystical land. I can't wait to grow this one!



Lee Linett showing us how to use a shower cap to keep the pot, soil, and moisture contained and away from tablecloths, etc.

Lee also let us know how easy it is to find things to plant in – starter plants can go into little cups you get filled with barbecue sauce with Buffalo Wings – or the tops from laundry detergent (which also double as boosters under the lights because they are tall and narrow – and you can free up the pots you used to use for more planting! Lee's presentation was very informative and delightful and if you were not there I am sorry you missed her!

HOWEVER – it is not too late for those of you who did not come to the last meeting to plan to see what Bob Stewart has up his sleeve at the next!



Larry Skog holding the raffle tickets as Christian draws for a prize from the raffle table

He and his wife Dee have been growing and showing for many years, and have made a name for themselves at the of The Gesneriad Society conventions for growing both unusual, seldom seen plants very well, and some things we have seen before but in unusual ways. I will never forget the photographs I came across from the last Convention showing *Streptocarpus* growing mounted – like an epiphyte! I can't wait to see what he will bring to show us, in addition to the presentation on soil, water and what can be added to soil and water to make our plants grow to their maximum potential.

Mark Zukaitis

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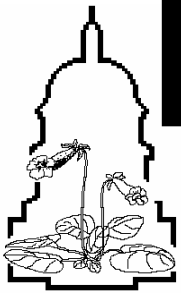
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Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

Volume 36, number 5

April, 2007



Calcaroboaea concinna – grown by Bill Price, 2006 Convention
Awarded Best Gesneriad in the Toronto Gesneriad Society show!

PRESIDENT'S GREETING

Spring greetings to all! I look forward to seeing everyone in just a few weeks. We expect another exciting meeting this month and hope you can join us. Don't forget to bring in a water and soil sample if you'd like an on the spot analysis by our guest speakers, the Stewarts. Remember, the talk will start at 10:30, so come a little earlier to get your plant and design entries set up for the little show (see the revised entry schedule below), since we will judge them while the talk is proceeding. I expect another generous selection of plant materials on the raffle table, as I again have another bumper crop of cuttings and starters to share. We're even planning on discussing updating our chapter's web page, so do try to join us!

It's also time again to choose from Mauro's extensive seed list. Although we've decided not to publish the list in the newsletter (11 pages), I have sent out a pdf version of the list to all who have previously told me they'd like to grow from seed. If you're not yet on the list and want to be, please drop me an email, and I'll send you the list. For all of you who have received seeds from Mauro last year, I'd like to know how it's going. Please drop me an email and let me know what success and failure you have had. This will help us to decide which seeds to order- no sense ordering the same stuff that's already growing well. For further details, see the "Seed Project Update" below.

Happy growing, Carol



SEED PROJECT UPDATE

I got an inquiry from a new member interested in growing seed from Mauro. The question was, what seed have we already ordered, and is it growing well. I went through the records this weekend and have the lists of seeds we've ordered. Since we joined late in the year, last year we got our allotted 18 seed varieties in 2 orders. The first time we got a batch of *Sinningias*:

- S. Rio das Pedras
- S. cardinalis Innocent
- S pusilla 'Itaoca'
- S. leucotricha
- S. tubiflora
- S. araneosa
- S. schiffneri
- S. bulbosa

The second time we ordered:

Codonanthe devosiana "pink" MP 0018
 Gesneria humilis
 Gesneria hyb. (christii x citrina) x self
 Phinaea multiflora
 Sinningia tuberosa
 Sinningia sellovii, 'Purple Rain'
 Sinningia sellovii
 Diastema sp cf racemiferum
 Gesneria cunifolia
 Pearcea hypocyrtiflora

Personally, I have had good luck with *S. schiffneri* and *bulbosa*. I got three seedlings from *s. araneosa*, and 1 from *leucotracha*, but it looks suspiciously like a *Columnea* (?), and no luck with 'Rio das Pedras', *cardinalis* 'Innocent'. The second batch got started a bit late, so not much to tell yet. Anyway, let me know how your seedlings are doing.

Carol Hamelink



DESIGN CLASSES FOR APRIL MEETING

"Spring is Sprung": 12" x 12" arrangement of planted gesneriad, design must show motion. If you plan a hanging design, please bring your own set up for hanging.

"Miniature Magic": 5" x 5" arrangement of planted or fresh cut gesneriad material.

UPCOMING MEETING DATE

April 14, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum - Dee and Bob Stewart will give a presentation relating to the following:

"Water and Soil Basics"

This will be an interactive talk covering a variety of topics in water quality and soil mixes for growing gesneriads. Some of the topics included will be:

1. what should be tested for, what minerals might be missing;
2. how plants absorb water and what they do with it;
3. pH, soluble salts
4. drainage
5. mix ingredients, and capillarity.

Questions from the audience are encouraged during the talk and

will steer the discussion.

Anyone who wishes can bring a sample of their water (in a clean well-rinsed small glass jar) and samples of their soil mixes for Bob Stewart to test

LITTLE SHOW

In an effort to speed up entries and to make the job a little easier on the judges, the Little Show is being changed slightly this month. We may go through several different set-ups until we find one that works well for all of us. Entry cards should be filled out by you and brought with you to the show. The entry card should be a simple 3 x 5 inch index card with the name of the plant on the front, along with the Section and Class. For arrangements, this same card should give the name of the arrangement as well as list all the material used in the arrangement. Your name should be written on the back of the card. Sections and Classes will be simplified also, and you should use the following guidelines. If there are several plants that would fall into a single class in a standard Gesneriad Society show, the judges may, at their discretion, divide them out into a subclass.

Section I – Gesneriads in Flower

- Class 1 – Tuberous
- Class 2 – Rhizomatous
- Class 3 – New World Fibrous-rooted
- Class 4 - Old World Fibrous-rooted
- Class 5 – Saintpaulia

Section II – Gesneriads Grown for Foliage

- Class 6 – Episcia
- Class 7 – all other New World
- Class 8 – Chirita and Petrocosmea
- Class 9 – all other Old World

Section III – Other Horticultural Entries

- Class 10 – New Hybrids or Species
- Class 11 – Rarely Seen Hybrids or Species

Section IV – Artistic

- Class 12 – First arrangement or design as listed in Petal Tones
- Class 13 – Second arrangement or design as listed in Petal Tones

We hope to see many entries this month. Let's try to impress our visitors from Massachusetts. And flower show entries are a great way to entice locals, who may be visiting our group for the first time, to get excited about this great plant family and join us. We got four new members in February. Let's try to do that every month!

MEMBER PLANT COLLECTION PHOTOS

One of the really fun things about a chapter newsletter for me is to get a chance to see pictures of beautiful plants, potential wish-list candidates.

Carol Hamelink, our chapter President has offered pictures of the plants she grows with her notes on each plant.

I find this extremely interesting – and it is a beautiful thing for a member not only to be able to routinely grow such beautiful plants in their own homes, but to share them with us.

All of the following plants were grown and photographed by Carol Hamelink.

Enjoy the tour and, thank you Carol!



Chirita sclerophylla is a somewhat difficult *Chirita* to grow. The leaves are fairly brittle, and it can vary a lot for how much contrast there is in the light and dark shading on the leaves. This is the nicest it has ever looked for me. I had this same plant in our fall show last year. When I was clerking for Ben Patternoster's team as he judged the plant. The plant was in a 2 1/2 inch pot. He was telling the other judges in his team that he had seen the plant much larger. I had always thought it was a small one and had never put it into a bigger pot. But I potted it up into a 3 inch pot after the show and it has taken off. This *Chirita* seems to be less fussy about being watered by the constant wicking method. Growing under two tubes, standard soil- 1/2 pro mix potting soil, 1/2 perlite plus generous amount of horticultural charcoal.



Drymonia chiribogana. This is my first *Drymonia*. I have it under both 4 tubes (this plant) and two tubes. It may like a slightly wetter soil than my usual mix, because it is constantly running

dry. Or I have too many cuttings in the pot. It was a single stem, but I didn't find that attractive, so I cut it into four pieces and rooted them all in the above pot. It bloomed earlier this month, but the blooms are fairly small for such a large plant.



Kohleria bogotensis 'El Chrystal'. This is a very large *Kohleria* species. It can get up to 24 inches in height for me. I have it under 4 tubes and two wicks to keep it constantly moist.



Kohleria hirsuta (Ecuador collection). Another *Kohleria* species. This one is fairly compact and often a heavy bloomer, although

there is some difficulty keeping the stems fully clothed as it ages. Also grown under 4 tubes, standard soil mix, single wick.



Kohleria 'Gunsmoke'. This is one of John Boggan's relatively new creations. He has been working on getting beautiful foliage. This one has the most amount of silver in the leaf veining. It is a fairly heavy bloomer. (I don't know the parentage- maybe we should ask John). Stays fairly compact (8-12 inches) and sturdy stems with no tendency to trail. Grown under 4 tubes with standard soil mix and single wick. Sometimes dries out when it is blooming heavily.



Kohleria 'Silverfeather'. Another of John Boggan's hybrids. This one has absolutely beautiful contrast with the dark leaves and silver veining. The blooms are fairly small, so in my mind it is a better foliage plant. Sturdy upright growth with no tendency to trail. It has occasionally gotten to be quite tall (18 inches), although normally 8-12 inches. This is from tip cuttings, grown under tubes with standard soil and single wick.



Kohleria 'Green Goblin'. Still going strong. Another of John Boggan's hybrids and one of my favorites. Compact grower (8 inches or less). Beautiful bright green leaves with silver veining. Small, but prolific clear orange flowers, with lovely fuzzy orange buds. Grown under four tubes, standard soil mix with single wick. Need to watch hydration when blooming freely.



Kohleria 'Napoleon V'. This is actually a photo of three tip cuttings that are rooting in a glass of water. Somehow the photo of the plant didn't get saved on the camera. This is a new Kohleria hybrid for me. I purchased it from Ralph Robinson (Violet Barn) at the MAAVS convention last October. It had gotten very large before I cut it down (18 inches). The contrast of the flowers with the medium dark green leaves is very nice. Although the flowers are small, they are prolific and beautifully hairy.



Seemania medea. (Not sure, but think it is a hybrid). Grown from tip cuttings in my new enclosed wicking terrarium. I was growing this under 4 tubes on the stand along with all the Kohleria, etc. But I constantly had trouble with this one. It would suddenly go downhill and then collapse. Since moving to the high humidity enclosure it has perked up and appears to be thriving. Grown under 4 tubes, but enclosed with temperature controlled water reservoir.



Streptocarpella. This is a plant I got from Benkes nursery last fall to put in a terrarium for our fall show. It grows fairly rapidly, and branches freely making a nicely shaped plant. Grown under 4 tubes, 3 inch pot, Single wick.



Gloxinella lindeniana. Grown under 4 tubes, standard soil mix, single wick. I find this to be a difficult plant to grow. The leaves have beautiful patterning, but tend to curl somewhat tightly, suggesting possibly a desire for increased humidity. I have put one in the high humidity box to see if that improves the foliage.



Sinningia speciosa. Tuber is several years old, about the size of a large orange. Grows rapidly when it breaks dormancy and blooms prolifically for several weeks. Grown under 4 tubes, 5 inch pan pot, standard soil mix, two wicks. Need to watch hydration when blooming.



Sinningia 'Seminole'. Got this from Dale Martens (not sure if it is one of her hybrids). About 8 inches tall, beautiful green leaves and

lovely deep pink blooms. Usually have to stake it to keep it upright. I should post this on Gesneriphiles. Dale would be pleased to see how nice this one looks right now.

RHIZOMATOUS PLANT MULTIPLICATION

By Jim Roberts

You might ask why I called this article multiplication rather than propagation. The reason will become clear by the time you finish reading this piece.

Rhizomes, as you know, are specially modified storage growths produced by a number of the South American genera of Gesneriads. These organs can be thought of as tight bundles of leaves, packed together tightly on a stem, ready to burst into growth as soon as conditions are favorable for the plant to grow. Although they usually form under the soil level and remain dormant there, some plants will even produce these modifications at the leaf axils or at the terminal growth of the plant under stressful conditions. The modified leaves, or scales, are packed full of growth hormones and will, when triggered by favorable conditions or a fixed dormant period, cause the stem to elongate and push the end of the rhizome towards the top of the soil and emerge as a new plant.

When the plant is in active growth you will be hard pressed to find any rhizomes at all in the pot. Once the plant has reached maturity, has flowered and is ready to go back to sleep rhizomes are produced in abundance (this term abundance can vary greatly between genera and the size of the rhizomes produced can also vary greatly). It's important to start withholding water and letting the plant experience some stress at the first sign that it is approaching the end of its growth and wants to rest. Without stress the number of rhizomes will be reduced.

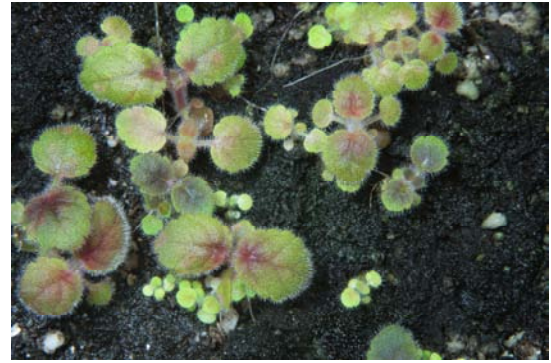
Now comes the multiplication part. Most of us take whatever rhizomes are produced by a plant, pot up half a dozen or so in a pot and share the rest with friends. This time of year especially is a time to share. The Achimenes are ready to wake up. Seemannia and all the other genera that used to be called Gloxinia are ready to burst into growth. Smithiantha, Kohleria, Diastema, Phinaea, Niphaea; they're all available as rhizomes around this time of year. But what do you do with a single rhizome when someone shares one with you? Pot it up and have a lonely little stem growing in the pot that first season until you have extra rhizomes of your own?

I think not. Multiply it. The easiest and quickest way, if the rhizome is large, is to simply break it into several pieces and plant them all in the pot. Then, instead of one plant growing up out of the soil you'll have several. But you can take this even further. If the plant is something new and in limited circulation, or if the plant is one of those that looks great in a huge mass planting, take that rhizome and split it up into individual scales. That's right, those hormone packed, compressed little leaves will each sprout!

I was recently picked up a rhizome of *Smithiantha cinnabarina*. Smithiantha is one of those plants that looks better grown as a single crowned specimen in the pot. However, it's also a great plant to share. Around the beginning of February I took my small rhizome and split it up into scales. The scales will each act like leaves that are being rooted, and as such want to have some light. Don't bury them like you would a rhizome or piece of rhizome. Simply sprinkle them on top of a pot of soil mix, water well, and enclose the pot in a plastic bag. They don't take kindly to drying out.

Below is a picture of this pot of scales after just 6 weeks. The plants mostly have several sets of leaves and are already showing

the decorative red foliage and fuzziness of a full grown plant. They will reach flowering size in a single season and in just 6 weeks I have multiplied a single rhizome into several dozen plants to pot up or share. Look for some at our monthly raffle.



Another advantage of scaling is that you can force a plant out of dormancy this way. Achimenes are all long-dormancy plants. They start to grow in the spring, flower by mid to late summer, and keel over into dormancy in the fall. It's a rule that can't be broken. Or can it? By scaling an Achimenes rhizome in say, January, and planting the scales on top of the soil, the plants will be up and growing strong by early March and may even start to flower by the end of April. That's months ahead of their normal schedule.

Let's all try to bring a rhizome or two to the raffle in April. Share and multiply!

NCAC/TGS WEBSITE!

The officers of the National Capital Area Chapter of The Gesneriad Society feel that it's time for us to put together a new and updated web site. A place to go to find out what's happening at the next meeting, A place to find other member's e-mail address or home addresses without having to dig out an old e-mail. A protected area so that those same addresses don't become a source for spammers. A place to archive the new and improved Petal Tones. We've done a little research on this and if anyone has more information, please bring it to the meeting in April. However, here's what we've found after a quick search and a talk with my daughter, Emily Roberts Freed. The domain name www.NCACTGS.org is available. For about \$10 a month we would have this name available for the site, along with over 200 GB of storage space for archiving Petal Tones, pictures, etc. We would each be able to have an e-mail address at this domain if we choose, so that we don't have to use work or personal e-mail addresses (jim.roberts@ncactgs.org).

We will be able to post slide shows of past flower shows, or even videos if we choose with that much storage space. Emily works with a program called Dreamweaver and knows how to do all this for us. Once the site is set up we will be able to maintain it ourselves or pass updates on to Emily for her to add to the site. We will also be able to post links to TGS or to any other interesting site (Gesneriphiles, gesneriads.ca, etc.). We will need to come up with a plan to either go ahead with developing our own web site like this or an alternate plan that someone else brings to the meeting.

Let's make our web site something that will make us as proud as the new Petal Tones does. It's nice to have other Chapters of TGS comment on something we've done. Let's make the NCAC of TGS a web site that other groups will try to emulate. Whatever we decide, we'll probably want to form a committee to get together in May to design the home page for our site. Think about volunteering!"



2006 Convention Show Class 5 Blue Ribbon Winner
Sinningia 'Apricot Bouquet' grown by Paul Lee

2007 CONVENTION ANNOUNCEMENT

The Gesneriad Society's **51st ANNUAL CONVENTION**

Tuesday, July 3rd to - Sunday, July 8th, 2007

The site of this year's convention is tropical Miami. Our host chapter, the Caribbean Basin African Violet and Gesneriad Society, has prepared an exciting schedule of events for all convention goers, in addition to the flower show, plant sales and a full line-up of speakers.

Jim Roberts will be attending the convention and would like to pair up with a roommate to share expenses. If interested please contact the editor or Jim Roberts whose e-mail address is listed in the roster of officers in this newsletter. -ed.

DESPERATELY SEEKING!

This is the place to post your wish lists, or plants you'd like to find.

Carol Hamelink's wish list – if anyone has any of these I'd be happy to arrange a trade, or be willing to purchase.

- Gloxinia rupincola*
- Gloxinia sylvatica*
- Streptocarpus 'Crystal Ice'
- Chirita 'Cynthia'
- Kohleria 'Ganymede'
- Sinningia 'Peridots Darth Vader'
- Sinningia *speciosa* 'Tigrina' type
- Sinningia 'Amizade'
- Sinningia Rio das Pedras- no luck at starting seeds!

Jim Roberts' wish list - Gesneria species or hybrids (other than *humilis* or *christii*)

- Any Diastema
- Any former Trichantha or Dalbergaria alliance members of the Columnea tribe.
- I'll trade or pay for any of the above.

Contact me at 443-838-1935

Jim Roberts

Mark Zukaitis' wish list – *Gloxinia* 'Dragonsong'
 any *Saintpaulia* species,
Achimenes erecta 'Tiny Red',
 any Kohleria, any *Codonanthe* species or hybrid,
 any *Nematanthus*



Smithiantha cinnabarina – photo by Ron Myhr

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the newsletter. It has been great to move into Spring and watch the tubers (and I've seen some *Achimenes* come out of dormancy too). This issue is a great treat as Carol Hamelink and Jim Roberts both contributed heavily and they have so much to offer!

It would be great if all the members took a look at Carol's photo tour of her collection and see if you can do the same.

And, if nothing else, please consider contributing to our "Desperately Seeking" section and send me a list of the plants you would like posted there. Petal Tones goes out to several places as we share our newsletter with other chapter editors and who knows? No matter how rare the plant you are looking for, if someone in the National Capital Area Chapter does not have it, someone somewhere else might be growing it and be willing to share/trade.

Calcaroboea concinna, the plant in the first photo on page 1 is a prize winning plant grown by a member named Bill Price. I would love to get my hands on that one! If you go to the National Convention you will see unusual and wonderful things. So take a minute and consider looking into the convention announcement and if you want to share a room with Jim Roberts, let me or him know!

Looking forward to seeing you all on April

Mark Zukaitis

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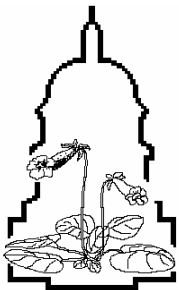
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Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

Volume 36, number 5

May/June 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

As summer approaches my mind turns to outdoor gardening. This year I am planning to expand my use of gesneriads outside. For the past several years I have grown many gesneriads on the shaded front porch all summer long. As long as they get enough water in our hot summers, they have done well. *Achimenes* have taken over my porch planter boxes, they bloom all summer long as long as they don't dry out and I love the rhizome harvest in the fall. I've got a couple new varieties this year to try to increase my color palette. I also find that the large *aeschynanthus* that I love, but have trouble finding space for indoors, do very well as hanging plants on the same shady porch. Last year I tried a few *Kohleria*, *Seemannia*, and *Achimenes* in a shade bed garden. They did so well that I am planning to do that again. *Kohleria* and *Achimenes* propagate so fast that I'm always running out of space to put them, but with the outdoor option, whole new vistas are open. These plants won't survive the winter, but I get enough rhizomes from my indoor collection to replant the next year. With the prolific production of propagules by *titanotrichum oldhamii* last year, I am looking forward to adding that to my shade garden as well. Jim Roberts reports that *titanotrichum* is hardy in his gardens with out digging up each fall, so that will be a welcome addition. Let me know which gesneriads you've had success with in your outdoor gardens.

Happy growing, Carol

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

June Summer Picnic: June 9, 2007

With the onset of summer, many of us are spending more time in our outdoor gardens and less with our indoor gesneriads. In light of this, we have decided to produce the Petal Tones newsletter on a bi-monthly basis for the summer months. As the next issue will be coming out at the beginning of June I sent an email out about the club picnic. As you know, at the last meeting, we had not yet decided where to hold our summer picnic. Although there was an excellent suggestion to meet at Calvert Cliffs, it was decided that this was a little bit too far.

We will hold our picnic **JUNE 9 at the Greenbelt Park**, at the Sweetgum Picnic area beginning at 10:30 AM. This park is easily accessible from the capital beltway, and offers picnic tables, public restrooms, and grills. Although there is no pavilion, there is a lot of tree cover for shade. I was told we could bring pop up shade covers, as long as we didn't need to tie them to the trees. As this will be primarily a social event, please bring friends and relatives.

Jim Christ and I will provide hamburgers, sausages, buns and condiments. Please bring a dish to share with others. Also please RSVP to me (hamelinkc@yahoo.com) if you are coming, how many friends or relatives you are bringing and what dish you are bringing. This will be in an attempt to spread out the food selection.

In light of the unpredictable weather conditions at an outdoor park, we will not be holding the little show, or what's in bloom. If the weather is nice and you have something you'd like to share, feel free to bring it along, but be prepared to find a way to protect it from the elements if needed. We will still offer the raffle table items to share. So please bring your extra cuttings, rhizomes and starters, as this is always a highlight of our meetings.

Hope to hear from you soon,

Carol Hamelink

September 8, 2007: 10:30 AM Karyn Cichocki will be visiting from New York to teach us all how to make dish garden and terrarium plantings. The design concepts are the same; just some differences in scale and relationship to container. Karyn is giving a talk on this same subject at The Gesneriad Society Convention in Miami in July. Plan to attend and bring a friend. More details will be available in the next issue of Petal Tones.

October 13, 2007: 10:30 AM

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM **Christmas Party**

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

Sorry about the change in Petal Tones distribution schedule, but with the summer here it is kind of hard to guarantee a monthly distribution, so we thought it was better to schedule it at a frequency we could better deliver to you.

It would be great to hear from all of you, to find out what is growing at this point and how it's all doing. Don't

forget to send me your wish lists so I can put them in.

WHAT WE GROW

The last couple of issues lists some of the things our members grow - and the April issue still awes me with the beautiful plants Carol Hamelink has so generously shared with us. Let's hear from any members who would also be willing to share! -Ed.



Titanotrichum Oldhamii



Titanotrichum oldhamii Flower detail – Hardy in Baltimore!

LITTLE SHOW RESULTS

Here are the Little Show results for the April meeting:

Section I Gesneriads in Flower

Class 2 Rhizomatous in Bloom:

Blue ribbon to Carol Hamelink for *Kohleria* 'Manchu' 97 points

Class 3 Fibrous New World in Bloom:

Blue ribbon to Carol Hamelink for *Episcia* 'Kee Wee' 95 points

Class 4 Fibrous Old World in Bloom:

Blue ribbon to Jim Hipple for *Streptocarpus* 'Bristol's Tractor Beam' 100 points!!

Red ribbon to Carol Hamelink for *Streptocarpus* 'Kim' 93 points

Section III Artistic

Class 12 Spring is Sprung:

Blue ribbon to Jim Roberts 97 points

Red ribbon to Carol Hamelink 90 points

Class 13 Miniature Magic:

Blue ribbon to Jim Roberts 95 points

Red ribbon to Carol Hamelink 94 points

Once again Carol takes sweepstakes with 2 blue in horticulture. Jim takes design sweepstakes with 2 blue in design. What I think is really amazing is that not a single plant or arrangement scored under 90 points. **Great growing and great showing!** And a special award should be given to Jim Hipple. He just joined our group at the February meeting. If his Strep is any indication of the way he's growing plants at home, we're all going to be learning a lot from him.

Thanks to our guest judges: Bob and Dee Stewart and Lee Linnet.

There won't be a Little Show at the picnic, but if you have something in bloom that you want to show the group your welcome to bring it for the "What's in Bloom" program. So let's all go overboard at the September meeting. We're not having a Fall Show this year, but all those plants that normally would be prime candidates for a Fall Show could be entered in the Little Show. Only one or two per class, please, but let's try to get some more widespread participation. Since the speaker is going to be Karyn Cichocki and the topic will be terrariums and dish gardens, let's all wow her with our "lack of skill" in this area. We'll do this in lieu of arrangements.

Check out these shots from our April Little Show:



Jim Robert's hanging arrangement – "Spring is Sprung"



Streptocarpus 'Kim' shown by Carol Hamelink



Carol Hamelink's hanging arrangement – "Spring is Sprung"



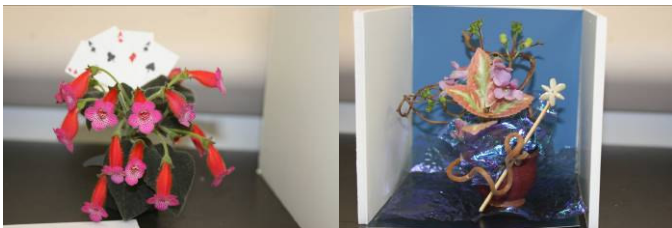
Kohleria 'Manchu' shown by Carol Hamelink



Jim Hipple's 'Bristol's Tractor Beam'



Episcia 'Kee Wee' shown by Carol Hamelink



"A Little Magic" by Carol Hamelink (left) and Jim Roberts (right)

Artistic and The Arts Classes for the September Meeting:

Class 12: Dish Garden or Natural Planting – These are not the same thing. A dish garden should be artistically balanced with a good selection of harmonious plant materials. Gesneriads MUST predominate. A Natural Planting is an artistic planting of one or more plants in a natural material (rock, driftwood, or other material).

Class 13: Terrarium – Either curved or straight sided glass enclosing the artistically balanced plant material.

Class 14: Photography – a print, no larger than 8 x 10", appropriately framed or displayed. If we get enough photos we'll subdivide the class to match the new TGS classes: plant close-up, whole plant, and plant photographed in nature. Only one entry per exhibitor, unless they fall into different classes of the three categories mentioned here.

The Plant Raffle

The Plant Raffle has been a big hit at our meetings. Not only does it give members something to do while the judges are hard at work judging the Little Show, but it gives us all cheap access to a lot of new and exciting plant material. Even though there won't be a Little Show at the picnic, there will be a raffle. Bring plants, cuttings, seedlings, growing material, and in keeping with the outdoor season, extra garden plants that you're thinning out.



Jim Christ calling the raffle



A small section of The Raffle Table

NCAC TGS WEBSITE IS UP!

One of our newer members, Jim Hipple has put a lot of effort into our website! The site is now up and running, although much of it is still "under construction." Check out www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org. Even though it is under construction I can see how beautifully, and creatively it has been done. The back issues of Petal Tones will be posted soon, and links that are there mostly as placeholders now will soon be active. Please take a look at it before the picnic and bring your ideas for additions and I'm sure you'll have lots of compliments for Jim

Thank you Jim!

Ed.



Saintpaulia grandifolia #299 grown by Bill Price, photo by Irina Nicholson

I GAVE AT THE OFFICE

One thing I really enjoy about my hobby, is that I sometimes come up with really nice gesneriad gift plants. One such experience that was very gratifying, was when I worked at the law firm DLA Piper US – they have a huge all glass building in Mt. Washington, Maryland so there is a lot of light – and so many of secretaries had African Violets growing and flowering on the ledges where all the files and mail are left for the attorneys to pick up. I couldn't resist talking to some of them, and one in particular, Sandy loved growing them and told me how she was dying to get a cutting of a pink flowered one with blue spots. None of these people have any exposure to the gesneriad world other than the most successful member of the family, *Saintpaulia* but they do love their plants, and I couldn't resist bringing her a very small start of *Saintpaulia grandifolia*. As it turned out, another secretary makes self-watering African violet pots that she made a pretty good business selling around the office. I went for a period of probably three months without wandering by Sandy's area – and got an e-mail from her telling me how excited everyone in her area was about her plant! I went over to see it and couldn't believe it grew like that just in the ambient light of the office

(although the offices on the outside are solid glass walls, it probably did make the inner work areas a little brighter). It had at least 50 flowers, all flung around a plant about 10 inches across and was absolutely beautiful. Everyone could tell it was an African Violet – however, they had never seen one like *S. grandifolia*, and there were leaves sticking out of cups in the attorneys offices, and on their secretaries desks. They all wanted a cutting because it was beautiful, and, it was a "wild" African violet – just as it grows in nature and not available in any garden center, anywhere. That made it special too.

Since then I moved on to another law firm and have been there a couple of months, and the secretaries with their little pots (I showed them how to wick-water them) sitting in the best light they can give them, which looks pretty good to me. The plants are growing very well. I like to give *S. grandifolia* because I feel it is foolproof, but they also have *Episcia* and *Kohleria*. This has created such an interest that there is talk about having a growing group at the firm (well, I started it). Once we get into fall we are talking about getting interested people together for a little talk and sharing of some plant material, intended to send them off to their workstations and offices to see how these things will work out. They do enjoy having something different and, to them "rare". Maybe it isn't rare in our world, but our plants certainly rare in the world at large!

The managing partner told me to post "Petal Tones" on the bulletin board and said I could distribute hard copy to people who would like to receive it – but they have already been getting it by e-mail.

Hiding our light under a bushel will only keep the exposure to this material that inspires such passionate interest among those of us who have loved and grown members of this plant family for so many years – but letting it out among plant hungry secretaries might even increase our membership. I do know that it has increased the traffic on the gesneriad and other plant-related websites!

It really is a lot of fun! If any of our members has a story like this, please send it to me, it would be good to hear how your plants are received – and how various plants do in the hands of "non-experts" who have never even called a plant by it's Latin name (at least intentionally).

Keep on growing – and Spread the Wealth!
Mark Zukaitis

April Talk Summary - SOIL AND WATER

Bob Stewart and his wife Dee (Chirita 'Diane Marie' was named for her) were very accommodating, with their long drive to The National Arboretum from Massachusetts and going to all the trouble to bring some great plants for the raffle table!

Bob's talk was interesting and animated about the

properties of soil and water, and the interaction of the various components chemically with their environment and various things we like to add – such as fertilizer. I found it fascinating and very entertaining to hear about the reason water spot damage happens when you drip cold water on the leaves of a plant in the sun, is that the water vapor filling the open spaces within the cells of the leaf condenses, forming a wet patch that drowns the cells, and that over fertilizing actually desiccates the roots of the plant, causing the concentration of salts outside the cells of the roots to be greater than the concentration of salts within the cells of the roots, thereby attracting the water away from the plant and thereby drying the roots, causing the plant to flop over – in most cases permanently. This is a good reason to listen when people say to use plant food at quarter strength – or even one-eighth strength at every watering, and to periodically pour around a quart of water through the pot and soil to flush out salts that have build up and lessen the efficiency at which the plant can take up fertilizer.



Christian Feuillet, Larry Skog and Carl Taylor listening intently to Bob Stewart's extremely interesting and entertaining presentation on April 14, 2007

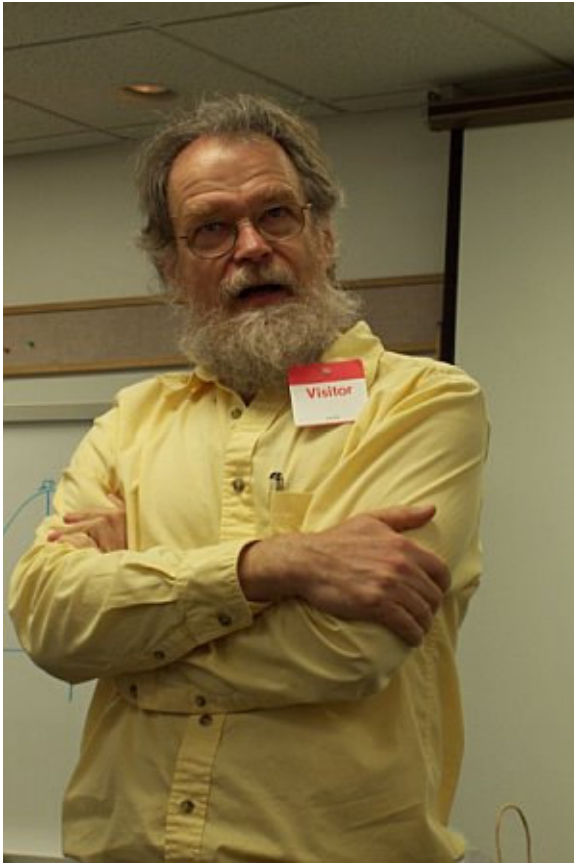
Vermiculite – that strange little hole-punch of mica that is heated until it expands, actually does more good in the soil as a cat-ion exchange facilitator, which means that phosphate will run right through the pot and is gone out the bottom, so it is a good idea to use a sparing amount of vermiculite in the mix, as the vermiculite chemically holds the phosphate molecules to itself, making it available for the plant to take up at its leisure. I don't know about you, but I was amazed by this fascinating information – and it is far from trivial even though a lot of people don't know that!.

Capillary action is another thing to consider when constructing a substrate for your plants – capillary action is the action of water in a small space to be pulled upwards – as in the spaces between particles of soil, long-fibered sphagnum moss, sand, etc. This actually causes the water to be drawn up into the pot as Bob demonstrated with a bright pink sponge – he set it in a dish and showed us that the water had been taken up by capillary action. In other words the sponge was saturated. He lifted it and you could see the excess water

dripping away. When it was finished dripping, he turned the sponge over from having the short side vertical to now holding the long edge vertical and water began to once again pour from the bottom of the sponge showing that capillarity is in opposition to gravitational forces and that there are limits to how high the water can be pulled upward. The way water behaves in soil, it really is not necessary to have lots of crockery in the bottom – that just shortens the soil ball in the pot and keeps the soil more evenly moist. Dee Stewart uses a piece of window screen over the hole(s) and that is enough. The water will distribute itself after the run-off has been collected in the saucer.

It was a wonderful lecture and everyone was engrossed in what Bob was saying and his excellent presence.

Ed.



Bob Stewart gave the lecture at the April meeting

Brazil Seed Club Membership Protocol

Just a reminder that if you are a member of the NCAC TGS and would like to participate in this seed club, please send me an email and I will add you to the list. Three times a year, I get the seed availability list forwarded to me from Larry Skog. I then distribute this to everyone who has emailed me and asked to participate. Participants then select their top 6 seed orders and email that to me. The rest of the protocol can be found in the April issue of Petal Tones.

Bring those extra seedlings for the raffle table!!

Carol Hamelink

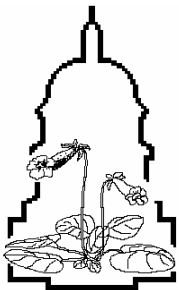
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NCAC meets four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

The Gesneriad Society website: <http://gesneriadsociety.org> **NCAC website:** www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
Membership: John Boggan, jkb25@cornell.edu, (202) 328-8145



NCAC/AGGS
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Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

Volume 36, Number 6

July-August 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

I hope everyone has enjoyed the summer break and is ready to begin meetings at the Arboretum again. We have a couple of great speakers lined up for the September and November meetings. As we commence our fall meeting schedule I'd like to encourage everyone to enter plants and designs in the Little Show competition. Please see back issues of Petal Tones for details on the Little Show (back issues now available on line on our new website). Remember that we will be having a show in the spring of next year. It's not too early to begin thinking about potential plant entries. Plant shows are one of the best ways to re-ignite and bolster a passion for this family of plants we call gesneriads. For the past couple of years we have had a limited number of individuals bring most of the show plants. I'm hoping we can break out of this routine with our spring show, as we have a number of new enthusiastic club members. A truly great show requires the participation of many people as this often leads to greater plant diversity. Entering a plant in the Little Show is a great way, if you've never entered a plant in a show before, to get an idea of how your plant will be judged. Gesneriad shows are competitively judged (as well, the Little show), as opposed to merit judging. This means that only one plant in each show category is eligible for each ribbon, blue, red, etc. A plant must also score 90 points or higher to get a blue, 80 or higher to get a red, and 70 or higher to get a white ribbon. Judges are looking for specific qualities such as the condition of the plant, which includes things like grooming to remove those pet hairs and traces of pesticide residue, trimming of leaves to remove brown edges, and removal of faded blooms. Plants are also judged for their culture which is a measure of how well the plant has been grown; are the leaves a vibrant green, or maybe pale from a nutrient deficiency. Does the plant have a pleasing shape, or is it leaning or leggy, suggesting that it may not have had enough light? Gesneriad shows allow staking of plants, the less obvious the better. One of the hardest things to control, that is also a point of judging, is the bloom count. With the exception of Saintpaulia, most gesneriads cannot be easily manipulated to bloom on schedule for a particular event. Many gesneriads bloom when they have reached a certain level of maturity (provided they have adequate light and cultural conditions), while others are seasonal and only bloom in spring or fall. This is the primary reason our club has chosen to alternate our shows from spring to fall each year. A plant that is just beginning to bloom and shows buds with color will often score better than one that is at the end of its blooming cycle. If you have the space, you can grow two plants of the same species, as one will often be slightly ahead of the other for its peak bloom time. For the shows, judging is done by panels of

three judges for each plant. For our Little Show, although we have certified judges in the club, we try to get the guest speakers to judge our shows, if possible for a non-biased view point. We also try to give the high lights of the Little Show judging, stating what qualities of the plant generated the score. This way everyone has the chance to learn what is valued in a particular gesneriad species. I hope you've got your eye on a plant or two that you may be able to bring to the September meeting.

Cheers, Carol Hamelink

LITTLE SHOW

Chairman – Jim Roberts

Section I – Gesneriads in Flower

- Class 1 – Tuberous
- Class 2 – Rhizomatous
- Class 3 – New World Fibrous-rooted
- Class 4 - Old World Fibrous-rooted
- Class 5 – Saintpaulia

Section II – Gesneriads Grown for Foliage

- Class 6 – Episcia
- Class 7 – all other New World
- Class 8 – Chirita and Petrocosmea
- Class 9 – all other Old World

- Section III – Other Horticultural Entries
- Class 10 – New Hybrids or Species
- Class 11 – Rarely Seen Hybrids or Species

Section IV – Artistic and the Arts

Class 12: Dish Garden or Natural Planting – These are not the same thing. A dish garden should be artistically balanced with a good selection of harmonious plant materials. Gesneriads MUST predominate. A Natural Planting is an artistic planting of one or more plants in a natural material (rock, driftwood, or other material). Only one entry of each type per exhibitor, but each exhibitor can have one dish garden and one natural planting.

Class 13: Terrarium – straight sided

Class 14: Terrarium – curved sided

Class 15: Photography – a print, no larger than 8 x 10", appropriately framed or displayed. If we get enough photos we'll subdivide the class to match the new TGS classes: plant close-up, whole plant, and plant photographed in nature. Only one entry per exhibitor, unless they fall into different classes of the three categories mentioned here.

Let's all pretend it's our Annual Show instead of "just" a "Little Show." We all need to practice for next March.

Karyn will help judge the show; let's give her a good workout.



Jim Roberts, NCAC/TGS Vice President

SHOPPING FOR GESNERIADS AT HOME DEPOT Jim Roberts

I don't know how often most of you go into the Home Depot or Wal-Mart or other big box stores looking for plants. I live out in the middle of nowhere and have to take what I can get. What I've gotten lately are four great *Columnea* at the Home Depot. Unfortunately, the Home Depot, or more specifically "Angel Plants" is not very good at labeling plants correctly, so after buying them I had to do a little research to get proper ID's.

Three of the plants are variegated varieties. Something that you don't see very often and which you might expect to pay \$6-10 for a small 4 inch pot with a rooted cutting or two over the internet or from a gesneriad supplier. At Home Depot these three varieties were \$14.00 each and were in 10" pots. Very full 10" pots.

Following are pictures and the proper names of the plants. Pictures of them in flower can be found on www.gesneriads.ca.

This beauty below is called *Columnea* 'Broget Stavanger'. Broget means variegated in Norwegian and Stavanger is the name of a town in Norway. It has been grown and distributed under the names of *Columnea* 'Tricolor' and *Columnea* 'Maarsan's Flame', but the 'Broget Stavanger' name is the one found in the registry and is the official name. Home Depot was selling it as *Columnea microphylla* 'Variegata.' The culture tag lists it as coming from the Himalayas!

The plant will trail for many feet and is spectacular when in flower. The large orange/red flowers are great in contrast to the green and white leaves. But the best part is that the plant is decorative even when not in flower, and really lights up an area with the bright markings on the leaves.

This plant likes a cool period over the Winter months to set bud, and since Angel Plants is located in Florida it probably won't flower for me this Summer. However, if I

can find the right location for it, it should look spectacular at our show in March next year.



Columnea 'Broget Stavanger'

This next plant has similar green and white variegation and was also sold under the name *Columnea microphylla* 'Variegata.' However, this one has much larger leaves and red hairy stems. The correct name for this one is *Columnea hirta* 'Light Prince.' My plant is in bud and even the calyxes have the green and white stripes.



Columnea 'Light Prince' calyxes

This next one is something that I was completely unfamiliar with. It was labeled; you guessed it, *Columnea microphylla* 'Variegata.' Unlike the other two, this one had a fantastic gold marking in the center of each leaf. *Columnea* 'Cascading Beauty' has glossier, more rounded leaves than the other two, but is just as showy.



Columnnea 'Cascading Beauty'



Close-up of Cascading Beauty' leaves

This last one is not variegated but is still a nice plant. It was labeled *Aeschynanthus Krakau*. It is more of an upright or sprawling plant than the three variegates but is one of those plants that can flower year round and puts on a great show under lights where it fits a lot easier than the baskets above. Of course, it isn't an *Aeschynanthus* from the Himalayas. The correct name is *Columnnea 'Krakatau.'*



Columnnea 'Krakatau'

When I bought it, it had been chopped off at the top and had no signs of what it's potential was going to be. I recognized the plant as a *Columnnea*, and from the old days of my business I knew that there was a *Columnnea 'Krakatau.'* It was nice to see the flowers pop out and verify my identification.

In conclusion, look for gesneriads everywhere. You'll find them in the strangest places. Just last week I stopped at this roadside flower stand/greenhouse on Liberty Road. I was just stopping to see what they had left for annuals when I ran across *Streptocarpus 'Black Panther'*, *Streptocarpus 'Concord Blue'* and *Streptocarpus 'Blue Angel'* all in full flower. Just sitting there in a tray with other exotics. \$5.99 each. I like a good steal.



Simningia 'Dollbaby' is a good container plant, even if the editor is a bad designer! Karyn – Please help!

SEPTEMBER MEETING AGENDA

A special welcome to our guest speaker **Karyn Cichocki** who will be giving a talk about Container Gardens – her program will go over the elements of design that are involved in creating a dish, natural and terrarium planting. Among topics she will discuss with us will be containers, plant material that can and also that should be avoided. She will also share her experience with growing on for show, as well as judging points.

Members are welcome to bring a container or terrarium and some plant material and Karyn will be happy to demonstrate how to plant it.

Welcome: 10:30 AM
Container Gardens: by Karyn Cichocki 10:35
Refreshments: 15-20 minutes- please use this time to complete your design and horticultural entries for the Little Show

FUTURE PROGRAM TOPICS

Please go over the list and send the editor what topics in the following list are of interest to you (mzukaitis@msn.com).

- Trained Gesneriads (bonsai, sculpted)
- Natural Plantings
- Hanging plants (growing large epiphytes well)
- Terrarium plants (high humidity, small growing plants)
- Saintpaulia species
- Any specific genus – you name it for us:
- Alternate growing media (leca stones, long fiber sphagnum, bark slabs)
- Alternate growing methods (hydroculture, wick watering)
- Growing from seed
- Asian Gesneriads
- Photographing Gesneriads
- Gesneriads in the Wild
- Hybridizing Gesneriads
- Judging – Hold a Judge's School at the Arboretum
- Alpine/ Winter Hardy Gesneriads
- Other topics????

We would like to balance the arts and plant culture in planning the meetings. Please consider this list or any other ideas you may have. We will bring this up at the September meeting, so if you cannot make the meeting, feel free to email your ideas to one of your elected officers. I think we can attract some quality speakers from many places on the east coast; we know a lot of them. And most Gesneriad experts love talking about what they love!

ROOTS – MY BEGINNINGS WITH GESNERIADS

Jim Roberts

We all started somewhere with these plants. Some of us because of a chance encounter with a supermarket *Streptocarpus* or a *Sinningia speciosa* given to us by a friend. I'd like to start a column in *Petal Tones* where we each get to explain how we got started in this hobby. Since this is my idea, I guess I'm going to have to go first. Don't feel that your article has to be as long as mine, or as detailed. But by knowing more about how each of us got our start we can maybe think of ways to get others started.

Shortly after Barb and I got married back in 1972 we had an opportunity to rent an A-frame on a lake in Westminster, MA. We weren't real happy about where we were living and jumped at the opportunity. Barb has always been very interested in Library work. She was working at the Clark University Library in Worcester while I was finishing up my education. Anyhow,

shortly after moving to Westminster, Barb checked out the local library. Small but interesting. Of great interest was the head librarian.

Stan Kendig was ancient in the context of our short lives – probably close to 70 – and still worked 5 days a week maintaining the collection. Barb got to know him quite well, along with his live-in lady-friend Florence. We eventually got an invite to their house for dinner and that's when I discovered that Stan had a hobby. He grew and hybridized African Violets in his basement under lights. I'd always grown plants but had never tried AV's. After all I was still in my early 20's and had a lot of things that I still hadn't tried!

Stan shared some of his hybrids with me and shortly after that I found I had to set up my own plant stand to make room for these beauties. Stan got me interested in the local African Violet society which met at various members' homes. And that's where the real trouble started. One of the members was Jessie Crissafulli. Her home was a virtual plant heaven. Every window space was covered with plant material. What didn't fit on the windowsills was hanging in front of the window. The sun porch was so completely full of plants on all three sides that you really couldn't see out. And then there were the light stands in the basement where she grew the Saintpaulia.

And what plants! Sure, Jessie grew lots of big beautiful African violets, but she had hundreds (thousands?) of other plants scattered everywhere. She said that they were gesneriads and gave me a few dozen cuttings to start my collection. Every trip to Jessie's house yielded more information about these plants, and added dozens more to my collection. It was better than going to a greenhouse or botanical garden because every plant was grown as a show plant and all were available as free cuttings if I wanted anything.

I got involved. I not only belonged to the local and state AV societies, I also joined the American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society. I entered shows, met lots of great people, and just had lots of fun. Mike Kartuz had his greenhouse set up in Wilmington, MA at that time. Stan introduced me to that great experience too. And Stan and I would make periodic trips to the Buell's greenhouses in Connecticut. Buell's was famous for their *Sinningia speciosa*, and Albert and Diantha Buell were happy to have someone visit to buy gesneriads and not just the African violets that made up most of their business.

What a great location for someone starting out in the hobby. So many sources for excellent plant material within an hour of my house. And that doesn't count the membership of the New England Chapter of AGGS. Great growers and hybridizers such as Frances Batchellor, Renee White, Anne Crowley, Peg Belanger. The list goes on and on.

In 1979 Emily Roberts came along. Barb wanted to stay home with our first born so we developed a stay-at-home business called "Village Plants." It wasn't all gesneriads at that time. We also grew a variety of houseplants that we sold through the town hardware store and at "plant parties" (kind of like a living Tupperware party). We got into the mail order end of things and sent out a printed catalog.

By the time Hanna came along in 1982 I was attending both the local and national shows. We were no longer selling anything except gesneriads and had a pretty interesting customer base. Barb would go out to the local post office every day and mail her packages. I still remember a catalog request from Christian Feuillet to be sent to French Guiana. The post office wanted to know if that was in Africa. We also had problems figuring out

where Lesotho was. Remember, those were the days before any of us had instant access to everything via the internet.

In 1984 we moved to Baltimore and changed the business name to Roberts' Gesneriads. We rented a U-Haul and drove the collection down, where it stayed in boxes for nearly 2 weeks before we could move in and set up lights. Not everything made it, but in a short time the collection was back up and growing. It had no objection at all to the heat and humidity of Baltimore. The house was air conditioned (we'd never even thought about looking for AC when we moved down – it just wasn't something that anyone had in central Massachusetts), but the humidity in the basement was ideal for just about everything.

We moved with the business one last time in 1988. By the time we stopped the business in 1992 we had a collection of about 1200-1300 different varieties. I kept a couple dozen for myself but gave just about everything else to Larry Skog and Christian Feuillet for the Smithsonian.

After a 14 year rest I'm at it again. Could be that a couple of visits with Mauro in Brazil got me started again. I don't know what really got me back into it. But I'm back! The list of plants is up to 268 varieties. I'm still trying to find some of my old hybrids. And I've got seedlings started now of my first new hybrid since giving it all up. It may not be anything worth keeping, but it's in the pot and I can't throw it out now until some of the seedlings start to flower.

All this because of a kindly old gentleman librarian who grew some violets in his basement. Share your plants. Let others

know how easy they are to grow. Bring a friend to a meeting. Grow plants in your office. Write an article for Petal Tones!!

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

September 8, 2007: 10:30 AM Terrariums and Dish Gardens

November 10, 2007: 10:30 AM Streptocarpus

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM **Christmas Party**

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

Summertime is a great time for enjoying the fruits our labors through winter and spring – with beautiful foliage and flowers coming into their own. There should be plenty of wonderful things on the raffle table and little show for September! We are all especially looking forward to Karyn Cichocki's presentation! Terrariums are one of my favorite things – but I have never really had help designing and planting one and so inevitably I discover the pitfalls the hard way and will greatly appreciate Karyn's assistance with terrariums and dish gardens. Thanks to Jim for his articles and all the participation from others that helps me out so much with the newsletter – especially Carol Hamelink and Jim Roberts's help with proofreading! Looking forward to seeing all of you at the September meeting.

Mark Zukaitis

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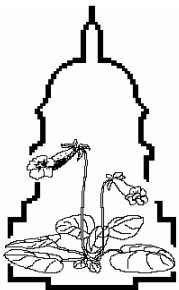
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Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

Volume 38, number 7

SEPTEMBER 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings everyone,

Although it's still August, it is beginning to feel like summer is winding down. Although I'm rarely ready to let go of summer, as this one was pretty hot and dry, I think I'm about ready. One thing I am looking forward to is the resumption of our meetings at the National Arboretum. Don't forget we've got a presentation by Karen Cichocki on terrariums and dish gardens this month, so we've featured those as our designs for the little show. This is a great opportunity to pick up some tips on how make these interesting and not just plants thrown together.

I hope everyone has had the opportunity to check out our new website which can be found at:

<http://www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org/>

Jim Hipple has done a very nice job of getting it started. You can find archives of the past Petal Tones (since Jan 2007) and easily keep up with the schedule of events. It looks like what we need now is a few beautiful photos of some of those prize winning plants everyone is growing. We've also included a photography category in this month's Little Show for all of you photo buffs, so show us what you can do.

I look forward to seeing you all,

Carol Hamelink



Best Photo 2007 Convention: Columnnea ericae
Karyn Cichocki

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

September 8, 2007: 10:30 AM Karyn Cichocki –
Dish Gardens and other artistic plantings.

November 10, 2007: 10:30 AM Streptocarpus

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM Christmas Party

WHAT WE GROW – SHOW AND TELL

In addition to plants that you are planning on entering into the little show, you doubtless have something that is either in bloom or otherwise interesting, but not quite up to show quality. Please select plants to bring for the "Show and Tell section of the meeting!"

Mark



2006 Convention: Best Gesneriad with Seed Pods
Karyn Cichocki

LITTLE SHOW

Section I – Gesneriads in Flower

Class 1 – Tuberous

Class 2 – Rhizomatous

Class 3 – New World Fibrous-rooted

Class 4 - Old World Fibrous-rooted

Class 5 – Saintpaulia

Section II – Gesneriads Grown for Foliage

Class 6 – Episcia

Class 7 – all other New World

Class 8 – Chirita and Petrocosmea

Class 9 – all other Old World

Section III – Other Horticultural Entries

Class 10 – New Hybrids or Species

Class 11 – Rarely Seen Hybrids or Species

Section IV – Artistic and the Arts

Class 12: Dish Garden or Natural Planting – These are not the same thing. A dish garden should be artistically balanced with a good selection of harmonious plant materials. Gesneriads MUST predominate. A Natural Planting is an artistic planting of one or more plants in a natural material (rock, driftwood, or other material). Only one entry of each type per exhibitor, but each exhibitor can have one dish garden and one natural planting.

Class 13: Terrarium – straight sided

Class 14: Terrarium – curved sided

Class 15: Photography – a print, no larger than 8 x 10", appropriately framed or displayed. If we get enough photos we'll subdivide the class to match the new TGS classes: plant close-up, whole plant, and plant photographed in nature. Only one entry per exhibitor, unless they fall into different classes of the three categories mentioned here.

Let's all pretend it's our Annual Show instead of "just" a "Little Show." We all need to practice for next March. Karyn will help judge the show; let's give her a good workout.



Terrarium with marvelous patina: Grown and Photographed by Mark Zukaitis

WHY I LOVE TERRARIUMS

BY: Mark Zukaitis

I don't need to tell you that the above pictured terrarium is a labor of love. They acquire such a beautiful patina with patience. A terrarium with an appropriate plant – such as a smaller plant that can live to maturity without becoming too large for the space, as well as a plant that requires high humidity. This terrarium has a single *Gasteranthus attratus* which by the looks of it will NEVER outgrow this terrarium. Someone at work received the glass vase with flowers in it and gave it to me when the flowers died.

Actually, you probably already can tell I'm being sarcastic.

Sarcastic and excited to have Karyn Cichocki here to advise us regarding appropriate plant material for terrariums and dish gardens – as well as the planting of that material and the grooming required to keep them looking their best.

There are lots of good possibilities in the Seed Fund. I have found that the miniature *Sinningias* look good in terrariums, but if I set them in too much light they get hot – and these little plants do like a fairly bright light – and since I do not grow under fluorescents heat buildup in a window is a problem, not to mention that size become an issue when you are putting it on a window sill. I will keep trying – there are several bubble bowls and various other transparent containers accumulating waiting to be planted into a magical self-contained landscape!

Members are all welcome to bring their terrariums to the September meeting! We all look forward to see the fruits of our fellow members' labors!

NCAC TGS WEBSITE IS UP!

One of our newer members, Jim Hipple has put a lot of effort into our website! Watch for an announcement that our website, www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org, which has been going through some changes, is up and running – for information, entertainment and back-issues of this newsletter. However, even though it is under construction I can see how beautifully, and creatively it has been done.

Thank you Jim!

Ed.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Just a reminder that if you are a member of the NCAC TGS and would like to participate in this seed club, please send me an email and I will add you to the list. Three times a year, I get the seed availability list forwarded to me from Larry Skog. I then distribute this to everyone who has emailed me and asked to participate. Participants then select their top 6 seed orders and email that to me. The rest of the protocol can be found in the April issue of *Petal Tones*.

Carol Hamelink

ROOTS – KARYN CICHOCKI'S STORY

BY: Karyn Cichocki

I've always been interested in gardening but did it mostly outdoors. I first got involved in indoor gardening with your typical houseplant and then a few African Violets. In the early 80s and joined an AV club and got involved in growing for show and then entering the design section of the shows. There was a member in our club that would bring a couple of *Streptocarpus* and *Chirita sinensis* 'Angustifolia' to the shows. I really feel in love with the Chirita but was not able to grow it as my growing area was too warm. I joined the LI Gesneriad Chapter about 6 months before I moved to NJ in 1994 and really got bitten by the bug. I now grow in my unheated basement where the temperatures are much cooler and dip into the mid 50s in the dead of winter. This is great for growing many Gesneriads. I discovered that there were several clubs that met at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morristown, about 40 minutes from my home, and I soon joined the two AV clubs and the Gesneriad Chapter.

I struggled for several years with the *Saintpaulia* hybrids until I finally came to the conclusion that they just didn't do well with the cold winter temperature. I still grow a few hybrids but have expanded my collection of *Saintpaulia* hybrids and grow these on a two tube light stand in my dining room.

Being a new person discovering all the wonderful genera in this plant family, I just had to get almost every plant that I could get my hands on. I have added quite a bit of plant material to the compost heap in my back yard in the twelve years I have been in NJ. But I have finally learned that there are some plants, mostly those that require warmer temperatures than I have, that don't do well in my conditions and I have learned to let them go.

My first Gesneriad Society convention was the Nashville, TN convention in 1999. This was my first try at entering in the Artistic Section and I found it to be a challenge as I didn't have much of my own plant material. I now grow most of the plant material that I use in my arrangements and plantings as I find it less stressful to depend on finding something at the sales table.

Maryjane Evans, who single handedly took care of the seed fund for so many years, was a member of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum Gesneriad Society. What a treat to get to much new plant material as she tested much of the seed that she received. She was always handing me a little container of seedlings to grow on for our sales table. It is from her that I get great enjoyment out of propagating plants for our Chapter sales tables and from growing plants from seed. It is a challenge and you have to have a lot of patience because some plants take several years before they reach blooming size.

I am now on the Seed Fund committee and feel that it is important to grow species and try to set seed for the seed fund. I have cut down on the hybrids that I grow and keep a few to use for my artistic arrangements. My collection consists of *Streptocarpus*, *Sinningia*, *Kohleria*, *Petrocosmea*, *Columnnea*, *Nematanthus* and a few plants of other genera. I have just started growing Alpine Gesneriads which I figure should do well in my growing conditions. I also have a few Orchids and Begonias. My outdoor gardens feature a variety of perennials but I really enjoy *Hosta* and Day Lilly. I am now a Master Gesneriad Society judge as well as a Senior African Violet Society of America (AVSA) judge. Besides participating in local shows, I attend the conventions for the Gesneriad Society, AVSA, AVSC and NYS. I've held several different positions in the local clubs that I belong to.

I am also an avid bird watcher and belong to a local bird club and enjoy birding when I go away to the conventions.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

BY: Carol Hamelink

Since the advent of the fluorescent light fixture, growing blooming gesneriads indoors has been a viable option. I will not provide an in-depth review of lighting, since large amounts of information can be found online and in many publications. However, I do want to provide some guidance on how to tell when your plants are getting too much or too little light. If you have a plant that doesn't seem to thrive for you, moving it to an alternate location with either more or less light may make a difference.

A plant that doesn't get enough light may have elongated internode lengths (distance between leaf petioles) which can inhibit the ability of the plant to stand upright. The plant may also exhibit pale coloration in its blooms or even a complete failure to bloom. A plant that gets too much light, on the other

hand, may exhibit photobleaching (the areas exposed directly to the light will fade) or appear tight and bunched up as the petiole length is so short that all of the leaves are crowded together at the growth center.



Dish Garden: Grown and Photo by Karyn Cichocki

In my house, I have only one four tube plant stand (all stands are 2 feet deep). This is where I grow most of my *Kohlerias* and *Sinningias*. For some plants, even four tubes is not enough light. In an attempt to keep the foliage on *Sinningia speciosa* compact, I have even added an additional compact fluorescent tube (23watts) to the four tube stand where the *speciosas* are clustered. The added light is making a dramatic difference in the foliage of these plants. The lighting for these plants is still a work in progress, as the blossoms are failing to open completely—suggesting that I may have the additional lamp a bit too close. On the other hand, miniature *Sinningias* appear to tolerate a wide range of lighting conditions, and grow well on both the 4 and the 2 tube stands.

Saintpaulias and *Chirita* prefer less light and do quite nicely on two tube stands. I have grown a best-in-show *Chirita* 'Stardust' under four tubes, but as that space is very limited, most of my *Chiritas* have been moved to the two tube stands. *Chirita* 98-083 tended to get brown tips on the leaves when it was growing under four tubes, but no longer has this problem under two tubes. *Episcia* also seem to be quite tolerant of variable conditions. They've grown well for me in east facing windows, under 4 fluorescent tubes and seemingly equally as well under two tubes.

I have a windowless office at work. Under the credenza cabinets is a single fluorescent tube. Surprisingly, a couple of *Chiritas* are doing better there than they have on the 2 tube stands at home. *Chirita* 'Jade Moon' and *Chirita brassicoides* 'Marble Leaf' have been shy bloomers for me until I placed them about 6 inches

below this single bulb. It may be the short distance to the light that has made the difference, since the peduncle (stalk supporting the flowers or inflorescence) on the Chirita Jade Moon is much shorter and more attractive than on the siblings growing at home which are 12 to 18 inches below the light bulbs.

In that windowless office I have placed two small fluorescent lamps from one of the big box stores. Each lamp has a 27 watt full spectrum bulb. I tried a few *Saintpaulias* under these lamps, but found they did not bloom, which means they did not get enough light. However, *Streptocarpus* 'Kim' is doing very well. Surprisingly, a couple of *Episcias* are also thriving – even blooming modestly, with a blossom here and there.

The amount of light a plant receives depends on a number of factors. The most obvious are the number of bulbs and how long the bulbs are turned on. The distance from the bulb to the plant is also important – the further from the bulb, the less light the plant receives. Without a reflector or lens, the brightness decreases as the square of the distance. The brightness also varies along the length of the tube; fluorescent bulbs are brightest at the center and darkest near the ends. Even the area around the light stand affects the light level. If you put a mirror behind the light stand, the plants will receive more light.



Another View of Karyn Cichocki's Growing Area: Photo by Karyn Cichocki

The age of a bulb is also important. Fluorescent bulbs decrease in brightness while they are turned on. Although most literature recommends changing bulbs every year, few of us are so rigorous. Some people recommend changing every other bulb during the interval when light hours are being ramped up for producing maximum bloom for show entry. Since there are shows each spring and fall this would ensure that all the bulbs get replaced each year. Although I usually use a bulb until it burns out, I am presently noticing phototropism (turning toward the light) on the front edge of some shelves which may be telling me that it's time for new bulbs.

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome back to an active new season – Summer is over and we are off our bi-monthly schedule with Petal Tones and looking forward to the September meeting! How fast time goes by! By now everyone's plants have recovered from the winter doldrums, have had a nice long growing season and look good enough to bring to the meeting either for the Little Show or for the Show and Tell (Not to mention, for the Raffle Table of course)! Our raffle table has been incredibly rich since I have been coming to meetings. It will be great to be back!

SEE YOU AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING! PLEASE BRING PLANTS FOR THE LITTLE SHOW, SHOW AND TELL AND THE RAFFLE TABLE!!!!

We have been very fortunate with speakers at meetings. The quality has been and continues to be the highest it can be! Therefore, in order to keep you all involved with these exciting, fun and informative programs I am running the following message that was in the last issue by Jim Roberts. We would greatly benefit from your input.

FUTURE PROGRAM TOPICS

Please go over the list and send the editor what topics in the following list are of interest to you (mzukaitis@msn.com).

- Trained Gesneriads (bonsai, sculpted)
- Natural Plantings
- Hanging plants (growing large epiphytes well)
- Terrarium plants (high humidity, small growing plants)
- Saintpaulia species
- Any specific genus – you name it for us:
- Alternate growing media (leca stones, long fiber sphagnum, bark slabs)
- Alternate growing methods (hydroculture, wick watering)
- Growing from seed
- Asian Gesneriads
- Photographing Gesneriads
- Gesneriads in the Wild
- Hybridizing Gesneriads
- Judging – Hold a Judge's School at the Arboretum
- Alpine/ Winter Hardy Gesneriads
- Other topics????

We would like to balance the arts and plant culture in planning the meetings. Please consider this list or any other ideas you may have. We will bring this up at the February board meeting, so if you cannot make the meeting, feel free to email your ideas to one of your elected officers. I think we can attract some quality speakers from many places on the east coast; we know a lot of them.

And most Gesneriad experts love talking about what they love!

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC), a chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc. "The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars." (NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981)

NCAC meets four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

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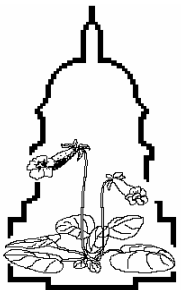
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Volume 39 number 8

OCTOBER 2007



Streptocarpus Dunnii: Pole-Evans 1921 From *Gesneriad Reference Web*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

It was great to see so many of you last month. I hope we can continue to have stimulating meetings. We're lining up programs for the 2008 season, so please let us know what you'd like to hear. We're trying hard to revitalize our meetings, but to maximize your enjoyment, let us know your interests. With the web site up and running, it's pretty easy to drop any of the officers an email. Although we have no meeting this month, for those of you who don't mind traveling short

distances, you can come visit the Mid Atlantic African Violet Society's convention to be held in York, PA on October 11-13. Besides beautiful African violets there will be many beautiful other gesneriads, as well as a large commercial sales room including Paul Sorano of Lyndon Lyons Greenhouse and Ralph Robinson from the Violet Barn to name only a few. For more information visit <http://www.maavs.org/>. Next month we will have the pleasure of a program on Streptocarpus from Dennis Miller the hybridizer of the Neil's Streps. Let's once again make this a well attended meeting. See you soon,

Carol Hamelink

SEPTEMBER LITTLE SHOW RESULTS

By: *Jim Roberts*

Section I – Gesneriads in Flower

Class 1: Tuberos

Sinningia 'Cindy-Ella' by Jim Roberts 94 points



Sinningia 'Super Orange' by Denise Whitman
80 points

Denise Whitman's *Sinningia* Super Orange had lots of unopened buds showing great potential for a week or two after our meeting. Unfortunately it was in a glass container that bounced off so much flash I couldn't get a good photo of it.



Class 2: Rhizomatous

No Entries

Class 3: New World Fibrous

Columnnea minutiflora by Carol Hamelink 96 points



Episcia 'Unpredictable Valley' by Jim Roberts 95 points



Class 4: Old World Fibrous

No Entries

Class 5: Saintpaulia

No Entries

Section II – Gesneriads Grown for Foliage

Class 6: Episcia

Episcia 'Silver Skies' by Carol Hamelink 93 points



Episcia 'Pink Dreams' by Carol Hamelink 92 points



Class 7: All Other New World

Columnnea 'Broget Stavanger' by Jim Roberts 97 points



Section III – Artistic and the Arts

Class 13: Terrarium Straight Sided

Carol Hamelink's entry – 88 points



Class 14: Terrarium Curved Sided

Jim Roberts' entry – 85 points



Class 15: Natural Planting

Carol Hamelink's entry – 80 points



Class 16: Tray Landscape (Dish Garden)

Jim Roberts' entry 78 points



Class 17a: Photography – Part of a Plant

Achimenes flava by Jim Roberts – 82 points



Columnnea minutiflora by Carol Hamelink – 80 points



Class 17b: Photography – Whole Plant



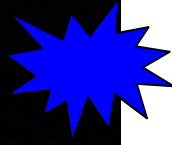
Episcia 'Unpredictable Valley' by Jim Roberts – 86 points

Chirita 'Starburst' by Carol Hamelink – 85 points



Class 17c: Photography – Black and White

Gasteranthus acropodus by Jim Roberts – 96 points



Totals for the Month:

Horticulture

- Carol Hamelink: 2 Blue Ribbons, 1 Red Ribbon
- Jim Roberts: 2 Blue Ribbons, 1 Red Ribbon
- Denise Whitman: 1 Red Ribbon

Artistic and the Arts

- Carol Hamelink: 2 Red Ribbons, 2 Yellow Ribbons
- Jim Roberts: 1 Blue Ribbon, 3 Red Ribbons, 1 Yellow

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO ENTERED AND A SPECIAL THANKS TO KARYN CICHOCKI AND JEANNE KATZENSTEIN WHO HELPED JUDGE THIS DIFFICULT SHOW.

**SEPTEMBER SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS
KARYN CICHOCKI**

By: Carol Hamelink

Karyn Cichocki gave an enlightening talk and demonstration on what makes a good terrarium or dish garden at our September

meeting. For those of you who were unable to make it, here is a brief synopsis.



First off is the selection of a container. Karyn showed several examples, many of which were simply the flower pot trays that catch the run through when you water your plants. These can easily be painted a neutral color so the tray itself won't be competing for attention with the planting. Also to be considered before diving in, is whether this is to be a design for a show, which can be assembled just prior, or an ongoing garden. Next is to select plants that fit the scale of the tray. Karyn described gathering many potential plants during the conceptual phase of her garden. If you are attempting an ongoing planting, you will need to consider the growth potential of the plants selected, or be willing to trim them as needed. If you are entering your garden in a show, all plant material must be planted and growing, no tip cuttings. Three months before the show is a good time to root tip cuttings to start small versions of plants for a garden.

Now comes the hard part, assembly and creating an appealing garden. For this Karyn gave many suggestions. To have balance, the plant material should reach about 1½ times the diameter of the tray. Obviously the tallest items should be in the back, and it may be helpful to have a transition in height with medium tall items before getting to the shorter plants in the front. This is an iterative process, try placing a plant, stepping back and assessing the look. Not only do you want to avoid putting things in rows, but it's also helpful to have some repetition to create some harmony. As far as judging goes, use almost exclusively gesneriads, with the exception

of possibly moss. If your tray is large, you may want to try some landscaping so that not everything is planted on a flat surface. Rocks can be useful to not only help position a plant where you'd like it, but to add some interesting landscape.



Finishing the planting often makes a big difference for visual appeal. Karyn suggested the use of peat moss without added perlite as a planting medium, so you don't have to pick all of the white spots out. Another option would be to cover the soil with horticultural charcoal. Make sure the tray is cleaned off. Things are allowed to hang over the edge of a planter, but not lay on the table. Walk away from your planting and come back to it later so you can have a fresh perspective. Don't be afraid to make changes.

NOVEMBER SPEAKER

I thought it would be interesting for you to read an article by Mr. Miller that that was published in the Gesneriad Hybridizer's Association newsletter, Crosswords. Read on.

"NEILS HYBRIDS – BY A HOBBIEST HYBRIDIZER"

By: Dennis Miller - FROM: CROSSWORDS 2006 Volume 30, Issue 3

A couple of weeks ago, Dale Martens asked me to write an article for CrossWords on my hybridizing of streptocarpus. I thought about it overnight and finally decided to say "Yes" I would do it. But ever since I told her I would, my mind has been in a whirlwind. Dale forwarded a copy of CrossWords for my review. I read the articles by hybridizers and wondered what I was doing writing an article on hybridizing. I guess I would have to refer to myself as a hobbyist hybridizer, because there is no scientific method to my madness.



Dibley's *Streptocarpus* 'Seren'

I live in Fredericksburg, Virginia and grow mostly African violets and streps under 15 light stands in my basement. I primarily sell plants on E-bay. I figured this would be a nice supplement to my retirement.

I haven't been hybridizing for very long. I learned to hybridize streps about 4 years ago when I was visiting Alyce Droege who lives in North Carolina. She taught me how she did her crosses of the Aly's series. When I got back home I couldn't wait to pick out which streps would be in my first cross. I finally chose 'Paper Moon' and 'Wild Rose' as my parent plants. The time and anticipation required to see if it took drove me crazy. Low and behold I did get a seedpod, and you know the rest: Wait for the pod to mature, wait for seedlings and finally wait for the first bloom. I was amazed at the number of different blooms that actually resulted from that one cross.



Photo from Gesneriad Reference Web: "... *Streptocarpus dunii* is the source of all red coloration in *Streptocarpus* hybrids ..."

When I decided which were worthy of a name and not similar to other named streps, I needed to name my plants. I decided to use "Neil" as my signature name. (Neil is my middle name and my son's first name.) When I name a strep, I look at each bloom and ask myself what does it remind me of or simply what hits me. This cross produced 'Neil's Senior Prom', 'Neil's Minnesota', and 'Neil's Summer Day' to name just a few. Unfortunately, I did lose a couple of keepers as I was learning to grow streps but that's all part of the hobby, I guess.

Now that I have been hybridizing for awhile, it's the color and patterns of the bloom that drive me. I like them big and bold, big and soft, and big and gorgeous. Other characteristics are secondary to me, such as number of blooms per stem, type of foliage, etc. (terminology like F1, F2, genetics are foreign to me but I'm learning). Lately, I'm concentrating more on

number of blooms per stem once I saw Toshijiro Okuto's hybrid 'Big Yolk' that I was growing had 7+ blooms on a single stem.

Being interested primarily in color and pattern (fantasy and webbing), I was interested in playing with fantasies. I did a simple thing of selfing 'Bristol's Party Girl'. I was again amazed at the different fantasies this cross gave me. One I really like is 'Neil's Jammin'. I just introduced this one to the world on E-bay at the end of September. I like the rich colors of the blue bloom with kind of fuchsia fantasy and a nice yellow throat. I just introduced my second fantasy 'Neil's Wam Bam' on E-bay.

My second cross I did was with 'Aly's Magnetosphere' X 'Paper Moon'. I was hoping to get some of the webbing or space dust effect as in 'Aly's Magnetosphere'. I wasn't sure what color I would actually get. Well to my surprise, I got two very nice, different reds. One is 'Neil's King Arthur' and the other is 'Neil's Strawberry' (and it looks delicious). There is very nice webbing in 'Neil's Strawberry' with nice yellow fangs in the throat. Pictures don't do either one of these flowers justice.

So as the blind led the blind, I have succeeded in producing a few very nice plants that I'm very proud of. So now what? As I learn more and more in working with my streps, I am going to work on a few goals: a) more doubles with different patterns, b) fantasies not from selfing with a fantasy plant, c) a bold yellow, d) different colored blooms on variegated patterns, just to name a few goals.



Streptocarpus gardenii Van Houtte, 1845 (From Gesneriad Reference Web)

I put my new introductions on E-bay first. If one sells well, I know I have a keeper. If the bidders do not like it and I like it, it's still a keeper. I plan to start selling at shows when time permits and depending on availability of plants. With any luck, I plan to sell at the Denver AVSA convention and the Miami Gesneriad Society convention next year. I look

forward to meeting other hobbyists, growers and hybridizers. I do have a website under construction neilsstrops.com. Feel free to contact me anytime at: Leo5699@aol.com.

ED NOTE: You can see some of Dennis' Streptocarpus hybrids on his e-bay store: <http://stores.ebay.com/neils-streps>

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

NOVEMBER 10, 2007: 10:30 AM MEETING U.S. National Arboretum: Dennis Miller talking about Streptocarpus hybridizing and selling on E-Bay. We hope Dennis will have some of his plants at the meeting, either for the raffle table or for sale.

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM **Christmas Party**

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Just a reminder that if you are a member of the NCAC TGS and would like to participate in this seed club, please send an e-mail to Mike Cagley at cagleys3@yahoo.com. Three times a year, Mike will get the seed availability list forwarded to him from Larry Skog. He then distributes this to everyone who has e-mailed him and asked to participate. Participants then select their top 6 seed orders and e-mail that to him. The rest of the protocol can be found in the April issue of Petal Tones.

Thanks Mike, for taking over this important job!

Carol Hamelink

EDITOR'S GREETING

Any ideas for programs that would particularly suit your interests? Have there been speakers that have whetted your appetite to hear more detail about a particular component of their talk? There are many expert, talented and experienced growers, hybridizers, people who love Saintpaulia, or emphasize Drymonia, tuberous, scaly rhizomatous or growing Gesneriads as trained plants for Bonsai or in terrariums and other natural plantings. There are even some that are hardy outdoors in our area! Do some googling and read your newsletters! Join The Gesneriad Society and see what is out there. We can provide speakers on any topic.

The list published in September Petal Tones is just an example. The possibilities, however, are endless, limited only by the tangents your imagination wanders off on.

As Jim Roberts said in the last issue, please send your ideas via e-mail to one of your elected officers. They really appreciate any input you have.

DESPERATELY SEEKING . . .

Lee Linett

Saintpaulia 'Chanticleer'
Columnea 'Cornelian'

Mark Zukaitis

Columnea minutiflora
Phinea any
Alsobia punctata
Codonanthe any
Nematanthus fritschii

Any member who has recently seen something on the web, or at a show that they just have to get a hold of, please send your wish list to your editor, Mark at mzukaitis@msn.com and he will put it in the next issue of Petal Tones for you. As you know, this newsletter goes Everywhere! So chances of somebody seeing your wish and getting it fulfilled are really good.

November Little Show:

Speaking of the Little Show, Here's the Schedule:

Section I – Gesneriads in Flower

Class 1 – Tuberos
Class 2 – Rhizomatous
Class 3 – New World Fibrous-rooted
Class 4 - Old World Fibrous-rooted
Class 5 – Saintpaulia

Section II – Gesneriads Grown for Foliage

Class 6 – Episcia
Class 7 – all other New World
Class 8 – Chirita and Petrocosmea
Class 9 – all other Old World

Section III – Other Horticultural Entries

Class 10 – New Hybrids or Species
Class 11 – Rarely Seen Hybrids or Species

Section IV – Artistic

Class 12 - **African Queen:** 16" x 16" arrangement of cut or growing material in an open container of water.

Class 13 - **King Kong:** a 10" x 10" arrangement of cut material with marked contrasts in size between the various elements.

Class 14 - **Strepto-what?** a planting or arrangement of cut material in rock. Must use some part of a *Streptocarpus*.

BONUS: Anyone who has never entered an arrangement in our show should attempt this class. The best novice arrangement wins one of Dennis's Streps. (We'll buy it from him if he doesn't want to donate it)

NCAC TGC WEBSITE

I hope everyone has had the opportunity to check out our new website which can be found at:

<http://www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org/>

Jim Hipple has done a very nice job of getting it started. You can help by submitting links, pictures and other ideas. Past issues of Petal Tones are being archived there. If anyone has all the issues from 2006 and previous years we would like to scan them and add them to the archives.

What We Grow – Show and Tell

In addition to plants that you are planning on entering into the Little Show, you doubtless have something that is either in bloom or otherwise interesting, but not quite up to show quality. Please select plants to bring for the "Show and Tell" section of the meeting!

MZ

The Raffle Table

Who would have thought that giving away the extra cuttings and plants that we all seem to have so many of would bring such a big boost to the club's treasury. Keep the plant material coming! Our show is only 5 months away, and show plants must be grown for 3 months in order to be entered in the horticulture classes. But even plants that we pick up the day of the show can be used for design entries.

JR

The March Show

At the September Meeting Jim Roberts agreed to be Show Chair for our show in March. We are working on a theme and hope to have a lot more information for you at the November meeting.

JR

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC), a chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc. "The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars." (NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981)

NCAC meets four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

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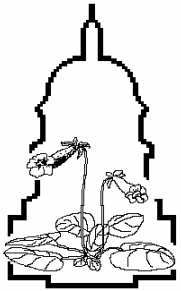
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Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

Volume 39, number 8

NOVEMBER 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

Hard to believe we are already at that frost danger time of year! As we begin to bring in outdoor plants and clean up our gardens, it's once again time when we'll be able to focus on our indoor gardens. Typical for me, I once again collected a bunch of new gesneriads to try growing this year. Who can resist the beauty of a well grown plant? Especially one that few other people have. The longer I grow gesneriads, the greater the diversity of my plant collection. This leads to either a greatly expanded collection which requires more work to maintain, or some very tough decisions on which plants to keep and which to give away. No one can grow everything. Oh what fun it is to get a new cutting for something with a lot of potential! But the painful decision it causes for what it is going to replace. Once again, I'm at my limits, 3 eight foot growing stands with 3 shelves each and a quarantine room with an 8 foot shelf. And there isn't really any spare space. If you have the same issue, this is a good time to review why you are growing plants. If it's just for personal enjoyment, the choice is easy. Keep your favorites. If it's for show entry, this is more challenging. Now you'll want to keep that which grows well and blooms well, and add in the uniqueness factor. Remember for our spring show (March 15 and 16) you need to be growing your plant for 3 months. That means that this November and upcoming December meeting may be the last time you can get new plants to grow for the show. See you Saturday, and happy hunting on the raffle table for new potential show plants.

Carol Hamelink

**NOVEMBER SPEAKER: DENNIS MILLER –
STREPTOCARPUS HYBRIDIZER**

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

NOVEMBER 10, 2007: 10:30 AM

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM Christmas Party

NOVEMBER LITTLE SHOW

Section I – Gesneriads in Flower

Class 1 – Tuberous

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Class 4 – Old World Fibrous-rooted

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BONUS: Anyone who has never entered an arrangement in our show should attempt this class. The best novice arrangement wins one of Dennis's Streps. (We'll buy it from him if he doesn't want to donate it).

EDITORS MESSAGE

Well, it seems I have come almost full circle as editor of the newsletter – My first issue was January 2008, and will be a year since Jim Roberts and I had lunch at the Baltimore Inner Harbor, at which time he told me about his group. Time goes by so fast. In just this short time there has been so many very high quality speakers, the raffle table is beyond my wildest dreams and new people have joined the group. I was disappointed that we did not have an October meeting – since I missed the September meeting. Not having had a meeting since the last issue came out, this is a small issue. I hope nobody is disappointed. I kept trying to get down to writing a couple of article ideas but time just went by and now here we are, sending it out again already!

I know you all are tired of me asking this – but it would be great if someone would take one or more pictures of something they find rewarding to grow and write to me about their experience with it. Membership would be able to really share in the experience of growing Gesneriads. Don't forget to give some thought to the March show – you

must grow your plant for at least three months to qualify it as an entry in a horticultural class, as Jim revealed in his comments last issue. So when your winning number(s) come in – go over to the Raffle Table with that thought in mind – there certainly is an abundance of different material to select – and you can revisit our old issues of PT on the website and draw ideas from there – especially Carol Hamelink's photo-tour and Karyn Cichocki's dish gardens and terrariums (or you might just want to grow something special under glass).

So, see you all at the November 10, 2007 meeting at the U.S. National Arboretum where we will be regaled by the hybridizing experience and plants of Dennis Miller (and hopefully he will have some of his plants for the raffle table).

If you would like to visit Dennis' E-Bay store, please go to:

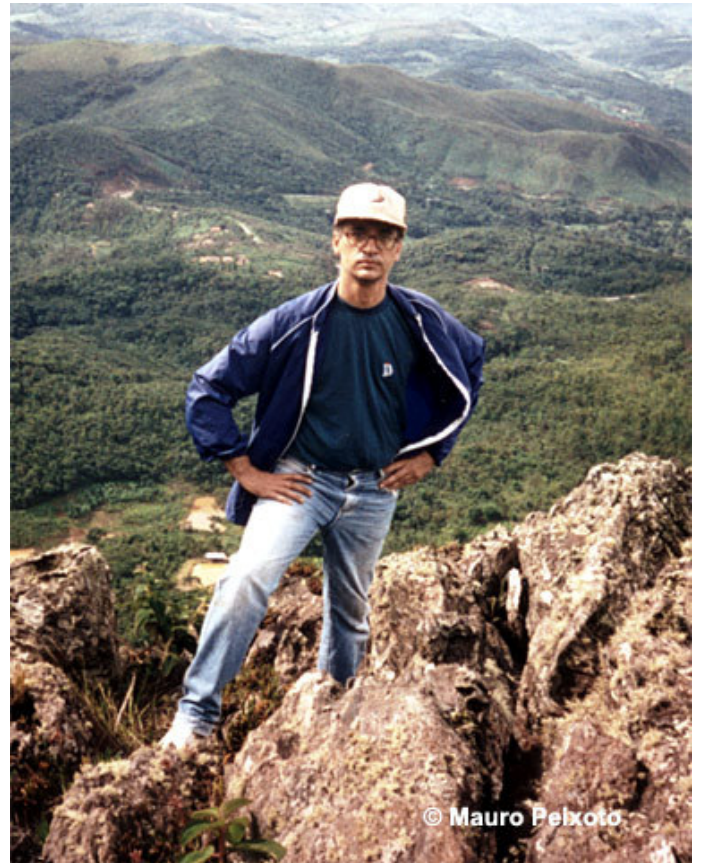
<http://store.ebay.com/neils-streps>

Thanks and good growing . . .

MarkZukaitis

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Just a note to remind you, and in case somebody missed this information, if you are a member of the NCAC TGS and would like to participate in this seed club, please send an e-mail to Mike Cagley at cagleys3@yahoo.com. Three times per year, Mike will get the seed availability list forwarded to him from Larry Skog. He then distributes this everyone who has e-mailed him and asked to participate. Participants then select their top 6 seed orders and e-mail that to him. The rest of the protocol can be found in the April issue of Petal Tones.



*Mauro Peixoto – See his website 'Brazilian Plants at:
<http://mpeixoto.sites.uol.com.br/>*

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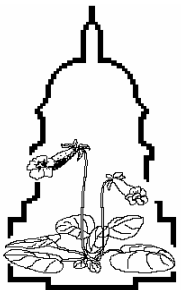
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Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

Volume 38, number 8

DECEMBER 2007



Sinn. leucotricha Blue Ribbon Winner – Nancy Taub Blue Ribbon TGS 2007

CHRISTMAS PARTY DECEMBER 8, 2007!!!!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

I hope to see you all at the upcoming Holiday party. This is a time for all of us to get together to simply have some fun- and of course search the raffle table for any last potential show entries for the spring. If you haven't been to the holiday party before all you need to do is bring a food item to share, any plantlets or cuttings you don't mind giving away (donations for the raffle table) and a brown bag gift item if you so desire. The gift exchange is purely optional. If you bring a gift (usually something plant related), you take a gift, just remember to conceal it to add some suspense.

This concludes the first year of my presidential term for the club. It's been a great year. We've had some fun, informative speakers and some truly outstanding plant and design entries at the little shows. We have decided, however, that we would do things a little bit differently for the 2008 meeting year. Although the Little Show is a great opportunity to see some beautiful show quality plants, especially those that never seem to bloom around show time, it tends to be a bit time consuming for those of us trying to judge the plants. This coming year we'd like to simplify things a bit. If you have a beautiful blooming plant, we still want you to bring it to the meeting. You will have some time to tell us about your plant, and we'd like to do something a little more informative about the point scoring. Stay tuned for more details in next month's Petal Tones.

Happy growing, Carol

NOVEMBER LITTLE SHOW RESULTS

By: Jim Roberts

Have you ever had one of those days where you fall into such a routine in doing something that you forget a big part of the process and don't even realize it? Well that's what happened at the November Little Show. I'm pretty sure I remember who got what ribbon, but I have no recollection of some of the plant names and didn't record any of the scores. I hope you'll all forgive me.

Best in Show with 94 points was Brian Connor's *Streptocarpus* 'Crystal Ice'.



Best in Show – Strep. 'Crystal Ice' entered by Brian Connor

The second place ribbon in the fibrous rooted gesneriads was another of Brian's Streps. I wish I had written down the name, but it was a lovely light pink color.



Second Place Strep entered by Brian Connor

Third place in this group went to Carol Hamelink's Streptocarpus 'Susie'.

All three plants were blue ribbon quality and any one could have been the blue. That's what makes judging plants competitively so difficult. No two plants can have the same score, and points have to be added or deducted to make them all different. This great showing of Streps was very timely with our guest speaker, Dennis Miller talking about hybridizing this diverse genus. Some of that diversity was seen in the exhibits. All three Streps had very different leaf sizes and growth habits.

A special thanks here to Brian for entering in the Little Show. Funny how whenever we have someone other than Carol or me in the show that "newcomer" takes **BEST** away from us. That should encourage more participation.

Mark Zukaitis got in on the Little Show competition with his plant of Gasteranthus atratus. Nice looking young plant that should be blue ribbon size by March. Mark scored a red on his first entry ever.

Carol had two entries in the rhizomatous class. I hate it when one has to compete against one-self! Her Seemannia 'Chic' was very compact and had a nice even distribution of flowers. It took the blue. Seemannia purpurascens had magnificent foliage but its bloom count was low compared to 'Chic' and it came away with the red.



Seemannia purpurascens entered by Carol Hamelink

Carol was the only brave soul to enter into the design classes. Her arrangement of 'Strepto-What?' gave her another blue to add to her collection. 'King Kong' was awarded a red. I don't think I've ever seen an Episcia leaf as big as the one in that arrangement. The contrast to the tiny stolons was right on target for demonstrating a size contrast.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim, usually our photographer, was so busy we had to rely on what photos I was able to successfully take (which means that were taken and usable). Unfortunately a lot of the pictures came out so blurry I could not put them in the newsletter. Sorry! - Mark



King Kong Entered by Carol Hamelink



Strepto-What? – entered by Carol Hamelink

In 2008 we're going to do the Little Shows a little bit differently. Carol and I are the only two judges in the group and it's really hard to judge with just a panel of two, especially when the plants you're judging are more often than not, your own. There'll be a big announcement in the January Petal Tones about the new procedure, but we're hoping it leads to more participation by the group as a whole.

I know Carol and I both need a break so that we can enjoy the meeting along with the rest of you. I have a feeling that we'll probably end up working just as hard or harder and loving it anyway.



Carol, our President, with one of several boxes of her and Jim Christ's contributions to the Raffle Table and the Little Show

Horticulture

- Brian Connor: 1 Blue Ribbon, 1 Red Ribbon
- Carol Hamelink: 1 Blue Ribbon, 2 Red Ribbons

Artistic and the Arts

- Carol Hamelink: 1 Blue Ribbon, 1 Red Ribbon

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO ENTERED

**NOVEMBER SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS
DENNIS MILLER**

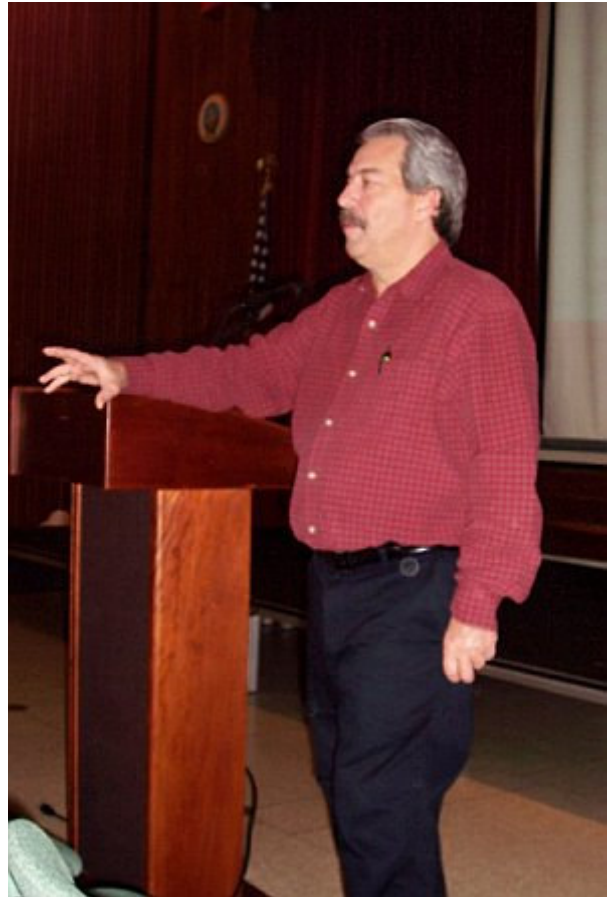
By: Mark Zukaitis

I just knew he was our speaker – Dennis coming into the lecture hall with a box stuffed with *Streptocarpus* plants (which he distributed to everyone after his talk). I had seen his hybrids on E-Bay and did remember the hybrid *Streptocarpus* 'Jammin' which is a beautiful fantasy flower.

Dennis' talk was particularly interesting in that he is a self-proclaimed "amateur" hybridizer who reports that he does not really know much about the genetic particulars. I rather doubt that, but if so, his intuitive grasp of what works is certainly in overdrive.

Dennis' first cross came about as a result of time spent with his friend Alyce Droege of North Carolina. When he got home is crossed *Streptocarpus* 'Paper Moon' with *S. Wild Rose* – and the rest is history.

Dennis may get 200 or so plants from a seed pod. Amazingly he brings them all along to see what the cross produced. He says that that the one you throw away might be just that cross you were hoping for!



Look for "Neil's Streps." on E-bay. They are named this way because his middle name is Neil.



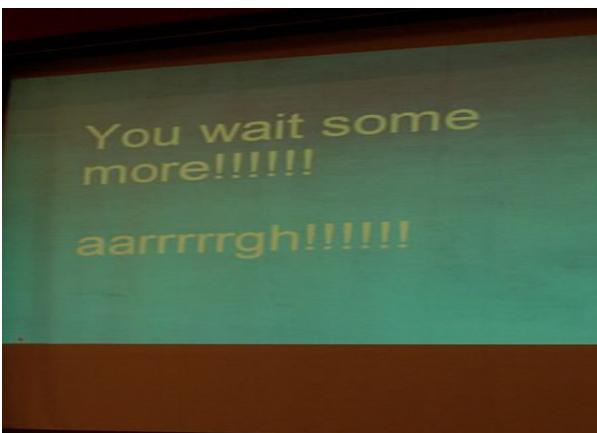
Streptocarpus 'Neil's Jammin'

I thought it was great for someone to demystify one of the more complex and intimidating aspects of growing . Hybridizing. According to Dennis, there really is not that much in the way of mechanics to accomplish this. Just a little pollen on the index finger applied to the stigma of another flower (hoping the stigma is receptive and the pollen is good).



There you go! The only thing to do after the deed is done is to wait to see if it took.

Then, a pod develops and gradually fattens and grow long and thin. When they ripen he takes the seeds and plants them (and in some cases stores them for later). And then what?



Once they come up the fun begins, as you can see an amazing variation in habit and, eventually, flowers from one seed pod!

This talk is a revelation to anyone who has grown gesneriads from seed and who have wondered how hybridization is done. The same techniques work for every hybrid, between any two compatible plants in any plant family. Just transferring the pollen from anther to stigma, wait for the seeds and plant! I hope this encourages many people to try it themselves. It is satisfying, to say the least, to select for traits in different plants and attempt to combine them into one – by crossing them and

selecting the offspring. Not only will this contribute to the variety we all love, but is a source for lots of free plants to bring to the Show and Tell and Raffle Table at our meetings!

Thank you Dennis for a very good lecture and meeting, and we will all enjoy the *Streptocarpus* plants you brought!

Dennis' streps can also be found at:

http://neilsstreps.com/new_for_2006.htm

Take a look and see his wonderful crosses!

Send him an e-mail at: Leo5699@aol.com.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM
Christmas Party

MARCH SHOW: THE TIME TO PREPARE IS NOW

Submitted by Carol Hamelink

In preparation for the March Show, some things you might consider doing include:

- be on the look out for powdery mildew as the temperatures are changing, spray with a fungicide as needed
- if you grow under fluorescent lights, consider lengthening the time the lights are on. Gradually increase the light duration, an additional hour each week is a reasonable schedule, but don't exceed 16 hours a day, and watch for signs of too much light (photobleaching, stunted new growth). It's probably a little early to start this yet, so mark you calendar so you won't forget. If you've never done this before, use moderation- increasing light times by 2-4 hours a day maximum.
- disbud Saintpaulias from now until 6 weeks before the show for single blossoms or until 8 weeks for double blooming varieties
- continue to remove stolons from Episcias until the plants have reached a mature size
- remove all Streptocarpus leaves that have finished blooming
- sow a few extra seeds for starter plants for the sales table
- root cuttings of all different shapes and sizes. This will give you maximum selection for preparing dish and terrarium gardens, as well as producing sale plants.
- pot up or pot down potential show plants that may be growing out of their pots. I like to pot down Kohleria shoots to even out their heights and submerge the lowest parts of the stems that may have baby leaves or fading leaves.
- examine potential show plants for foliage perfection. Remove faded leaves or droopy, spindly shoots. Experiment with staking options to improve shaping.

Showing single genera collections

Submitted by Carol Hamelink

If you're new to entering gesneriads in a show, you may consider entering several cultivars in the single genus collection. Here are some tips for these entries (this entry class is designed to showcase the VARIETY of the genus you are entering):

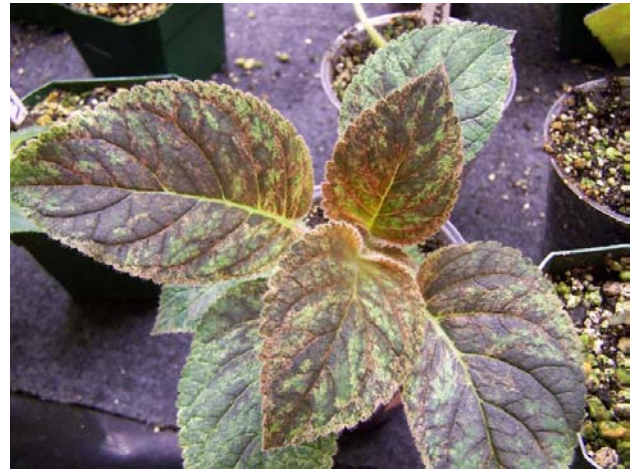
- ✚ You may choose from 3-5 different plants.
- ✚ Try to select as wide a variety as possible, including shape, both large and small, variegated and non, rosette and not, as well as species and hybrids with as much variety as possible in the bloom color as well.
- ✚ You need to also include some unifying theme that clearly links them all together. It can be simple- one year Nell helped me by artistically scrunching some colorful napkins under the plants.
- ✚ Also remember that the over all presentation should be considered, taller plants should be in the back, or use some elevation device. Staging devices are not discouraged in TGS shows.
- ✚ Finally, be aware that the collection is judged as a whole, which means that in terms of best in show competition, the collection will be brought down by the weakest member in it.

If you have two plants of the same species, enter the best one as an individual plant in the appropriate category and save the lesser of the two for your collection.



Kohleria Texas Rainbow

This is a unique Kohleria hybridized by Dale Martens in 2003. It has beautiful variegated foliage with greens and tans and almost reds. The flowers are a bright magenta-red with darker polka-dots. It's a heavy bloomer with longish blossom stems so the flowers are very visible. This is a somewhat difficult plant to grow. If it gets too much light, the variegation on the leaves becomes very muted, lower light gives more dramatic leaf variegation, but can lead to leggy plant growth. I tend to grow it at the middle of a two tube stand and just use staking to support the upright growth. Early pinching can lead to a more bushy growth habit.



Kohleria 'Texas Rainbow' from Gesneriad Garage catalogue. See: <http://www.gesneriadgarage.com/kohleria.html> for a great vendor specializing in Gesneriads

EDITOR'S NOTES

The November meeting was a great one. Especially for me, who missed the September meeting and had to wait because we had no October meeting! The Raffle Table was very large with selections from every class of gesneriad, fibrous, scaly rhizomatous, new world, old world, perennial Chiritas, an unusual annual Chirita brought in by Jim Roberts, *Chirita involucrate* – a tiny, tiny plant with a purple flower. I grabbed that one when my number was called!



Raffle Table Offerings with Chirita involucrate

There were so many things at this Raffle Table it was dizzying. I finally got *Seemanian 'Chic'* back and there was a *Kohleria hirsuta* Jim Roberts brought in that was covered with flowers at only three inches tall – and right from the rhizome at that – it was never topped and rooted. The plant will be a great dwarf for a terrarium.

The Show and tell was a little lonely, though. I was the only one with a plant to show this time – a *Sinningia* species, or maybe a hybrid, with flowers like *S. iarae*, on a two foot-tall plant with a nice caudex like tuber.

I heard the Raffle Table would probably be huge at the Christmas party (just between you and me) so if for nothing else, come to the party on December 8, 2007 and get something great to grow for the March Show!

DESPERATELY SEEKING

Please submit anything you are looking for – send it to me, your editor, Mark Zukaitis at mzukaitis@msn.com so I can post it here.

Here we go! Thanks Carol, for the *Columnea minutiflora*, by the way!:

Lee Linett: *Saintpaulia* 'Chanticleer'
Columnea 'Cornelian'

Mark Zukaitis: *Phinaea* sp. (the small, acid green one with red veins)
Alsobia punctata
Codonanthe (any)
Nematanthus fritschii
***Gloxinia* 'Dragonsong'**



Hmmm . . . lets see . . .



Columnea 'Cornellian'?



SEE YOU THE CHRISTMAS PARTY DECEMBER 6, 2007!

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Just a reminder that if you are a member of NCAC TGS and would like to participate in this seed club please send an e-mail to Mike Cagley at Cagleys3@yahoo.com. Three times a year, Mike will get the seed availability list forwarded to him from Larry Skog. He then distributes this to everyone who has e-mailed him and asked to participate. Participants then select their top 6 seed orders and e-mail that to him. The rest of the protocol can be found in the April issue of *Petal Tones*.

Thanks again Mike!

Carol Hamelink

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC), a chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc. "The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars." (NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981)

NCAC meets four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

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