

Petal Tones

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

Volume 40, number 1

January 2009

Message from the President

First off I want to wish everyone a very happy new year! I hope you all included plants (care of, adding to your collection, growing and showing) in your resolutions for the year.

I also want to thank everyone for having the confidence in me to vote me into office. This is going to be a huge year for the club, and thanks to all the great work done by Carol at bringing some life and membership back to the club I think we'll do just fine. In the past two years I've seen the attendance at meetings at least double what it was when I joined the club just 2 ½ years ago. We've been able to attract some great speakers and have had some fantastic monthly programs. Carol may be smaller than I am, but I'm going to have a heck of a time filling her shoes. Thank You Carol!!

If you were at the meeting in December you heard that we are going to have monthly meetings for at least the first half of the year so that we can better prepare ourselves for Convention. We'll try to concentrate on programs that will help us all gain some confidence in our methods and not be afraid to enter plants in the show. We've all seen some beautiful plants brought in for display that would have easily won ribbons in any show. However, some of the growers who brought them in have never entered our Chapter shows. Entering is not about winning. It's about showing others the beauty and potential of this very diverse family of plants. And a plant that's new or rarely seen, or a plant that's huge and magnificent is worth showing, even if it does have some marks on the leaves that could prevent it from getting a blue ribbon. The public, and that includes everyone attending the Convention as well as those who are just visiting to see the show, want to see these plants. Consider the show an Educational Display. Ribbons are just an added bonus if you happen to win some. ...cont.



Raffle Table at the December Holiday Party

In this issue...

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Our Meeting Place Is Safe-For Now
Bev's Gesneriad History – A Beginner's Story
Closeups: Episcia Leaves
Wishlists

Upcoming Events and 2009 Meetings:

Next Meeting: Saturday January 10, 2009

Program: Growing in Leca Stones
10:30 – doors open
11:00 – program begins
11:45-12:15 – Raffle and Little Show Entries
12:15-12:30 – Little Show (everyone should bring at least one plant for show every month)
12:30-1:00 – Socializing & Lunch:
1:00-2:00 – Business Meeting

Meetings are at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. New members are welcome – please introduce yourself for a free plant.

Meetings in 2009:

2/14/09, 3/14/09, 4/11/09, 5/9/09
6/13/09 (pre-Convention meeting)
6/30-7/4/09 – The Gesneriad Society Convention
(location: Silver Spring, MD)
9/12/09, 10/10/09, 12/12/09

...cont. from page 1

By now most of you have heard about my goal to enter a plant in every class at Convention. I'm keeping with that goal but it's going to be a real challenge. Before I started growing Gesneriads in earnest again I had very few plants and they all went outside for the summer. It turns out that was probably what kept them all alive. I have a whole house water filter/softener that adds salt to the water to replace the iron and other minerals that made the house water smell bad and stain all the while tile and porcelain when we first moved in. In small doses, over a few winter months, that didn't really harm any of the plants, and the residual salt would get flushed out when the plants went out for the summer.

However, once I put up light stands and put everything on wicks I started seeing problems about 6 – 9 months later. Wicks were drying up and refusing to soak up water, plants were showing lots of browning on the leaf edges, and whole plants would just shrivel up over time. Salt and gesneriads just don't go together well (except maybe in a salad). My Christmas gift this year was a new water line that bypasses the filter and softener, so that the plants get the full benefit of the iron and minerals in the water instead of getting their roots burned off. The water line includes a small water heater so that I can control the temperature of the water. But the bottom line is that I have just under 6 months left to get all the plants growing again and replace plants that I've lost so that I can have an entry for every Class.

When Gesneriads are growing well most can form a good show plant in that time. I actually have until April 2 to acquire plants, since the rules of the show state that the plants have to be in your possession for 3 months prior to the show. I'll be keeping an eye on Lowe's and Home Depot for some of the large potted *Columnea*, *Aeschynanthus* and *Nematanthus*. My Best in Show at the Chapter Show last Spring was *Columnea* 'Broget Stavanger,' a plant I bought at Home Depot the previous Fall.

I really look forward to the next few months as we all get ourselves ready. In addition to the monthly Chapter meetings I plan to hold meetings in February, April and June for the Show Committee Chairs. We can decide on locations at the January

meeting. I'm also going to re-institute the Little Show program. Right now I'm the only judge in the group, so judging a show is a bit difficult. However, Ben Paternoster, Judges' Chair for the Gesneriad Society, has put me back up to my previous status as a Master Judge. Instead of having secretive judging of show plants we'll take 15 minutes as a group and review plants brought for the Little Show. I'll discuss what's good about the plants, what could have been improved, and give the plants a rough point score (blue, red or yellow range).

I think I've rambled on long enough. I look forward to the continued growth of the Chapter and a fun two years as President.

JR



January Program: Growing in Leca Stones

by Jim Roberts

I'm still in the process of converting my collection over to Leca Stones. Back when Barbara and I had our business we grew everything in Leca, and I do mean everything. We even had some cactus (the spiny, barrel type) growing in the same trays as the *Episcia*. Stones were on the brown bag gift table at the Holiday Party in December. Some of you have tried the stones with mixed results, so I thought I'd fill you in on my experiences and tricks. Bring a plant or some cuttings if you'd like and we'll pot them up in the stones so that you can try this method at home. They work with tubers and rhizomes too, so any plant you want to try is acceptable.

* * * * *

If you missed the August 2008 issue of Petal Tones, it's available on our website. It includes Jim's article on growing in leca.

Some Important Notes

2009 Convention Information

Yes, the program, show schedule, and everything else you need to know is up on The Gesneriad Society's website! And yes, you can register now, online, just like that. For info, visit: <http://gesneriadsociety.org/>

Membership Dues

Our Treasurer reminds us that it's time for membership dues. If you haven't paid your 2009 dues, please do so at the next meeting or contact Larry Skog.

* * * * *

Our Meeting Place Is Safe—For Now

by Aarti Shah

As you may have heard, in April of 2008 the U.S. National Arboretum's parent agency—the Agricultural Research Service—called for a \$2 million cut in the Arboretum's budget. This proposed cut was part of an \$84 million cut proposed for the Agricultural Research Service, the scientific research arm of the Department of Agriculture, which would have led to the closing of the 11 research centers across the country and cutbacks at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville.



Pyracantha 'Navaho', a US National Arboretum introduction, 1978. Photographed at the National Arboretum on the day of the December meeting.



Capsicum annuum 'Black Pearl', an ornamental pepper. A product of a Collaborative Research and Development Agreement between the Agricultural Research Service and Pan America Seed Company. All-America Selections award winner, 2006. Photographed September 2007 at the National Arboretum.

The proposed cut in the Arboretum budget would have reduced funding for the Arboretum's public programming and care of plant displays and collections by 60 percent.¹ The Arboretum Director Thomas Elias prepared a plan that would cut 20 positions from a staff of 76, and remove some plant collections. Most significantly for our group, this proposal also would have closed the Arboretum on weekends. According to Friends of the National Arboretum (fona.org), a largely volunteer support group that has tried to raise public awareness of the proposed cuts, the cut might also have resulted in the closure of part of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum.² (This museum was featured in a previous edition of *Petal Tones*.)

Happily, on September 27, 2008, Congress came to the rescue, giving final approval for funding the Agricultural Research Service at last year's levels until March 6, 2009. Therefore, the issue of the proposed cuts should be tabled, at least until early 2009. So, our meeting place is safe—for a couple of months anyway.

¹ Adrian Higgins, An Infusion for a Wilting Institution, *Washington Post*, October 3, 2008, at B02.

² Adrian Higgins, Plans Wilt at National Arboretum, *Washington Post*, April 26, 2008, at A01.

Bev's Gesneriad History – A Beginner's Story

by Beverly Nissenbaum

I consider myself a beginner level hobbyist. I started with one African violet given to me by my Mother; a familiar story I am told. Mom grew it from a leaf in dirt from the back yard in good old Brooklyn, NY. Mom had earlier showed me the leaf growing and said it took a whole year to grow from leaf to full size plant. The original plant, as with many of my Mom's violets, was grown from leaves that Mom would get from her sister in Seattle, probably in the 1970s – little leaves travelling in suitcases on Northwest Airlines through the years of visits to a city that was Mom's birth town. I was already decades into adulthood, but my Mom and Aunt were aging. I was interested in a way I had not been before.



This is Sally, The Best Dog Ever.

My Mom was groovy with earthy stuff. When I was a kid my Mom sliced off the top of a carrot and we grew it together in water in a saucer on a window sill. There were always lots of plants in my parent's house; behind chairs, on stairwell windows, in the bathrooms, and on the kitchen sink window ledge that faced east where at least a dozen African violets grew along with hanging plants. And when we traveled, we always visited the local botanical gardens.

I had never kept plants on my own until that one plant that Mom gave me about 10 years ago. I tended to it with utmost care. I started reading up on African violets, googling sites, and subscribing to the African Violet Society of America's monthly magazine. I kept that one lone plant on a west facing kitchen window sill for several years. My second plant was a hanging generic *Nematantus* bought from a local nursery; the journey goes on from there. I am partial to *Nematanthus*, but don't have the room to grow these well.



Saintpaulia 'Milang Lake'

I grow most of my plants on a six foot plant stand – four shelves, each with two 24 inch bulbs. I mostly use two cool white bulbs per shelf; but I often randomly mix in with full and wide spectrum. I am not a competitive hobbyist, but perhaps I will get that bug. I grow what grows well on those shelves and toss those that don't. I buy plants and supplies from a local nursery, Johnsons, and on rare occasions though the mail – Lyndon Lyons, Optimara, Logees. I now happily get plants from our club meetings. CVS sells a generic brand of small, clear plastic Dixie cups that I buy and drill holes in, and they also carry nylon string that I use for wicking, sometimes doubling the string. I write with indelible marker right on the pot, name, date potted.



I don't have a lot of room and I don't have a consistent system. I do make my own potting mix, with 1/3, peat, perlite and vermiculite; and use a liquid fertilizer on a regular basis – mostly Schultz's African Violet, 8-14-9, and sometimes Miracle Gro African Violet, 7-7-7, or the regular Miracle Gro. I wick some on food containers.



Shelf with bagged plants and Suzy, my gesneriad guardian.



Aeschynanthus sp. 'Pink Thai' and 'Red Thai'

I bag a lot. I often find that plants that do really well bagged, dry out and die when I shelve them on their own, especially in the winter – my stand is next to a radiator. In addition to the stand, I grow a few Strops and other plants and a hanging *Nematanthus* on a west facing window in the kitchen.



Closeup: Episcia Leaves

by Kyoko Imai

This month I took my macro lens to a couple of Episcia leaves. It's amazing just how hairy these leaves are - although to the naked eye, they're nothing compared to new leaves of *Sinningia leucotricha*.

The first photograph is of a blue-flowered *Episcia*, possibly *lilacina*. I find these blue-flowered ones struggle during most of the year, except for a few weeks in the spring and fall when temperatures are steadily around 80-85F. (Culture suggestions would be welcome.) This one is currently in the bottom of a growing case, and just received some "rain".



My stand is in the dining room right next to the table where I use my laptop, so I get to enjoy my plants almost every day up close. I recently read an article in AV magazine on the affects of fluorescent lights on your skin – it darkens it over time. The article didn't address cancer, just skin pigment, but I will look into this and perhaps adjust where I sit.



This next one is of new growth on *Episcia* 'La Solidad Bronze', from our club sale. It's currently growing in a plastic tub with various other cuttings.



Saintpaulia 'Kimono'

That's my plant hobby history. I am happy to share it with those who find it of interest. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

Beverly Nissenbaum
Washington, DC
January 2009



***** Wish Lists *****

Jim Roberts:

- Any Gasteranthus*
- Streptocarpus rimicola*
- Petrocosmea formosa*

John Boggan:

- Seemannia* (formerly *Gloxinia*) *gymnostoma*

Brian Connor:

- Streptocarpus* 'Roulette Cherry'
- Streptocarpus* 'Roulette Azur'
- Smithiantha* 'Sassy Redhead'
- Smithiantha zebrina*
- Smithiantha* 'Big Dots Rule'
- Eucodonia* 'Adele'
- Eucodonia* 'Frances'

Carol Gates:

- Streptocarpus pole-evansii*
- Streptocarpus micranthus*
- Streptocarpus liliputana*
- Streptocarpus* 'Silky Touch'
- Chirita dielsii*



Verticillata 'Red Sprite', in front of the Administrative Building at the National Arboretum. Photographed December 2008 on the day of our meeting.

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

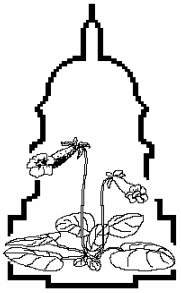
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NCAC meets several times a year on the second Saturday of the month in the Administration Building of the U.S. National Arboretum. For details, please refer to the latest issue of *Petal Tones*, the website, or contact one of the people below. All are welcome and new attendees are invited to adopt a free plant.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org
NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

- President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net
- Vice President: Brian Connor
- Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu
- Secretary: Denise Whitman
- Directors: John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink
- Committees: Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor
- Newsletter Editor: Kyoko Imai
petaltones@gmail.com
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
- Chapter Website: Jim Hipple
webmaster@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
- Membership: John Boggan
jkb25@cornell.edu
(202) 328-8145



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Volume 40, number 2

February 2009

Message from the President

As I sit and write this there is no doubt that winter has finally arrived here in Maryland. Sure, it could be a lot worse, but when I landed at Dulles on Tuesday morning after 10 days in Brazil, there was no doubt the vacation was over.

I was still going through customs when I got a call from the office asking me stop by on my way home from the airport. Nine and a half hours in the air, an hour to the office and then two hours there to take care of a problem... home sure looked good when I finally got there.

But rest was short lived. I had to go out and get the stitches out of my leg. They'd been in for 19 days (the doctor in Brazil said everything was healing nicely but he refused to take them out while I was down there). Ten days in Brazil, and the first time I got clearance to go into a pool or ocean was after I got home.

Oh, well. I still had a great time. I'll share a lot of pictures at the meeting this month. It's been almost five years since my last visit to Mauro's greenhouse and things sure have changed. The plants there are still fantastic to look at, but there seemed to be seed



Mauro, his sister, mom and brother-in-law at his Birthday party on Sunday the 25th.

...cont.

Next Meeting: Jim's Trip Report (Brazil)

Jim Roberts will be speaking about his visit to Brazil and to Mauro Pexioto's greenhouse.

Please remember to bring plants for the Little Show, raffle table contributions, and food.

Membership Dues

If you have not done so already, please give your dues to Larry Skog.

In this issue....

What's Growing

Tsukuba Botanical Garden

Close-ups: *Petrocosmea*

(No one sent in a wish list this month.)

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Program:

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...cont. from page 1

Pods everywhere to feed the Brazil Seed Fund. The greenhouse itself has been expanded and the roof repaired, but Mauro's friendly reception was what really impressed me.

We spent three amazing days exploring areas close to his home and seeing some great plants. I've got some wonderful pictures to go through for the plants growing in their natural environment class at the Convention this summer. We saw *Sinningia allagophylla*, *S. magnifica*, *S. aggregata*, *S. douglasii* (growing in trees), *Nematanthus fissus*, *N. fritchii*, *N. fornix*, *Codonanthe gracilis* and *C. devosiana* – all in just a few small areas within a couple hours of his home. Not to mention all the orchids, bromeliads and aroids that got in the way of seeing the plants we were hunting.

I don't want to spoil the program by putting photos here ahead of my talk, but I will be giving Ki a CD of photos to put in the March issue.

Mauro had some interesting hybrids that he's made with *Sinningia* sp. 'Florianopolis.' Does anyone have any seedlings growing from the seed that Carol shared last Summer? *S. sp.* 'Florianopolis' seems to transfer that great leaf texture into its hybrids, so if you have the plant, work with it.

Guess I'm going on a bit long but there's still a lot to talk about. There are still a few months left to pick up plants to enter in the Convention show. And there are still a few open meetings for us to pick up hints on what the judges will be looking for in show plants. Remember to bring plants to our Little Show.

Don't forget plants/tubers/rhizomes/leaves/cuttings/pots and other related materials for the raffle table. Now's the time to start small cuttings to grow on for dish gardens and terrariums, or for arrangements of growing materials. And don't forget to send your wish list to Ki each month.

Tell your friends about next month's special meeting. Tim Tuttle will be down to talk about his *Petrocosmea* plants and hybrids, a preview of his Convention talk.

Jim

What's Growing

Brian Connor sent in some photos!



©2008 Brian Connor.

From the top, left to right:

Top row: *Epicanthe* Don Herman 'Gold Rush' (An orchid, not a gesneriad - one whose parents have undergone some taxonomic changes, resulting in this relatively new name for the nothogenus.)

Row 2: *Streptocarpus* 'Shen Sugarplum', *Kohleria* 'Peridot's Potlach'

Row 3: *Kohleria* Peridot's 'Rolo', *Streptocarpus* 'Spin Art'

Row 4: *Petrocosmea minor*, *Streptocarpus* 'Inky Fingers'

Tsukuba Botanical Garden

<http://www.tbg.kahaku.go.jp/english/>
by Kyoko Imai

I've been meaning to share a few photos from my brief visit to the Tsukuba Botanical Garden in June of last year. It was a drizzly wet afternoon worthy of a movie, but I had a space in my schedule and it was time for some greenery.

The Tsukuba Botanical Garden is a research branch of the National Science Museum of Japan. It is located within Tsukuba Science City, a 45 minute ride via express train (a little over 30 miles/50 km) from the northeastern edge of Tokyo. Occupying some 14 ha. (36 acres), the collection includes vascular plants of central Japan, East Asian ferns, Cycadaceae, Colocasia, and South American orchids.

The garden has three greenhouses: the Tropical Resource Plants House; the Tropical Rain Forest House which has two rooms for Lowland and Montane climates; and the Savanna House.

This is the Tropical Resource Plants House. (You can see it was raining.)



©2008 Kyoko Imai.

According to the online database, the Tsukuba Botanical Garden has quite a number of gesneriads, but I only spotted three in the Tropical Resource Plants House.

Rhytidophyllum tormentosum, a few feet tall:



©2008 Kyoko Imai.



©2008 Kyoko Imai.

Episcia 'Acajou':

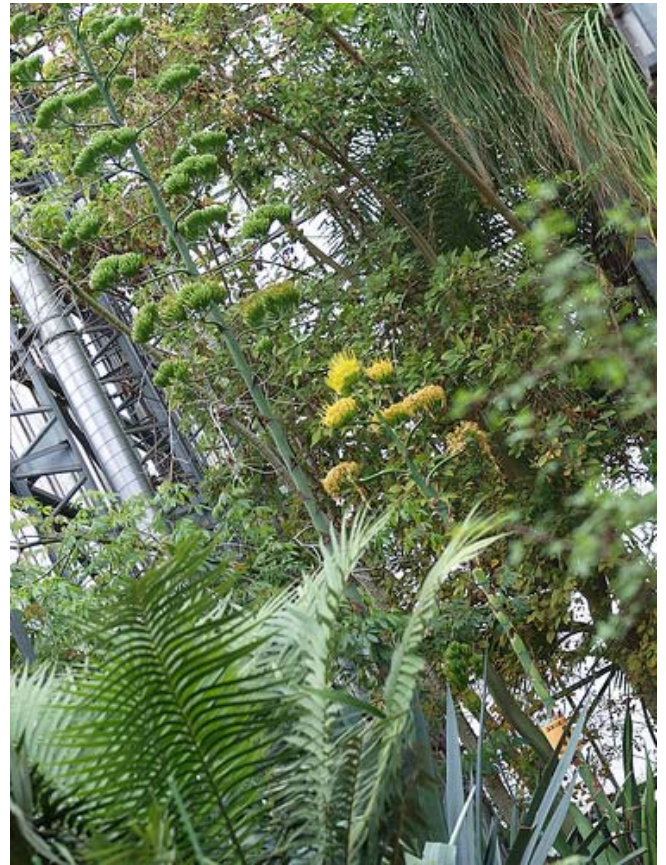


©2008 Kyoko Imai.

Aeschynanthus:



©2008 Kyoko Imai.



©2008 Kyoko Imai.

Despite the rain, I spent a couple of hours wandering through the outdoor areas. There are some dozen sections such as a Cool-Temperate Deciduous Broad-leaved Forest Section, Marsh Plants Section, and Hygrophytes and Aquatic Plants Sections.



©2008 Kyoko Imai.

The "most interesting" plants were marked for the public, and on this day an *Agave atrovirens* was #1 in the Savanna House. You can see one spike in flower, and another taller spike with buds. I'd guess it was over 20 feet tall: this photo cuts off the adult standing next to the plant, and even standing at the very edge of the greenhouse I had to tilt the camera to get most of it into the frame. (I wasn't carrying a wide angle lens.)



©2008 Kyoko Imai.

I hope some day I'll be able to visit the off-limits areas – I saw some interesting things behind the walls and fences.

Close-ups: *Petrocosmea*

by Kyoko Imai

As next month's program will be on *Petrocosmea*, I took my macro lens up close to a couple of leaves, and then decided to include a bit more on this genus.

There are quite a few species and hybrids in cultivation in the U.S., such as *Petrocosmea forrestii*, *P. begoniifolia*, and *P. rosettifolia* (there is some question as to whether what is circulating as *rosettifolia* is named correctly).



© 2008 Kyoko Imai.

P. flaccida at the Mid-Atlantic African Violet Show 2008.



© 2007 Laurie Gray Bounsall.

P. forrestii.

Petrocosmea species are native to areas of Asia including Thailand, China, Burma. Some are from higher altitudes and therefore grow and bloom

better with a cool, relatively dry winter. Some such as *P. parryorum* are from lower elevations.¹



© 2008 Kyoko Imai.

P. rosettifolia in a planting shown at the NCAC 2006 show.



© 2008 Kyoko Imai.

P. rosettifolia in the same planting.

¹ The Gesneriad Reference Web, <http://www.gesneriads.ca/genpetro.htm>.

Most grow beautiful rosettes of leaves, such as this *P. begoniifolia*:



© 2007 Laurie Gray Bounsall.

Propagation from leaves is easy and relatively fast – just as with *Saintpaulia* – and can also be done in long fiber sphagnum.



© 2007 Laurie Gray Bounsall.



© 2006 Kyoko Imai. *P. flaccida*.

I discovered that they can be extremely resilient to drought when I left some *P. 'Momo'* babies (each with only a few leaves) in 0.5 oz cups without water for 3 months. They had shrunk but all were still alive and are growing.

The leaves of some species are covered in hair, such as with this species being distributed as *P. sericea* 'HT-1':



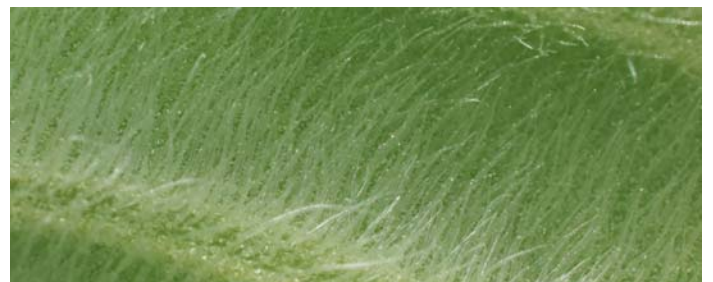
© 2009 Kyoko Imai.

A closer view of the hairs from the side:



© 2009 Kyoko Imai.

And this is the back of a leaf:



© 2009 Kyoko Imai.

In contrast, the leaves of my *P. minor* have shorter hair ("fuzzy") with some longer hairs at the edges:



© 2009 Kyoko Imai.



© 2009 Kyoko Imai.

And this photograph shows the bumps and hairs on *P. menglianensis* leaf:



© 2009 Kyoko Imai.

I find that during the dry winters, my *Petroselinum* grow better in enclosed environments such as a terrarium.

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President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

Secretary: Denise Whitman

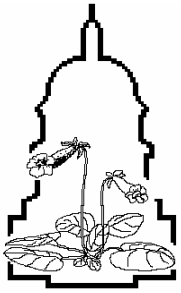
Directors: John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees: Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor

Newsletter Editor: Kyoko Imai
petaltones@gmail.com
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Chapter Website: Jim Hipple
webmaster@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



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Volume 40, number 3

March 2009

Message from the President

Today is the last day of February. Snow and sleet are predicted for tonight and tomorrow. Will Spring ever get here? YES it will. And before you know it, we'll be into Summer and Convention. This month's meeting should be an extra special one for all of us. Not only will we hear a great talk on *Petrocosmea*, but we have some special tubers and rhizomes to sell off to members from David Harris. David won't be able to attend our Convention, but will be sending a couple hundred tubers for the plant sales room. These early arrivals are "to be used as a fundraiser" for our local group. Since we don't have any plant sales planned I thought that we could put them out for sale along side the raffle plants. And then once the raffle starts anything left could become part of the raffle.

...continued on page 3

Next Meeting: Tim Tuttle on *Petrocosmea*

Tim Tuttle will be speaking about *Petrocosmea*. Tim will be a speaker at the Annual Convention of The Gesneriad Society in July 2009.

Please remember to bring plants for the Little Show, raffle table contributions, and food.

In this issue....

New *Aeschynanthus* Species
Help Wanted!
Wishlists
Growing Gesneriads for Show
Brazil Plants – A Visit with Mauro



Clockwise from top left: *Columnea orientadina*, *Columnea* sp., raffle table, *Kohleria* 'Peridot's Rolo' from the February meeting Little Show.

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12:30-1:00 – Socializing & Lunch
1:00-2:00 – Business Meeting

Meetings are at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. New members are welcome – please introduce yourself for a free plant.

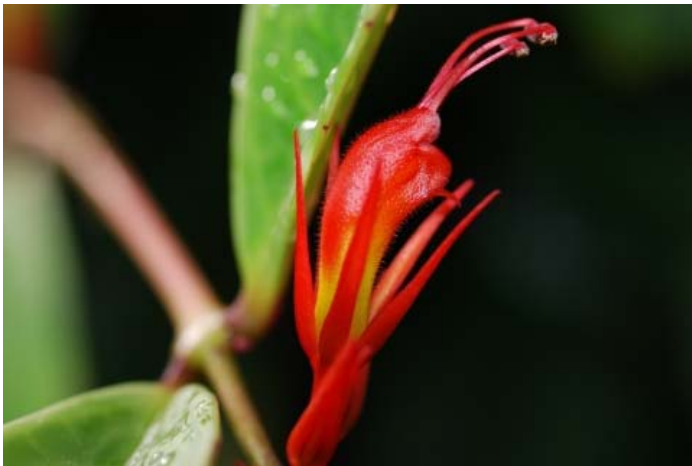
Meetings in 2009:

4/11/09, 5/9/09, 6/13/09 (pre-Convention meeting)
6/30-7/4/09 – The Gesneriad Society Convention (location: Silver Spring, MD)
9/12/09, 10/10/09, 12/12/09

New *Aeschyanthus* Species

by Aarti Shah

In December 2008, the World Wildlife Fund ("WWF") issued a report on an amazing number of new species which have been discovered in the Greater Mekong region, the area comprising the basin of the 3000-mile long Mekong River including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Yunnan Province of China. According to the report, over 1,000 new species have been discovered in this area in the past ten years alone.



© Royal Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh. Photograph by David Middleton.

The report, which is 40 pages long and available via the December 17, 2008 press release on the WWF's website,¹ is fascinating, and includes one item of particular interest. It states that in 2007, a new *Aeschyanthus*, *A. mendumiae*, was found 850 meters (approx. 2750 ft) high on the southeastern slopes of Phou Yang, a mountain in southeast Laos. The Appendix lists another: *A. minutifolius*.

As you can see in the pictures, *A. mendumiae* is a beautiful species with delicately mottled leaves, flowers that have yellow tubes with bright red openings, star-like calyces and red stamens and pollen. It's a beautiful plant, and I look forward to learning more about it.

¹ <http://www.worldwildlife.org/who/media/press/2008/WWFPresitem11027.html>



© Royal Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh. Photograph by David Middleton.

Help Wanted!

After getting our **website** off to a great start and maintaining it so well since then, Jim Hipple is asking us to find someone else to take it over. If you have web experience and want to help in this, please see me at the meeting. Ki and I are already planning to get the necessary software to maintain it, but if you've got the skills please see me.

Jim Roberts

Wishlists

Doris E. Hill:
Sinningia 'Bewitched'

Mark Zukaitis:
Mark is looking for material to propagate on his windowsill(s) for the Convention.
Sinningia braziliensis
Codonanthe devosiana
Any *Columnea*
Any *xCodonanthe*

Beverly Nissen:
Streptocarpus starter plants

...cont. from page 1

For those of you who don't know him, David is an extraordinary *Sinningia* hybridizer (minis and compacts). He has many spectacular doubles and singles which consistently win him awards at AV and Gesneriad shows.

I haven't asked Tim Tuttle yet, but I assume that Tim will also be bringing some plants to sell. So bring a little extra cash with you this month. And, as a friendly reminder, this is the last meeting where you can pick up plants for entry in the Convention show. Flower Show rules state that the plants entered in the horticulture section of the show must have been in the grower's possession for 3 months prior to the show. That means April 2 is the absolute deadline for getting show plants. Plants obtained after that can still be used in arrangements, decorative plantings or terrariums, but not as "show plants" *per se*.

Three months is still plenty of time to get your plants ready. Start to shape them now. Trim off any growth that ruins the symmetry of the plant so that new growth can fill in the trimmed area. Disbud *Saintpaulia* and *Streps* until the end of April or May, depending on the variety. This will result in a bigger burst of bloom when the plants are finally allowed to show their stuff. Start cuttings of anything healthy that you trim off the plants you are growing for show. Even leaves have time between now and July to send up plantlets that can be divided up and sold. Start planning your arrangements and gathering interestingly shaped twigs, stones, and vines from your yard or while walking through the woods. They're a lot easier to see now than they will be once they're covered with leaves. Find containers for dish gardens (tray landscapes) and terrariums and start gathering together the plants you want to use in them.

Convention will be a lot of work by all of us, but we've got some really dedicated hard workers in this group to make all that effort pay off in a lot of fun. Once you've been to a convention, you'll want to keep on going back – not just for the plants, but to see the friends you'll make and can look forward to seeing again every year.

Jim

Growing Gesneriads for Show

by Carol Hamelink

Now is the time to go through your plant stands and evaluate what you are growing with an eye toward identifying potential show plants. With 4 months to go until the show, there is still time to make changes that will lead to better plants with show potential. The various genera are quite different in their preparations for show. In general, to stimulate blooming you can increase the temperature of the room and/or increase the lighting. Now is a good time to replace one bulb in your light fixtures. This will give more lumens to your plants. As the show gets nearer, you can also increase the time you have the lights on.

Sinningias are among some of the easiest to deal with. This is the time to remove the old growing stems and allow new growth to start. This is also a good time to give the tubers a new clean pot. While I'm at it, I like to take off some of the old roots and examine the tubers.



Close up of a *Sinningia* sp. 'Florianopolis' tuber, with old stems removed.

Sometimes you'll have more than one in a pot and will want to separate them. Of course there is some risk involved – sometimes tubers don't start up again right away. Be sure to root the growing tips you've cut off as insurance. If the tuber grows, now you've got a starter plant for the sales table. I put both the tubers and the cutting in a humid environment, under a dome for a couple of weeks to try to

encourage them. With spring coming, most of the tubers seem to know this and restart quite readily.

When the growth is big enough to easily see, I take the sprouted tubers out from the dome and move them into the plant stand. Be sure to watch them carefully for the first couple of days for signs of wilting or wicks that aren't drawing. To keep the new growth compact, elevate the tuber so that it is close to the light source, adjusting the pot's distance to the light as it grows. Miniature *Sinningias* often look best with a single growth stem allowed to grow and flower. As secondary shoots appear, they can be harvested for show plants as well.



Miniature *Sinningia* with one growth each.

Kohlerias are among my favorite gesneriads. This is also a good time to restart them for the midsummer show. If your *Kohleria* is already mature and blooming, chances are it will be overgrown and done flowering by midsummer. Now is the time to take it apart and start any rhizomes you find. You can also cut down the growing tips and restart them as cuttings. Since gesneriads are notoriously hard to time for show (especially the blooms), I try to start a couple of pots at different stages, hoping that one of them will end up being just right for show. The others will be sale plants. When you start from rhizomes, they will not all start at once so you may have to revisit the pots after all the rhizomes are up and space them out, grouping like sized ones together. Tip cuttings will need to be started either under a dome for several weeks until roots can form, or they can be started to root in water on a shelf. Once roots begin they will still need to be put in a humid environment for a couple of weeks. Give them

a slight tug to test if rooted before removing from the humid environment. These will need to be watched daily for signs of wilting. I usually bring them out for a few hours a day to harden them off.



Three sizes of *Kohleria hirsuta*. Hopefully one will be just right in time for the show.

Chiritas can also be hard to get to bloom on time for show. Luckily the ones with variegation in the leaves can be entered in non-blooming categories. To tune up potential plants for show, I remove any leaves that have brown tips if they are not necessary to complete the rosette shape. If this leads to a bit of a neck, repot the plant. Your choices are to either go to a slightly larger pot, or root prune and go back into the same size pot. In general, *Chiritas* like to be underpotted, so I usually end up slicing off the bottom 1/2 to one inch of the root ball and going back into the same size pot with new soil on top to cover the neck. Depending on how much root is removed, these may or may not need a humid environment afterward: just be sure to keep an eye on them.

Episcias, as Lee Linnett told us last year, may require 6 months to make a beautiful show plant. But, if you've got them and they need tuning up, you may as well go for it now. You might get lucky, as some grow faster than others. *Episcias* seem to be very sensitive to the onset of spring and often exhibit vigorous growth as temperatures start to warm. Start several similar sized stolons in a pot and cover them for a week or so. They root very quickly. Remember to remove any new stolons until your base plant has filled in.

Saintpaulias are very easy to grow. As a consequence, to do well in a show they must be near perfection. The best growers in the country use a regular schedule for repotting or potting up, doing it every three months for maximum growth and to avoid any obvious signs of culture break. But nevermind that. To get your African Violet to look as good as it can, you should repot it now. Examine it carefully, you still have time to train errant leaves that aren't growing quite where they should for the perfect rosette. I use something like a bobby pin that I can clip onto the pot and, over the course of weeks, slowly move the leaf to the location I want. The Gesneriad Society follows the recommendations of the AVSA (African Violet Society of America) for classification into standard (greater than 8 inches in diameter), semiminature (less than 8 inches in diameter), miniature (less than 6 inches in diameter), and trailer (any size but must have 3 or more growing tips on the plant) categories. So look up the variety you are growing and make sure it is not too large (too small is not penalized). African Violets are relatively easy to time to bloom at the right time. To do this you need to remove all bloom stalks that you see for the next 2 months. Eight weeks before the show, you can let those that are double bloomers start to flower, and only 6 weeks are needed for single blossoms. These are only guidelines, but a good place to start. There are some things to do to speed along or slow down blooming. We'll talk about those as the show gets closer.



Mauro is a very gracious host, and was able to arrange his schedule so that we could spend three glorious days hunting down gesneriads. I took a bus from São Paulo to Moji das Cruzes after my last business meeting on Friday. Mauro picked me up at the bus station and we went out to dinner. It had been a long day of meetings for me, so after dinner we went back to his place, chatted for a while and I went to bed early.

The weather on Saturday was very much like what São Paulo had been experiencing for the previous two weeks: cloudy, drizzly, very warm and humid. Because of the threat of rain, we decided to limit that day's travels to a farm close to where Mauro lived. The owner of the farm is working at converting it to a sanctuary where plants and animals native to the region could be protected. We got to the farm only to find that the owners were not home. On our way out, after having passed once again over a plank bridge, we met up with the owners on their way back home.

The farm had some nice walking paths through the woods and along the stream, but there weren't many gesneriads to be found. Lots of bromeliads, begonias, orchids and other highly desirable house plants for us up here in the Northlands. We did find some *N. fritchii* and some *C. devosiana*. I also slipped once on the side of the stream and almost went in (lots of mud on the back of my jeans and shirt) and walked into a mud pit along the path where I sank in to the tops of my waterproof sneakers and ran about 10 feet to get to dry ground before it went over the tops of my sneakers. Luckily Mauro knew what the conditions would be like and we had come in his truck.

Brazil Plants – A Visit with Mauro

by Jim Roberts

One of the perks of my job (my wife disagrees with the term "perks") is getting to travel to different parts of the world. This year my company decided to hold its international sales meeting at a resort in Salvador, Brazil. A really nice place to visit but not nearly as enjoyable for me as the three days I was able to spend with Mauro Peixoto at his home outside of São Paulo.



Top and left: *Nematanthus fritchii*. Bottom right: *Codonanthe devosiana*.

On Sunday Mauro wanted to take me to see some better plants. There is a mountain about 2½ hours from his house. I forget if it's the second tallest peak in São Paulo state or in Brazil, but the peak was just a little over 6000 feet. On our way up, we stopped along the road to photograph some *S. magnifica* and *S. allagophylla*. The *S. magnifica* was growing among and between rocks whereas the *S. allagophylla* was growing in an area that seemed to support more plant variety. Mauro told me that the *S. allagophylla* had been in full bloom a few weeks earlier, but what we saw were mostly red-orange stalks with just a few, if any, open flowers and lots of unripe seed pods.

We passed numerous large hotels and guest houses on the way up. The peak is a popular winter resort where they actually get a little snow in the winter. Just before getting to the top Mauro pulled into a

dirt parking area on the side of the road and told me that this is where we would find the better plants of *S. magnifica*. Walking over the wet, moss-covered rocks going down the hill by the side of the road was a little slow. One misstep would have hurt a lot, and I was already nursing a fractured wrist and a large gash on my leg held together with a dozen stitches. The plants really were magnificent. All different sizes, some as individual plants while others seemed to be colonies with multiple tubers.



S. magnifica (left) and *S. allagophylla* (right), part way up a 6000 ft mountain about 2.5 hours from Mauro's home.

Stepping down off a rock to get a better shot of one small cluster I stepped on some very soft earth. While getting ready to take the shot I felt a lot of something on my foot. I looked down and discovered that the soft earth was in reality a fire-ant nest. My entire sneaker, sock and leg, up to the top of the bandage around the stitches was covered with ants. Needless to say, I wasn't as slow getting up the hill a bit as I was when I went down. A lot of swatting and brushing took care of the problem. Had to take the shoe off and even the sock to get them all, but I survived.

When we got to the top I asked Mauro if there were any on the other side of the road. He had never been down that way. Sure enough, at just about the same distance down this side of the hill, there were large plants of *S. magnifica*. In fact much larger and in better condition than those on the other side. And no ants!



Sinningia magnifica on the other side of the road.

On our way back down the mountain we stopped by some woods where Mauro knew that there was some *N. fornix*. Nothing in flower but I did manage to snap a photo of one in bud. Then Mauro spotted a *S. douglasii* up in a tree. We were looking at a large rhipsalis and higher up in the tree was the tuber of *douglasii*, covered in moss and lichen and with seed pods to boot. We missed the flowering, but I was at last able to see that, yes, some *Sinningia* are indeed epiphytic.



Sinningia douglasii growing epiphytically.

Monday we went to the beach. Not to swim, but to find some plants that a friend of Mauro's had sent him a picture of and a location. The picture looked like *S. aggregata* but this was a new location for it. Mauro had the GPS coordinates for it, and we were able to park on the street within 100 yards of the rocks where the plants were growing. They were *S. aggregata*, and a very nice clone at that. Mauro collected some seeds and a good sized tuber. Here I saw why my *Sinningia* were probably less hurt by the

salt water problem in my house than some of the other genera. Here were plants growing and thriving on bare rocks within 15 or 20 feet of the ocean.



Sinningia aggregata and its tuber lodged in ocean-side rocks.

We stopped at a couple other locations on the coast that day, saw more *N. fritschii*, *C. devosiana*, and *C. gracilis*, and headed back for some rest before my long flight home. I spent hours each day in the greenhouse taking pictures and hearing stories about some of the plants. I went through his seed collection on the last day and made sure I got packets of everything that we had seen in the wild. And I can't wait to see his slides and hear some of his stories at Convention this year. There are a couple of new things that I'm not talking about that will excite everyone in the audience.



Nematanthus fritschii



Codonanthe devosiana



Codonanthe gracilis

If you're ever in Sao Paulo, or plan to be down that way, get in touch with Mauro. The work he is doing to preserve and share not just gesneriads, but many different types of Brazilian plants is amazing. He is a truly special individual.

Next month: Jim Roberts' photographs from Mauro's greenhouse in Brazil.



Mauro Pexioto's greenhouse.

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

A chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

"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 several times a year on the second Saturday of the month in the Administration Building of the U.S. National Arboretum. For details, please refer to the latest issue of *Petal Tones*, the website, or contact one of the people below. All are welcome and new attendees are invited to adopt a free plant.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org

NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

Secretary: Denise Whitman

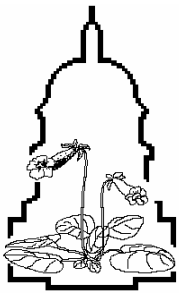
Directors: John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees: Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor

Newsletter Editor: Kyoko Imai
petaltones@gmail.com
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Chapter Website: Jim Hipple
webmaster@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



Petal Tones

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

Volume 40, number 4

April 2009

Message from the President

Does it really feel like spring has arrived? I'm writing this on March 22, and while there's no snow out there, the weather just hasn't inspired me to go out and work in the garden. But that's a good thing in my case. If I spend all my time outdoors when do I work on getting my plants ready for Convention?

Yes, that big deal that we all enthusiastically volunteered for is only three months away. By now we should all have a pretty good idea of what we'll have for show. Now it's time to work on those plants: re-potting, grooming, clipping, shaping and trying to get them to look better than they ever have before. April 2 was technically the last day that you could buy plants for entry in the horticulture sections of the show, but plants for the artistic (arrangements) and the arts (landscapes, terrariums) sections can be bought right up until the day of the show. In fact, the plant sales room is open early for those who will be entering arrangements so that they can find that perfect flower or stem to finish off the look that they were trying to achieve.

I know that this group can grow some terrific looking plants. I hope that every one of you has at least one entry in the show. From what I'm seeing on gesneriphiles, there will be quite a few growers coming who have never been to a Convention before. I think our location will bring some terrific growers from all over the east coast. DC is an attraction for foreign growers too. But don't let the size of the Convention scare you away. Plants are judged on their own merits. Just knowing that you scored 95 points on a plant is rewarding, no matter what ribbon that ends up being.

...cont. on page 2



At the March meeting, rhizomes and tubers donated by Dave's Violets were on offer as a fundraiser.

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Announcements

My Trip to Brazil (Part II): Mauro's Place

Attachments (members only):

Treasurer's Report (Laurence Skog)

Minutes from March Meeting (Denise Whitman)

Growing for Show Calendar (Brian Connor)

Culture of Petrocosmea: My Way (Tim Tuttle)

Upcoming Events and 2009 Meetings:

Next Meeting: Saturday April 11, 2009

10:30 – doors open

11:00 – program begins: **Growing in Leca Stones**

11:45-12:15 – Raffle and Little Show Entries

12:15-12:30 – Little Show (everyone should bring at least one plant for show every month)

12:30-1:00 – Socializing & Lunch

1:00-2:00 – Business Meeting

*immediately followed by **Convention Show**

Committee meeting in Silver Spring

Meetings are at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. New members are welcome – please introduce yourself for a free plant.

Meetings in 2009:

5/9/09 (propagation workshop)

6/13/09 (pre-Convention meeting)

6/30-7/4/09 – The Gesneriad Society Convention (location: Silver Spring, MD)

9/12/09, 10/10/09, 12/12/09

...cont. from page 1

This next meeting will be a replay of the talk I was going to give in January until the tractor in my garage decided to slice a big piece out of my shin. I'm going to show how I grow my plants in Leca stones. I know some of you have tried this method with varying degrees of success. I find that just about anything will grow in the stones, and for good reason — think of some of the photos I brought back from Brazil. Plants are growing on tree bark or stuck in a crack on a rocky cliff. Not exactly that 1-1-1 mix we're all using, is it?

I like to think of Leca culture like growing a cutting in a narrow mouthed container half filled with water. The bottom of the cutting gets "water roots" and the part above the water gets "air roots" in the high humidity atmosphere. The air roots in Leca culture occupy the spaces between the stones above the water level. Plants can't rot in Leca because they get lots of air around the roots. Even plants like *Streptocarpus*, *Petrocosmea* and *Chirita* which can't stand wet soil mixes do well. I think I've said this before, but I even grow succulents and cactus sitting in trays of water. It's all a matter of finding the right level of water.

But stones aren't for everyone. I'd like you all to share your growing medium recipe with us for the May issue. I mentioned the standby "Cornell Mix" of 1 part sphagnum, 1 part perlite and 1 part vermiculite. Does anyone use that exact mix? How do you modify it? Where do you buy coarse perlite and vermiculite (not the powdery stuff you can get at Home Depot)? What else do you add to the mix? In May we're going to be holding a propagation workshop and I doubt we'll be using Leca for that. We'll need some soil-less mixes, pots, plant labels, and a willingness to get a little dirty while having fun. But I'm getting ahead of myself. See you at the April meeting!

Jim



Magnolia x soulangiana

April Program: Growing in Leca Stones

This program will be about how I grow gesneriads and other plants in Leca stones, a hard fired clay pellet made in Germany. The method is often referred to as semi-hydroponic since there is no flowing water circulating air and water around the plants. The plants are only half or a third submerged in water and get their required air from the spaces between the stones.

I'll show how to start cuttings in Leca, how to transplant an established plant into Leca, and how to repot something that has been growing in Leca for a while. Rhizomes, tubers and fibrous-rooted plants; I haven't found a gesneriad yet that won't grow in Leca. If you'd like to try Leca with a plant of your own, bring it in and we'll get it started.

Jim

Also see Jim's article in the **January issue of Petal Tones.*



Spring in the DC area



A carpet of *Anemone blanda* 'Blue Shades' at Green Spring Gardens, a Fairfax County park in Alexandria, Virginia.

I Realize I'm Hooked Because . . .

©1985 Monte Walter

- ...I return home with more plants than I took to the sales table.
- ...I constantly "underpot" in order to get more plants on my shelf.
- ...I start cuttings for the sales table but mostly they remain on my shelves.
- ...I reset plants that become rangy but I retain the mother plant.
- ...I may have two dozen healthy seedlings of one species, but I keep all the weaklings hoping they'll gain strength.
- ...I put off buying that special article and use the money to buy new introductions.
- ...I subscribe to every magazine that mentions "Gesneriads".
- ...I recognize flower and plants whose names I cannot pronounce.
- ...Latin suddenly becomes a 'live' language.
- ...I fly into a rage when I hear the wrong information being dispensed by a radio plant show host.
- ...Ahead I see a sign and discover, after I drive in, that it reads 'geraniums' not gesneriads.
- ...I find the time to visit all the nurseries in the vicinity but cannot find time to visit the optician.
- ...I buy plants for which I have no room.
- ...I make a list in order to keep track of my plants.
- ...I find, hidden behind the dalbergaria, a blooming miniature which is not included on the list.
- ...I overhear someone talking about a 'strep throat' and I wonder what colour the flower is.
- ...Someone refers to a Boa Constrictor and I immediately ask for a cutting.
- ...I go to an orchid show and I am disappointed because there are no gesneriads on the sales table.
- ...I have a habit of engineering all my conversations to include gesneriads in the hope of involving the other party.

- ...I support the notion that the Society should meet twice monthly instead of just the 2nd Sunday of each month.
- ...I have recurring dreams of unusual hybrids being produced in my basement.
- ...I am elated when we gain a new member but equally resentful when one is lost.
- ...I can hardly wait for the next AGGS Convention.
- ...I hear the weatherman refer to humidity and air velocity and immediately think of my plant room.
- ...On my shelf I have every fertilizer, insecticide and fungicide that has been on the mark.
- ...I leap out of bed at 5:30 a.m. and rush to the plant room to ensure my Eucodonia is not being devoured by 'mealybugs' – it was only a nightmare!
- ...I get 'jitters' when a smoking visitor puffs clouds of contaminated air in the direction of my plant shelves.
- ...Someone tells me I am 'addicted'; I deny it and reply "It's just my hobby".

Competition!

Feeling addicted? Write it down, send it to *Petal Tones* - I'll include them anonymously in the May issue. The best one by vote entitles you to your choice of raffle plant at the May meeting!

....and don't forget to send in your potting mix recipes too:

***3 cups peat
1 cup sponge rock
2 tablespoons coco powder
Bake at 220F for 3 hours.....***

Announcements

The Gesneriad Research Center at the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens is pleased to announce

World Gesneriad Research Conference 2010

WGRC 2010 will be a three-day scientific meeting to be held in Sarasota, Florida in September or October 2010 focused on research in Gesneriaceae. Experts and students are invited to make presentations about research on Gesneriaceae and to discuss, promote and plan for continued research-based advancements in this important plant family. Plant enthusiasts and horticulturalists will also be encouraged to attend the presentations and to participate in discussion groups. Associated activities such as field trips will be a major part of WGRC 2010; these activities will be open to all conference attendees.

We are soliciting ideas and proposals for activities at WGRC 2010. Possible topics of interest include systematics, biogeography and ancestral range history, taxonomy and monography, pollination biology and ecology, conservation, horticulture, etc.

STEERING COMMITTEE

John L. Clark, University of Alabama
John R. Clark, Gesneriad Research Center
Eric H. Roalson, Washington State University
Laurence E. Skog, Smithsonian Institution
Bruce K. Holst, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens
Jeanne Katzenstein, The Gesneriad Society, Inc.
Melissa McDowell, Suncoast Chapter, The Gesneriad Society, Inc.
Peter Shalit, The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

TO PARTICIPATE

To participate and/or to receive additional information please send an email to the Committee Chair, John R. Clark, at gesneriadresearch@gmail.com by 15 April 2009 with the following information:

- Name, Institution, mailing and email address, current position.
- Research Interests.
- Symposia concept(s).
- How you wish to participate (poster, oral presentation, symposium chair, other).

- Which month you prefer the conference to be held (September or October 2010).
- Potential conflicts that should be considered (e.g., other meetings).

Baltimore African Violet Club Mother's Day Show & Sale

Location: Harford Mall
Address: Bel Air Road, Bel Air, MD 21014 USA
Event Date: 5/08/2009 - 5/09/2009
Time: Fri 10 am to 9:30 pm Sat 10 am to 9:30 pm

Event Description:

AVSA judged Mother's Day Show & Sale. Hundreds of beautiful African violets, other gesneriads and exotic houseplants will be offered for sale. The sale will also feature leaves, cuttings, and many growing supplies including soil mix, plant rings, self-watering pots and much more. Experienced growers will be there to answer your growing questions. This event is free to the public.

Whom to contact:

Karen Foster fancypos194@aol.com 410-457-4434
Diane Richardson mdianerichardson@peoplepc.com
410-686-4667

Brazil Plants

NCAC expects to be renewing its membership to the Brazil Plants Group for 2009. Up for discussion is the manner in which seeds will be distributed and, of course, a volunteer to handle the seed requests. See brazilplants.com for an idea of the seed list.

Long Island Chapter May Meeting

Jim Roberts will be serving as a judge at the Long Island Chapter's show on May 2. If you're interested in joining him for the day trip, please get in touch with Jim.

My Trip to Brazil (Part II): Mauro's Place

by Jim Roberts

We all think of Mauro's Brazil Plants when it comes to gesneriads. His selection of gesneriad seeds from both old favorites and new collections is invaluable to growers around the world. But one of the first things you realize when you visit Mauro is that he is not just into gesneriads. Like many of us, he grows many different plant families. However, few of us grow the diversity that he maintains in his greenhouse and in garden beds around the yard.



Mauro in his greenhouse

Approaching the door to the greenhouse, the first thing I noticed was a garden filled with *Sarracenia* (pitcher plants), and then just before opening the door, a *Nepenthes* (vining, tropical pitcher) greets you on the outside of the screen where it has managed to work its way through the tiny openings. What's with all the pitchers? Well, I've been there a few times before so I wasn't surprised, but someone new to the experience might think he's at the wrong place.



Streptocarpus 'Joker'



Hanging pots of *Sinningia* etc.

That feeling changes as soon as you open the door. There's a large bed of *Streptocarpus* 'Joker' under the first tier of hanging pots just inside the door, and to the left are some enormous *Sinningia* tubers growing in the ground. The greenhouse is packed! And not just with gesneriads. Mauro is involved with and works closely with many different plant families. He makes his living leading plant collecting and observing tours for various groups around the world. Gesneriads seem to be a special interest, but I can't see him giving up anything else to make room for more of them. With his unique way of growing plants, there's always room for more.



S. macrostachya (top) and *S. reitzii* (bottom).

Any plant that gets large enough for at least a 6" clay pot is hung up in the greenhouse. I never asked why he does this, but I suspect it helps keep down ant infestations in the pots and also provides for the perfect drainage that these plants need. Orchids, Bromeliads, Passiflora, Aroids, Begonia; they all grow in pots suspended by wire from the roof of the greenhouse. This makes it a bit tricky to take pictures of some of them because you can't just take the plant off a shelf and position it nicely in front of a screen. You have to push pots aside and squeeze in between them with the camera lens in order to get the shot.

Yes, he does have some benches in the greenhouse for small growing plants (for e.g., *Sinningia pusilla* and *S. concinna*) and seedlings. But most are either suspended or growing in pots on the ground or growing in the ground. Some of the *Sinningia* tubers would require a 30" pot to contain them; the ground is so much easier.

I doubt that there are any *Nematanthus*, *Sinningia* or *Codonanthe* species found in Brazil that Mauro doesn't have growing. If he doesn't have it, it's because it hasn't been discovered yet. He works closely with Alain Chautems from Geneva in identifying and/or naming new species.

He does the same with other plant families. While I was there, Mauro told me about a graduate student finishing up his thesis on *Neomarica* (walking iris). He just wanted to see the plants that Mauro was growing of this genus and found 4-6 new, unidentified species growing there. Mauro collects what he thinks is new and interesting to him. Turns out that in this case it caused the grad. student to have to do a lot more work on his thesis.

Ki has photos from my talk of some of the various plants in the greenhouse. There were too many to try to describe here but if you have specific questions about any of them you can e-mail me at jim-roberts@hughes.net.

One thing I neglected to mention above. I am calling this a greenhouse even though the walls are mostly just screening. He has one small greenhouse attached to the main growing area that has a door. This area has solid walls, but not to keep in humidity like we would want to do here. It's mainly to keep in

the heat at night during their winter. I've been at his house in July when he had to scrape ice off the windshield of his jeep before we could drive it. That may be an exception to how cold it gets there, but those temperatures didn't seem to have any negative effect on the plants in the house. The roof over the growing area prevents frost from settling on the plants. During the summer months the temperatures are often well over 90 degrees and the humidity is 70% or higher. Yet the *Streps* grow and flower beautifully, and even the *Chirita* and *Petrocosmea* do well. So it would seem that as long as the air circulation is good and the humidity is high enough, these plants will survive and thrive anywhere.

Just one last word about his outside gardens. He grows most of his own coffee, and has dozens of varieties of *Passiflora* that he grows both for the ornamental value and for the passion fruits. He has stick tepees in the yard which can actually be seen on Google Maps. Just type -23 40.027 -46 8.047 into the search block and you'll end up on the beige colored roof of Mauro's house. From there you can see the large white area to the left (the greenhouse) and north of that is the area with the tepees. These tepees are covered with either *Passiflora* or *Aristolochia*.

Captions for photographs on following pages:

1. *Gloxinia erinoides*
2. *Seemannia gymnostoma*
3. *Kohleria bogotensis*
4. *Columnea* species
5. *Drymonia strigosa*
6. *Sinningia allagophylla* orange version
7. *Seemannia nematanthoides*
8. *Codonanthe devosiana* berries
9. *Nematanthus australis*
10. *Nematanthus australis*
11. *Nematanthus bradei*
12. *Neomortonia nummularia*
13. *Nematanthus striatus*
14. *Sinningia braziliensis*
15. *Nematanthus corticola* seeds
16. *Nematanthus tessmannii* seeds being dispersed by ants
17. *Seemannia purpurescens* from Hans Wiehler - possibly a natural hybrid
18. *Nematanthus australis* seeds
19. *Sinningia richii*
20. *Diastema* aff. *racimeferum*
21. *Sinningia eumorpha* x *Sinningia* sp. Florianopolis
22. New *Sinningia* sp.
23. *Sinningia eumorpha* x *Sinningia* sp. Santa Teresa
24. *Streptocarpus kirkii*



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Columnnea gloriosa



Sinningia sp. Florianopolis at Mauro's.



Sinningia pusilla, grown by Al Pickrel

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

A chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

"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 several times a year on the second Saturday of the month in the Administration Building of the U.S. National Arboretum. For details, please refer to the latest issue of *Petal Tones*, the website, or contact one of the people below. All are welcome and new attendees are invited to a free item from the raffle table.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org
NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

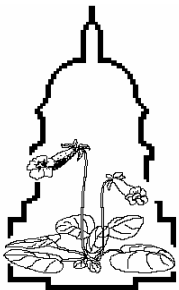
Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

Directors: John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees: Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor

Newsletter Editor and Website: Kyoko Imai
petaltones@gmail.com
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



Petal Tones

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

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May 2009

Message from the President

By the time we hold our meeting in May we'll only be 7 1/2 weeks away from Convention. Is everyone ready? I think the program this month will put us all in the spirit of Convention as we propagate for the plant sales room. Anyone and everyone in the Chapter is encouraged to sell plants in the sales room. Carol can explain a little better how the plant sales will work, but everything sold by the Chapter is split between The Gesneriad Society and us, and our share goes mostly to the grower - except for plants donated by members and plants started at meetings like the one we'll have this month.

The outside garden is demanding more and more of my time, and things out there have really sprung to life after the mini heat wave we're having this last weekend in April. I'm waiting for my *Titanotrichum oldhamii* to pop out of the ground (it actually crawls out around mid-May). I'm thinking of putting the *Ramonda* and *Conandron* out there if any of them are still alive under the lights.

Now is the time to really start shaping up what you plan to enter in the big show. Start new plants of anything and everything you trim off the show plants. If it's in the show, someone will want to go home with one. Now's also the time to stop disbudding plants that you've kept in active growth. The energy that they've been saving up will cause a huge burst of bloom in 6-8 weeks. Look over everything as a potential entry. If it's lopsided but healthy, figure out how to use it in a landscape garden or terrarium. If you haven't signed up for any of the arrangement classes, check with Frank Daspit to see what's still available and try one out.

Happy growing to everyone!

Jim



The April LECA presentation.

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Treasurer's Report
Minutes from April Meeting

Upcoming Events and 2009 Meetings:

Next Meeting: Saturday May 9, 2009

10:30 – doors open
11:00 – program begins: **Propagation Workshop**
11:45-12:15 – Raffle and Little Show Entries
12:15-12:30 – Little Show
12:30-1:00 – Socializing & Lunch
1:00-2:00 – Business Meeting

Meetings are at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. New members are welcome – please introduce yourself for a free plant.

Meetings in 2009:

6/13/09 (pre-Convention meeting)
6/30-7/4/09 – The Gesneriad Society Convention
(location: Silver Spring, MD)
9/12/09, 10/10/09, 12/12/09

May Program: Propagation Workshop

This will be a real working meeting. We're all going to be getting our hands dirty as we divide, trim, and pot up plants, leaves and stem cuttings for Convention. There'll be plenty of extras for those who don't have plants to bring.

I suggest everyone bring the following supplies:

- A supply of small pots. Solo cups make great starter pots, but we may have some larger leaves or cuttings that need something more substantial.
- Soil-less potting mix or pre-wet long fibered sphagnum moss. Foreign visitors cannot carry home anything that has soil in the mix.
- A tray or two to put the pots into to carry them home. Cardboard trays work well too if the plants are all enclosed in plastic.
- Plastic bags to enclose the individual pots.
- A watering can or squeeze bottle to water and settle in new cuttings.

Carol is bringing labels, but it would help if you can bring some fine point permanent markers to label the cuttings. Seven and a half weeks isn't a lot of time to get things going, but everything should be well rooted by July 2 when the sales room opens. People are looking for variety. Anything rare or unusual. Anything that they see in the Show. They aren't looking for huge plants, so we don't need for them to grow a lot once they're rooted. Remember, most of our guests have to stick the plants in their suitcases to get home. A rooted Chirita leaf with a small pup sticking up out of the soil is much easier to carry home than a 10" diameter plant. One can be readily unpotted and prepared for travel. The other will most likely have most of its leaves removed for the trip home.

As we work, we'll talk about different methods that we all use for starting different types of plants: scaling rhizomes, giving leaves a wedgie - uh, I mean wedging leaves, laying leaves flat and getting plantlets to grow at the cut veins. There are many tricks, and all will produce a growing product that we can sell. We all have favorite media for starting plants too. I hope some of you shared your soil recipe so that we can compare them at the meeting

and discuss why we put in some of those special ingredients.

It would be great if our Chapter could supply 750 to 1000 plants for the sales room. If we all can do just 50 plants each (small starters don't take up that much room!) we'll hit the 1000 plant goal. Of course, we'll have a lot of help from outside commercial growers too. But I'd really like to see this sales room talked about for years to come as something really special.

Jim

Addicted to Gesneriads!

by Brian Connor

- ...If you join another indoor gardening club, it will be called Gesneriads Anonymous and it will include a 12 step program
- ...Your solution to excess plants does not involve parting with them. Instead, you set up more plant stands.
- ...You stay home on a Friday night to repot the 25 plants with roots growing out of the drainage holes.
- ...You go to plant nurseries and botanical gardens on your days off-and it makes your day when you find gesneriads growing!
- ...You risk being late to work to harvest a seed pod.
- ...You can correctly pronounce *Corytoplectus cutucuensis*.
- ...You can correctly spell *Corytoplectus cutucuensis*.
- ...Your friends and family threaten to discard plants that you are "salvaging."
- ...You fill more containers of water than Gunga Din.
- ...And still your plants need more water!

Judges School

It is the responsibility of the local chapter to provide approx. 25 entries of plants, photos, terrariums, dish gardens, etc. for the Judges' School on Wednesday. These plants have to be dropped off Tuesday night or very early on Wednesday. As you decide which plants aren't going to make it to the show, think about whether you can clean them up enough for the school. Plants used in the Judges' School need not be blue ribbon quality. If they all are then the student judges won't be able to learn all they can. See Nell Hennessy if you can volunteer some plants or other entries. You'll get them back Wednesday afternoon and you'll still have time to throw a price tag in the pot and put it in the sales room.

Jim

Baltimore African Violet Club Mother's Day Show & Sale

Location: Harford Mall
Address: Bel Air Road, Bel Air, MD 21014 USA
Event Date: 5/08/2009 - 5/09/2009
Time: Fri 10 am to 9:30 pm Sat 10 am to 9:30 pm

Event Description:
AVSA judged Mother's Day Show & Sale. Hundreds of beautiful African violets, other gesneriads and exotic houseplants will be offered for sale. The sale will also feature leaves, cuttings, and many growing supplies including soil mix, plant rings, self-watering pots and much more. Experienced growers will be there to answer your growing questions. This event is free to the public.

Whom to contact:
Karen Foster fancypos194@aol.com 410-457-4434
Diane Richardson mdianerichardson@peoplepc.com
410-686-4667

Brazil Plants

NCAC has renewed its membership to the Brazil Plants Group for 2009. Thanks to Brian Connor for graciously agreeing to handle the seed requests. A new seed list is expected out soon!

Tips on Propagating Gesneriads

by Brian Connor

One of the joys of growing gesneriads is their ease of propagation. For the May meeting, NCAC is holding a propagation workshop. This will fulfill several functions: it will be an opportunity to multiply and share a variety of desirable gesneriads and simultaneously fill the plant sales room at the National Convention [as noted, by those who saw the hotel, "It's a big room!"]. This workshop will deal solely with vegetative propagation, which results in a clone of the parent plant. Gesneriad seeds are a special topic that we will not consider here.

What will be needed is a diverse assortment of plant material. So, bring that leggy *Seemania* and that out of control *Columnnea* and we will chop them down to size and give them a fresh, new start. Did your *Achimenes* produce more rhizomes than you can handle? The club will gladly take the excess. Do your *Saintpaulias*, *Chiritas* and *Streptocarpus* have an abundance of leaves? Break one (or two) off to propagate. If you find a nice, bushy hanging basket of *Nematanthus* or *Aeschynanthus* at the local garden center, bring it along (or at least a baggy full of cuttings). It goes without saying, no unhealthy, diseased plants!

ROOTING MEDIA/ENVIRONMENT: If you are rooting a lot of cuttings, a Prop Box is a most convenient accessory. It is simply a large, enclosed container with a plastic transparent cover that will conveniently fit under a light stand. These are available commercially or you can make your own from clear plastic shoe boxes, salad containers or other suitable materials. Plastic solo cups with holes drilled in the bottom make great propagation pots to place inside the Prop Box.

Most people root cuttings in vermiculite, perlite or sphagnum moss or a combination of these materials. An even mix of vermiculite/perlite works well. So does the sphagnum, but be careful to wring out any excess water after moistening the moss. It is possible to root the occasional stem cutting in water, but this is not recommended for high volume propagation.

STEM CUTTINGS: The easiest method of propagation, the stem cutting, can be used with fibrous rooted, rhizomatous or even tuberous gesneriads. Cut a section of stem that contains 3 leaf nodes, preferably a 2-4 inch section, although tip cuttings with 2 leaf nodes will usually work. Some people have great luck using a barren piece of stem without any leaves at all! Cut the stem at an angle, callus for a minute or two and dip in rooting hormone if you like. Rooting hormone is not required, but it may have anti-fungal activity. Remove the lower set of leaves and bury an inch or so of stem in your rooting media in the enclosed Prop Box. In a matter of days, fleshy stemmed *Kohlerias* and *Episcias* can strike roots. Woodier stems usually take a couple of weeks.

chimeras don't come true from leaf cuttings, see under miscellaneous].

Gesneriads Propagated by Leaf Cuttings

<i>Saintpaulia</i>	<i>Streptocarpus</i>
<i>Petrocosmea</i>	<i>Chirita</i>
<i>Nautilocalyx</i>	

Gesneriads Propagated by Stem Cuttings

<i>Columnnea</i>	<i>Streptocarpella</i>
<i>Aeschynanthus</i>	<i>Nautilocalyx</i>
<i>Nematanthus</i>	<i>Kohleria</i>
<i>Codonanthe</i>	<i>Seemania</i>
<i>Drymonia</i>	<i>Gloxinia</i>
<i>Alsobia</i>	<i>Smithiantha</i>
<i>Episcia</i>	<i>Sinningia</i>



Chirita leaf cuttings rooting in chopped sphagnum and perlite.

LEAF/WEDGE CUTTINGS: Another great method of propagation for rosette type plants is the leaf cutting. For *Saintpaulia* or *Petrocosmea*, cut the petiole at a slant, leaving about $1/2$ - $3/4$ inch. I prefer to insert the leaves at a 45 degree angle. Some people leave an inch of petiole and just insert the leaf straight down, which takes longer for "baby" plantlets to surface in my opinion. *Chirita* can also be propagated this way, but if the leaf is large enough, I prefer a different approach-the wedge cutting. In this procedure, the leaf is cut into sections [wedges] across the mid-vein and one of the cut sides is inserted into the propagation mix. *Streptocarpus* may also be propagated by wedge cuttings. A variation that can yield even more *Streptocarpus* plantlets -if you have the space- involves removing the mid-rib of the leaf longitudinally. This yields two leaf "halves" that are planted with the cut side down. Depending on the size of the leaf, you can get 20 or more plantlets this way. However, on the negative side, I find *Streptocarpus* and *Petrocosmea* leaves the most vulnerable to leaf rot. *Saintpaulia* leaves are probably the easiest to propagate [NOTE- *Saintpaulia*

SCALY RHIZOMES: Although they can resemble tiny alien pine cones or worms, scaly rhizomes are really underground stems that allow certain gesneriads to withstand harsh conditions. Such gesneriads usually have a dormant period when the plant dies back above ground and it relies on the rhizomes to survive the dry season. Rhizomes can be broken and each piece that is planted will produce a new plant. They can even be broken down to individual scales and planted like seed to get a tremendous yield of plants. CAUTION: However, it seems to me the bigger the rhizome, the more vigorous the resulting plant, at least for the first couple of months.

Gesneriads Propagated by Scaly Rhizomes

<i>Kohleria</i>	<i>Seemania</i>
<i>Gloxinia</i>	<i>Smithiantha</i>
<i>Achimenes</i>	<i>Diastema</i>
<i>Eucodonia</i>	<i>Phinaea</i>

DIVISION: This is my least favorite method of propagation, although it is the fastest. It involves dividing a multi-crowned plant with a very sharp knife and cutting through the root ball. Ideally, the end result is that each crown ends up with an equal share of the roots-then replot the divided plants immediately. Good luck! You may end up feeling more traumatized than the plants! To be fair, a few gesneriads, such as *Gesneria*, do not provide a lot of other choices.

Gesneriads Propagated by Divison	
<i>Saintpaulia</i>	<i>Streptocarpus</i>
<i>Chirita</i>	<i>Gesneria</i>

MISCELLANEOUS: What about stolons and crown cuttings? *Alsobia* and *Episcia* make stolons that can be treated as stem or tip cuttings. For leggy *Saintpaulia* that develop long necks, lop off the top inch or so of the crown [again a sharp knife comes in handy] and remove the lowest row of leaves of the freshly cut crown and treat as a stem cutting. This is also one of the few ways to propagate chimeras true to the parent. For chimeras, the other way to propagate true is to keep the bottom, beheaded half alive (which should hopefully have a row or two of leaves) and allow it make suckers, which can than be rooted. *Sinningia* can be propagated by crown cuttings also.



Tim Tuttle mentioned that *Petrocomea formosana* can sprout plantlets from the length of the petiole. I'm giving this a shot – most of the stem is lying on (or just under the surface of) the chopped sphagnum and perlite mix. –*Kyoko*

Potting Mixes

Thanks to everyone who wrote in about their potting mixes! A few people wrote in to say they use the traditional 1:1:1 mix (perlite, peat and vermiculite). Here are what others had to say:

* * * * *

Louise McPherson:

I use a mix called Sunshine 4. I find it better than other Canadian mixes as it does not seem to have a much peat as they do. I grow mostly African Violets, *Streptocarpus* and *Chiritas*. All thrive in this mix.

* * * * *

Karyn Cichocki:

In the past I used regular ProMix mixed with equal parts of course perlite and vermiculite. My plants grew without any problems.

Then I heard a lot about the New Zealand Sphagnum Moss disks which you add water to, to reconstitute them. I added equal parts of this to my normal soil mix – so then the mix contained 1 part each of ProMix, NZ Sphagnum Moss, Perlite & Vermiculite. I found that in my conditions this soil mix dried out too fast and was not easy to get dampened again. As far as how the plants looked, some plants were happy in it and others (*Chirita*, *Streptocarpus*) didn't look as happy growing in it. This may also have had something to do with the drying out.

I then heard about using Coir in your soil mix, so I purchased a couple of bricks of the stuff. This added some heaviness to the soil mix, but I was really happy with the results.

For the past year I have been using the following equal parts of:

- Farland Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss
- Coarse Perlite
- Vermiculite and
- Moo Doo (dehydrated composted cow manure).

This is a light mix, which my plants are really doing well in. So far I haven't found anything that doesn't like this mix. I grow Achimenes, Gloxinia and Eucodonia in Oyama self watering pots and this mix does well with this form of wick watering and I haven't needed to add more vermiculite and perlite to it.

My water pH is at 7 and I find that using Miracle Gro Tomato fertilizer (1/4 tsp to gal water) helps to bring the pH to neutral. After many years of struggling with my plants when I moved to New Jersey from Long Island, they are really looking good now.

* * * * *

Lee Stradley:

one part pro mix BX
one part perlite,
one part charcoal

for Chirita's I add some dolomitic lime

* * * * *

Brian Connor:

Here is a recipe for soil wicking mix that I quite liked. I deviated from it, and am going to try it again;

*1 hydrated brick of coco coir (approx. 8 quarts of coir after hydration---- while hydrating the brick add 3/8 teaspoon of superthrive to the water)
8 quarts coarse perlite
8 quarts small grade diatomite (#2)
1 1/2 quarts coarse horticultural charcoal
[below are optional]
5-6 tablespoons Dolomitic lime
5 tablespoons bone meal
2 1/2 tablespoons Triple Phosphate
1/2 cup of green sand
3/4 cup bat guano or dehydrated cow manure

* * * * *

Larry Skog:

As far as potting mixes go, I use MiracleGro Moisture Control Potting Mix right out of the bag. I buy this

at Home Depot. There may be others that are better, but this works for me, and it is soilless.

* * * * *

Mark Zukaitis:

Epiphytes (Nematanthus and actually former *Koellikeria erinoides*)

First, get a bag of long fibered sphagnum moss. What I like to do is cut it with scissors into little pieces. If you have small orchid bark mix it half and half with long fibered sphagnum and throw in any potting mix just enough to look like it will retain some water. It is like Italian cooking - it is better when you DON'T follow a recipe. Just feel it. The medium must retain water but at the same time allow lots of air into the root area. Please check out Mauro Piexoto's website, and look at his soil mix recipes. He suggests putting cut up dried leaves into his mixes as well.

If you go to any garden center, you will find a product called "Soil Moist". This is a polymer substance that looks like large grained sugar. When you add water, it goes from looking like sugar to looking like bar ice cubes, as it absorbs hundreds of times its weight in water. Keeping in mind the huge difference in volume, I would suggest plumping it up with water before you add it to the soil, and when you plant, make sure it is in the bottom third of the pot, and at that, very sparingly. Sometimes just soil humidity can make the difference (*Aeschynanthus humilis* is an example of a plant that flourishes with high soil humidity).

Terrestrials (Some Sinningias, and scaley rhizomatous)

Regular soil mixes generally work well for plants that are not found growing in and on trees or rooftops. Some of our best Sinningias are found growing rooted into the side of tree trunks, but the speciosas, Episcias and any others found growing in the ground, however, still require lots of air to the roots. Therefore, for terrestrial plants I use any peat based soil mix but lighten it up with lots of fine orchid mix. I don't like perlite because of the whiteness, but if you don't mind it is a great "soil opener". No plant likes a dense medium, especially

tropical lowland jungle gesneriads. Adding "Soil Moist" or a similar water retaining polymer is a plus, especially with scaley rhizomatous plants, who like an open mix but hate drying out. Plump the Soil Moist BEFORE adding so you get a handle on how large the crystals will become. Use sparingly.

* * * * *

Aarti Shah:

This mix isn't a miracle mix, but it's a good standby. I use any commercial potting soil (except the ones with the water crystals, which i haven't had good luck with) and to 3 parts soil I mix in 1 part perlite. My plants are potted in plastic, and are not wicked. This mix is lighter than the potting mix, but still retains enough moisture that the plants don't wilt between once-weekly waterings.

Growing Media Ingredients

by Kyoko Imai

As any orchid grower knows, there's a wide variety of media available for growing plants. Why would we look at alternatives to the 1:1:1 mix? Well, I for one find coarse vermiculite as easy to find as... well, Stalite, for example. Also, with my flood-and-drought watering habits, peat is a tricky base – peat dries rock solid and can be very obstinate about re-absorbing water. I once put a dried-out pot in a bucket of room temperature water – completely submerged – only to find several hours later that most of the potting mix was still completely dry. I've been meaning to try a coir-based mix for this very reason, but have been hesitating because of reports that some coir is very high in salts.

When mixing up some media, I think about compaction, pH, airiness, water retention, the ease with which the medium will re-absorb water, and how quickly the media will deteriorate. I might also think about media disliked by pests, or media that doesn't absorb fertilizer salts. Some of these considerations go to simulating the plant's natural growing conditions, while others are more to accommodate the grower's conditions and habits. A

common example is that mixes for wicking tend to be airier and less water retentive than mixes for "normal" watering.

Adjustments should be made according to the water's pH as well. Members who attended Bob Stewart's presentation last year will recall the discussion about pH, vermiculite, and "drainage material" in the bottom of pots. (Try inserting a wick to wick water down and **out**.)

As I already have a few different kinds of potting ingredients (yes, I grow orchids... and went through a media frenzy at one point), when I mix up some "mud mix" for the gesneriads I'm likely to use whatever is handy. I've added things like tree fern pieces, diatomite, LECA, and lava rock to my basic peat mix (usually ProMix) instead of perlite or vermiculite: the plants don't seem to know the difference, and some of them seem happier than before.

To illustrate some of the media available, I contacted a local supplier, Repotme.com.¹ They graciously agreed to let me use their photographs and descriptions of media. (And while looking around their site, I found they have coir-based houseplant potting mixes – I wish I'd known before planting up my succulent tank!)

Aliflor, is a brand of lightweight expanded clay aggregate (LECA), such as what Jim showed us last month for growing semi-hydroponically. LECA can also be used as a component of potting mixes, or as the only ingredient (without a water reservoir) for some of the lithophytic gesneriads.



©repotme.com. Aliflor.

There is also nothing to stop you from using broken brick pieces: inorganic chunks with some moisture retention properties.

¹Repotme.com is an internet store. Arrangements can be made to pick up purchases in Gaithersburg, Maryland. 301-315-2344.



©repotme.com. Brick.

For something chunky, inorganic, and that doesn't absorb water, cobblestone or pea gravel might be an option. Or how about granite chips (aka turkey grit or chicken grit), or marble chips? Granite chips are said to provide silica and micronutrients over time, while marble chips are said to provide some elemental calcium. There is also volcanic rock, of course, which is chunky and water retentive.



©repotme.com. Diatomite.

Metro Mix 380 (with coir) is formulated with coir, bark, Canadian sphagnum peat moss, perlite, dolomitic limestone and a starter nutrient charge.



©repotme.com. Cobblestone and granite grit.

Diatomite is a porous rock that is made from fossilized remains of diatoms. It is high in silica, very porous and lightweight. Diatomite is very absorbent and has uneven shape and size which resists over-compaction. It can be used in a semi-hydroponic setup, but is much more water retentive than LECA. However, Repotme notes that the September 2006 issue of the American Orchid Society's *Orchids*



©repotme.com. Metro Mix 380 (with coir).

Pumice Rock is rock that is formed when lava cools quickly above ground creating a unique rock with many air pockets.



©repotme.com. Pumice.

Stalite Slate is an all natural medium mined in the United States from volcanic slate, which is rotary kiln-fired to over 2000 degrees and turned into sterile granules or pieces that are extremely porous. It is pH neutral and has the ability to aerate and also

hold moisture and nutrients. Because it is essentially a type of lightweight rock, it is extremely durable, and will not compress. It is reportedly used at Busch Gardens, Mount Vernon and the Jefferson Memorial.



©repotme.com. Stalite.

Turface is pure calcinated clay sold under the brand name of Turface MVP. It is used on baseball fields to increase aeration of the soil, but is also used as a growing media amendment for orchids and bonsai.



©repotme.com. Turface.

For more epiphytic mixes, some of the following might be interesting. (By the way, there is a nice clump of *Lysionatus* at the Botanic Garden upstairs with the epiphytes.) I should note, though, that I find growing in an epiphytic mix to be tricky during our dry winters unless you have a humidity-controlled growing area (or a greenhouse).



©repotme.com. Rockwool.

Rockwool should need little introduction. It is made from basalt rock and chalk, heated to the melting point and then blown into fluffy fibers resembling

cotton candy - some 37 times its original size. Rockwool is inert and does not break down, and retains a lot of moisture.

Chopped sphagnum moss has come up a few times recently at our meetings. It is airy and moisture retentive, and reportedly helps prevent damping off. (Given the right conditions, it will also grow.) Finely chopped, coarsely chopped, and long fibre sphagnum all have their uses.



©repotme.com. Chopped sphagnum.

Trip to Ecuador *by Ken Meier*

My travels to Ecuador over the last 10 years have been primarily in the pursuit of finding orchids in their native habitats. But going to Ecuador and only looking at the orchids is like going to a candy shop and only looking at the bubble gum. Ecuador has a lot more to offer than just orchids. There is the beautiful Andean Mountains with their breath taking landscape and waterfalls. There are the different indigenous cultures that live in the mountains and the unique fauna and flora that abound there as well. Over the years, I've taken many photographs of non-orchidaceous plants, not really knowing what they were. I only knew that I liked them, but they weren't orchids so I just kept them to myself. Many of these, I later discovered, were Gesneriads.

I've always been a closet African Violet grower, but over the last year or so, I've become interested in *Streptocarpus*, *Chirita*s and other members of the Gesneriad group of plants. I recently joined internet groups like *funwithgessies* and *Gphiles* and also joined the local African Violet club and Gesneriad club here in Washington DC.

It's with this new interest that I journeyed to Ecuador two weeks ago with a group of orchid enthusiasts. Having put this group together, I felt some guilt about my secret agenda, but that didn't stop me from keeping an eye out for possible Gesneriads along the way. Some plants I knew to be Gesneriads while others were only suspect. The following are some photos I took along the way. They didn't have labels, and I don't know enough to identify them, so enjoy them for what they are – Flowers of Ecuador. If you know what they are, feel free to email me at ken-meier@orchidenterprise.com and I'll label the photos accordingly.

[Thanks to John Boggan for providing some identifications, as noted in the captions. The only one with a "gesneriad or not" question mark is the purple berry. –Ed.]



Plant 1: Bright red flower bracts attract pollinators like humming birds



Plant 1: Upon closer examination, the 'red flowers' are actually red bracts with red and yellow flowers inside.



Plant 2: *Columnea* sp. Extremely hairy flowers protrude from the bracts at the growing end of these barren plants. 3 foot long bare "sticks" hang off a fallen tree each terminating in a cluster of leaves and flowers.



Plant 1: Bright red and yellow flowers hide in the bracts clustered around the internodes of the plant



Plant 2: *Columnea* sp. Only a few flowers were pollinated producing bright white berries with seed.



Plant 3: *Columnnea sp.* Tiny white flowers are produced along the length of these Gesneriads that act much like vines hanging from many of the trees and underbrush.



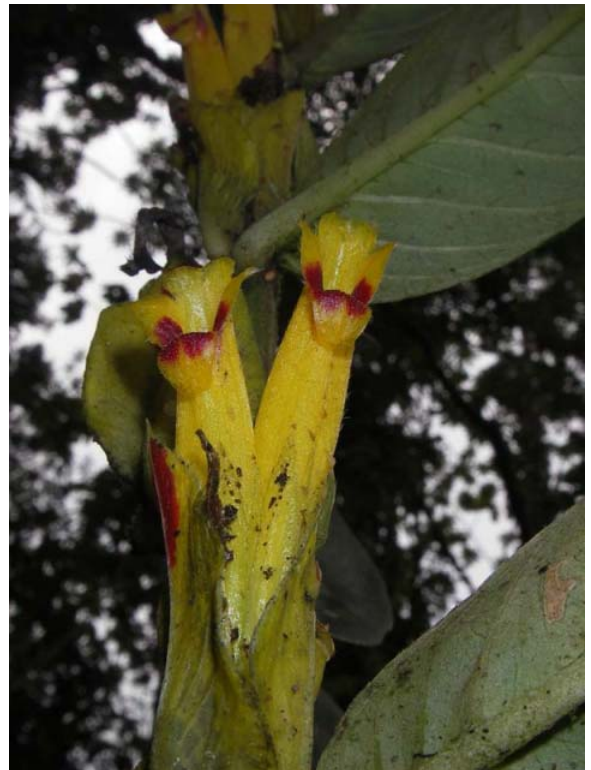
Plant 3: *Columnnea sp.* Hairy leaves and flowers are clues that this is may be a Gesneriad.



Plant 3[?]: Bright purple berries formed after successful pollination of these tiny white flowers. Note how algae, lichens and mold cover the older leaves of this Gesneriad. This is a clue to the environment that these plants are found.



Plant 4: *Heppiella sp.* Is this a Gessie? It's beautiful in any case.



Plant 5: *Columnnea sp.* If you don't recognize these plants as having flowers hidden under the foliage, you'll never see the flowers.



Plant 5: *Columnnea sp.* Some plants are easily recognized as Gesneriads, like this *Columnnea* species



Plant 6: *Columnnea sp.* Another *Columnnea* that's beautiful, even when not in bloom.



Plant 7: *Columnnea sp.* Yellow and red seem to be the two primary colors Gesneriads used to attract pollinators.



Plant 7: *Columnnea sp.* Zig-Zag growth habits give this plant an interesting artistic perspective. Yet flowers are still hidden under the foliage.



Plant 8: probably *Alloplectus*, now likely *Glossoloma sp.* .Maroon bracts with bright yellow and maroon flowers attracted more than hummingbirds on this trip.



Plant 8: probably *Alloplectus*, now likely *Glossoloma sp.* Small plants only 12 inches tall, produce large colorful flowers.



Plant 9: *Kohleria tigridia* (formerly *Capanea grandiflora*). These large flowers were so beautiful, even the orchidphiles had to stop and take pictures of this one.



Plant 9: *Kohleria tigridia*. This Gesneriad plant was only 18 inches tall with huge bell shaped flowers produced terminally.

Ken would like to know if *Kohleria tigridia* is in cultivation in the U.S., and if so, where might he find a piece? –Ed



Plant 9: *Kohleria tigridia*. This flower deserves to be in everyone's collection.



Plant 10: possibly *Drymonia/Paradrymonia longifolia*. Just a few days away from opening – too bad we couldn't wait.



Plant 10: possibly *Drymonia/Paradrymonia longifolia*. Fuzzy leaves, fuzzy flowers – sure looks like a Gesneriad to me!



Plant 13: *Pearcea sp.*



Plant 11: *Columnea sp.* Now this is a *Columnea* worth growing!



Plant 14: probably *Besleria sp.*



Plant 12: *Pearcea sp.*



Plant 15: *Columnea sp.* This was a rather wiry plant.



Plant 16: *Columnea sp.* This plant with its bright red flowers stopped us on the road to take pictures



Plant 16: *Columnea sp.* Notice the moss on the stem of the plant. Do you think these grow moist?

[Hopefully we'll have an opportunity to hear more about this trip at one of our meetings later this year! -Ed.]

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

A chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

"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 several times a year on the second Saturday of the month in the Administration Building of the U.S. National Arboretum. For details, please refer to the latest issue of *Petal Tones*, the website, or contact one of the people below. All are welcome and new attendees are invited to a free item from the raffle table.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org
NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

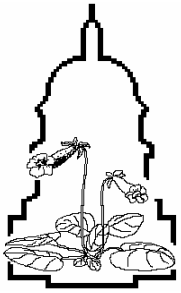
Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

Directors: John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees: Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor

Newsletter Editor and Website: Kyoko Imai
petaltones@gmail.com
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



Petal Tones

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

Volume 40, number 6

June 2009

Message from the President

I hope all your plants are growing well and getting ready to put on a good showing in July. For those of you who grow in natural light, the increased day length should be making a big difference by now. And those of us who grow under lights generally see a difference at this time of year too. Maybe it's the increased humidity that the spring rains bring to the home. Or maybe it's just part of the plant's genetics. Whatever the reason, I know I'll be seeing a lot of great plants on July 3 when the show opens to the public.

This month's meeting won't be nearly as much fun as we've had at other recent meetings. It's going to be a real WORKING meeting. We have approximately 200 convention packets to put together. I think the Denver group put everything together the week of Convention. I want our group to be able to concentrate on grooming their plants and boxing them up that week.

We also have some last minute details to work out with lining up volunteers to help with setting up the show. We've been offered some help by the Liberty Bell Chapter who will be doing this same thing in 2011. But we want to get as many names lined up as we can. We also have a party to host at the Convention. I guess Lee and Nell are taking care of that, but we all should plan on being there. We're welcoming guests from all over the US, Canada, South America, Europe and even Japan. Yes, we're a small group, but we're a strong group.

Any ideas on a special hat or accessory that will identify us as the hosting chapter? Has anyone seen a hat shaped like the Capitol Dome? How about something covered in Gems? We'll likely have a ribbon or different colored badge to show that we're the hosting Chapter but I want us to really be obvious. Bring your ideas to the meeting in June.

There will be many first time conventioners, both within our group and coming to this convention from elsewhere. Let me tell you this: Your going to have the time of your life! Sure, it's a lot of work. But the payoff... WOW!

BTW - My *Titanotrichum oldhamii* is showing above the soil now. I know it wasn't buried very deep, and we had temperatures here that hit 3 degrees (with no protective snow cover). This guy is a lot hardier than I thought! That's the way to grow gesneriads. Throw down a little fertilizer, hit them with the hose a few times and watch them flower their heads off.

Jim

In this issue...

The Hyogo Prefectural Flower Center
LECA Update. . .

Pictures from the Baltimore African Violet Society
Show

A Visit to Al's Orchid Greenhouse
Attachments (members only):

Treasurer's Report
Minutes from April Meeting

Upcoming Events and 2009 Meetings:

Next Meeting: Saturday June 13, 2009
10:30 – pre-Convention preparations!

Meetings are at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. New members are welcome – please introduce yourself for a free plant.

Meetings in 2009:
6/30-7/4/09 – The Gesneriad Society Convention
(location: Silver Spring, MD)
9/12/09, 10/10/09, 12/12/09

Hyogo Prefectural Flower Center
<http://www.flower-center.pref.hyogo.jp/>
by Kenji Hirose

Hyogo Prefectural Flower Center (HFC) is located in West Japan, in Kasai City, which is about 60 km (37 miles) north of Kobe City, or about 570 km (350 miles) west of Tokyo).

HFC possesses a wealth of natural beauty that is unmatched by any other flower garden in Japan. This 46-hectare garden extends around the vast Kamenokura Pond, in which numerous water birds swim and wade. The Center is set against the beautifully etched backdrop of Mt. Iimori, which retains natural pine forests that nurture numerous wild birds.

Within the Center, paths around the Pond lead visitors to various spots where they can appreciate diverse natural beauty: flower gardens where colorful seasonal flowers bloom, the Green House Complex with a tropical atmosphere, paths that wind past beautiful flowers and sculptures, and magnolia forest where the birds sing delightfully. Visitors can enjoy the clean and refreshing air in this relaxing environment, amidst some 4,500 species of plants which bloom throughout the four seasons.



HFC in Winter

Flower Gardens

The Center contains several flower gardens, the total area of which covers roughly 12,000 square meters (129,166 sq ft). The Main Flower Garden and Floral Plaza are European-style gardens where about

600,000 flowers of 50 species including Icelandic poppy, dianthus, begonia, impatiens, and zinnia are planted according to an annual schedule that maintains the flowers all through the four seasons. In the spring, all flower gardens are swept over by colorful stretches of as many as 300,000 tulips of 350 varieties. These tulips create a kaleidoscopic view attracting numerous visitors every spring.



The tulip garden in spring. In the background is the exhibition greenhouse.

The Japanese Iris Garden has over 50,000 flowers of 150 varieties and is in full bloom in June, and in the Rose Garden, 4,000 flowers of 150 varieties are effectively arranged three dimensionally, using arches, columns, flower beds, and hanging baskets.

Green House Complex

The Green House Complex is composed of seven houses, including a special room exhibiting gesneriads, a very rare collection in Japan. In addition, the Complex displays a variety of tuberous begonias – the extensive collection of which Center also takes pride in – as well as diverse tropical and subtropical vegetation, including orchids, carnivorous plants, hibiscus, bougainvillea, and passiflora. All the exhibited flowers bloom one after another, colorfully decorating the entire complex all through the four seasons.

Gesneriad Room

As noted above, HFC is unique in Japan in that it has a dedicated gesneriad room. Through the four seasons, some 700 plants are exhibited. In April and

May: *Saintpaulia*, *Streptocarpus*, *Sinningia*, *Columnnea* and others. In June: some species endemic to Japan such as *Conandron ramondioides* and *Opithandra primuloides*, as well as *Streptocarpus*. From summer to fall, *Achimenes* is central to the exhibit, and in October to November, *Streptocarpus* is in peak bloom. November through December is the season for *Smithiantha*, and in the winter are hanging baskets of *Aeschynanthus*, *Columnnea*, *Nematanthus* etc. In addition, *Chirita*, *Petrocosmea*, *Nautilocalyx*, *Cyrtandra*, *Codonanthe*, *Episcia*, unifoliate *Streptocarpus* are also regularly on display.



Achimenes display in the Gesneriad Room



Streptocarpus display in the Gesneriad Room

"Backyard"

The gesneriad "backyard" has two greenhouses, in which are grown some 50 genera and 1100 species of gesneriads. Although these greenhouses are not open to the public, please let me know if you would be interested in a tour. One greenhouse is dedicated to the lower-light gesneriads such as *Streptocarpus*, *Saintpaulia*, *Chirita*, and *Columnnea*. In the other are the more light-loving rhizomatous and tuberous gesneriads such as *Achimenes*, *Sinningia*, *Kohleria*, and *Smithiantha*. Flowering plants are placed on display in the Gesneriad Room, and returned to the backyard afterwards: this is usually done on Wednesdays when HFC is closed.

Streptocarpus Show and Plant Sale

Each year in October, some 400 plants comprising 200 species and hybrids are displayed in a special exhibit. Most of these hybrids and species are also offered for sale to enthusiasts who visit from all over the country.

If you have an opportunity to come to Japan, please come for a visit!

LECA Update. . .

Jim Roberts brought a couple of pots to the last meeting, both containing a propagated *Petrocosmea* leaf. One was in LECA and here's a photo to show that you can, indeed, propagate a leaf in LECA:



I am tried starting some *Achimenes* and *Titanotrichum* rhizomes in LECA. I generally have difficulty keeping these well-watered, so I thought they would be good candidates. (And yes, I had rhizomes handy from an NCAC meeting.) I've been pinching the *Achimenes* as recommended by Serge Saliba in his article last year. So far so good.

Achimenes pinched recently:



Achimenes pinched previously:



They're looking cramped now, so I'll have to spread them out a bit to give them space to grow properly.

As with the orchids and hoyas I've grown in LECA, I am using a fertilizer with trace minerals. I've only just started fertilizing these, as I was waiting for roots to develop.

-Kyoko

The Baltimore African Violet Society Show

As announced here as well, the Baltimore African Violet Society had their show in May. Here are some photographs courtesy of Brian Connor – growers' names in parentheses.



Best in Show - *Siantpaulia* 'Sizzlin' Romance' (Marie Burns)



Brian Connor's Semi-Minis



Saintpaulia 'Optimara Hopi II' (Marie Burns)



Saintpaulia 'Rob's Outer Orbit' (Brian Connor)



Streptocarpus 'Spin Art' (Karen Foster)



Best Semi-Mini, Second Best in Show, *Saintpaulia* 'Emerald Pink' (Brian Connor)



Sinningia 'Miriam G' (Carol Hamelink)



Saintpaulia 'Princess K Rei' (Marie Burns)



Sinningia speciosa (Carol Hamelink)



Best Tuberous - *Sinningia* 'Gabriel's Horn' (Carol Hamelink)



Best Rhizomatous - *Kohleria* 'Manchu' (Carol Hamelink)



Best Gesneriad - *Chirita* 'Hisako' (Carol Hamelink)



Chirita 'Keiko' (Carol Hamelink)



Kohleria 'Gunsmoke' (Carol Hamelink)

A Visit to Al's Orchid Greenhouse
<http://orchidexchange.com>
by Kyoko Imai

Al's greenhouse in Leesburg, Virginia (approximately 15-20 mins from Dulles Airport), is primarily an orchid greenhouse, but... recently there's been an increase in carnivorous plants, begonias, gesneriads and various other non-orchids.

On a recent visit, I saw this *Chirita* 'Dream Time', which I could never grow beyond a few inches in height:



The plant has leaves about 16.5 inches from stem to tip, with 5 flower spikes about 2 ft long. The spikes branch and develop, branching out into a heavy mass of blooms. The pot in this photograph is raised so that the leaves don't rest on the bench. Reportedly the foliage is perky in the morning, but droops during the day.

The flowers have a lovely dusty pink blush:



Chirita 'Dream Time'

Here's a view of part of the greenhouse on a rather cloudy day:



Other gesneriads include *Sinningia pusilla*:



which are now planted at the base of various bonsai and in mossy trays:



Kohleria 'Sunshine'



Gloxinia perennis

I should perhaps note that *Phalaenopsis* is Al's specialty:



Phalaenopsis wilsonii 'Millie'

A few more currently at Al's greenhouse:



Titanotrichum oldhamii



Alsobia 'San Miguel'



Kohleria 'Silver Feather'



Columnea 'Lava Flow'

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The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org
NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

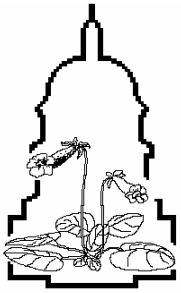
Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

Directors: John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees: Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor

Newsletter Editor and Website: Kyoko Imai
petaltones@gmail.com
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



Petal Tones

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

Volume 40, number 7

July/August 2009

Message from the President

As Convention is upon us I thought I'd take a little time to reflect on the past three years. It was the Summer of 2006 and I attended a picnic meeting at Carol Hamelink's house. This was my first time meeting Carol and Jim, and most of the other members of the National Capital Chapter. I hadn't been to a Chapter meeting in 15 years, and the membership had changed a lot. Yes, many of the same members are still members, but most weren't at that picnic meeting.

It was here that I heard that the National Capital Chapter had put in a bid to host the National Convention in 2009. Uh oh! Did I really want to get involved in something that big again. It was in 1991 that the Baltimore Chapter hosted the National Convention. I was President of the group and Local Convention Chair. I thought about it for a while and hadn't made up my mind yet when I attended the Chapter's show in October of that same year. I didn't have any plants to enter but managed to put together a few arrangements for the artistic classes. This was when I saw the quality of the plants that this group was able to produce. I still hadn't decided what to do.

At the December Christmas party I was asked if I would be interested in being Show Chair for the Convention. Mind you, I still hadn't joined the Chapter and still had some fears of overextending myself. My work schedule was horrendous and I didn't know if I'd be able to do the job that the Chapter needed. To make this long story short, I joined and accepted the position.

Carol Hamelink was elected President at that meeting and I was elected VP. Between our enthusiasm and a new electronic version of the Chapter newsletter, *Petal Tones*, the Chapter grew tremendously over the two years of Carol's term.

Instead of half a dozen at a meeting, we were pulling in 20-30. Now we had a Chapter that had a real chance of holding a successful convention.

In December I was elected as Carol's successor. So here I am again, Chapter President and instead of Convention Chair I get to play the part of Show Chair. Life sure is funny how it repeats itself.

There are a couple of differences between this show and that one. In Baltimore I was the major grower in the group and took many of the awards. Here I'm still just starting out and have had some major setbacks with my plants as I've tried to rebuild the collection. I'm not sure if I'll be able to find anything to enter in the horticulture section of this show. That would have worried me tremendously in Baltimore. Here, it's just a setback for me. The rest of the group will no doubt provide for a tremendous showing. And the attendance at this Convention will

...cont.

In this issue....

Petal Tones at the Convention

What is a Convention?

Announcement

What to Do with New Plants

Upcoming Events and 2009 Meetings:

Next Meeting: Saturday September 12, 2009

10:30 – doors open

11:00 – program: Ken Meier's trip to Ecuador

Meetings are at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. New members are welcome – please introduce yourself for a free plant.

Meetings in 2009:

10/10/09, 12/12/09

be setting some recent records. Not just for people, but I believe the number of plants and other exhibits will be at an all time high.

I really want to take this time to thank all the local Chapter members who have been so willing to help make this all work. Our monthly raffle wouldn't work without participation from everyone. Speakers within the group have been very generous in sharing information with the rest of us. And because of who we've all become in this short time we've been able to attract national speakers to present to us.

At the end of this Convention we have some new challenges that we'll all have to overcome and work through. The National Arboretum has some stimulus monies from the government. Great. That means they probably won't shut down to the public like we heard was coming last year. However, it also means that the administration building where we've been meeting "forever" won't be available starting in October. There is a chance that they'll be able to find other locations at the Arboretum for us to meet, but we have to assume that we need another meeting place. Time to start asking around and finding something for the next year and a half.

Another big challenge is going to be to fill Kyoko's shoes. They don't look that big, and she's done such an excellent job of getting *Petal Tones* out to us that no one realizes how big a job she has done. When Mark Zukaitis had to step down for health reasons we gladly accepted Ki as a replacement. She has taken a super new *Petal Tones* and has made it even better. I think we should all make a point of thanking her in person the next time we see her.

At our meeting in June the subject was broached about replacing *Petal Tones* with a blog. However, I didn't get the impression that anyone there was going to be willing to post to a blog. We'll have to bring this up again in September, but please think seriously about what we are going to do.

I will prepare the September *Petal Tones*, and see how much time it takes to put it all together. However, I need help. I need articles. Articles from everyone about everything. And not just from the local membership. *Petal Tones* is read all over the world. We're a local newsletter, but I'll publish articles from Australia (how are the Leca stones

working out over there?), Japan (any new *Chirita* or *Petrocosmea* we should know about), Sweden (care to put a free ad in *Petal Tones* Ingrid?) or from any other gesneriad grower out there. Does anyone want to write a regular column? How about something about pest control? A question and answer column? Questions can be posted to members@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org and the answers sent just to me and the questioner. Then they can be compiled and put in *Petal Tones*. Lots of ideas, but we need articles to keep *Petal Tones* alive and interesting.

I think I've rambled on long enough. For those of you attending your first Convention, enjoy it. Take part in as much as you can. Talk to everyone you meet. Make friends. Invite local visitors to join the group. Buy lots of plants in the Sales Room. Plan on attending again next year. And the year after that. And....

Jim

***Petal Tones* at the Convention**

Have cake and eat it too – at least, something like that, metaphorically and electronically speaking, of course. We wanted to have the July/August issue of *Petal Tones* ready before the Convention, but what of Convention news? Could it wait until September? I think the answer is "no" – if I were missing the Convention, I'd want to hear about it sooner.

So how will we do this? We'll be running a little experiment this month: a *Petal Tones* supplement will be online in blog form. As I write this, all I have is a blog space and not much more, so quite honestly I'm not sure how it will work. I'll send an email to the *Petal Tones* distribution list at the time of the first post, and after that, you can subscribe to the blog's RSS feed, or just check it when you feel like it.

If it actually happens, let me know what you think – we'd love to hear from you. As Jim mentioned, this is one format we're considering for the future – we're looking at as many options as we can to keep *PT* alive.

--Ki

What is a Convention?

by Jim Roberts

A Convention is a place to make new friendships and renew old ones.

A Convention is a place to learn more about the plants we all love, and not from a book or a lecture, but from others who are also there to learn.

A Convention is the starting off point for that local greenhouse or arboretum that you've always wanted to see and can now see with 75 of your closest friends.

A Convention is a place to share - cuttings, knowledge, e-mail addresses.

A Convention is THE place to see how your plants SHOULD look.

A Convention is a place to buy, buy, buy - plants, cuttings, seeds, supplies and Gesneriad Society publications.

A Convention is a place to see plants from eons ago



Chirita lutea at the Denver Convention

and plants that are just now being introduced



Chirita minutomaculata

A Convention is the fun of a live auction where the bidding gets really crazy (\$900 for a leaf!)

A Convention is the fun of a silent auction and trying to be the last one in the auction room before bids close so that you get that plant collection or book or "whatever" that you really want and haven't seen anywhere else.

Convention is a place to see the small



Sinnigia 'HCY's Aries' at the Denver Convention

and the really tall.



Gloxinia xanthophylla at the Denver Convention



Arrangement at the Denver Convention

To see the newest species and hybrids, and collections of plants that will boggle the mind.



Bill Price's *Nautilocalyx* collection which won Best in Show in Denver



Gesneria 'Ako Cardinal Flight' at the Denver Convention



Streptocarpus 'Dale's Scarlet Macaw' at the Denver Convention

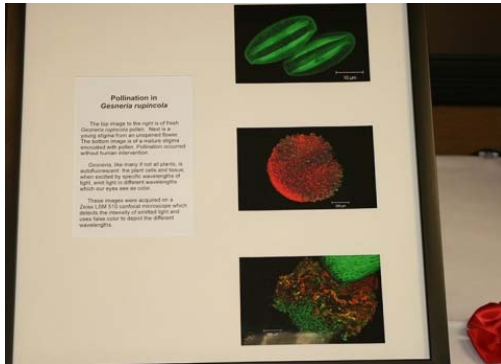
BE THERE!

Streptocarpus Update (*polyanthus ssp polyanthus x prolifus*)

Some of you saw this plant last year, at one of the Streptocarpus presentations. The seed is from Jaco Truter, courtesy of the Gesneriad Hybridizers' Association: JT 4-1101, sown on July 12, 2005. I only have this one left from that sowing, but I sowed the rest of the seeds from the package last year.

It's not a beauty, perhaps, but it's one tough grower.... Despite my growing it like a shade-tolerant cactus, it has kept on truckin'. After four years (minus a couple of weeks) it's finally blooming – although not exactly a candidate for the Convention.

Nevertheless, I like the small flowers and yellow throat. And did I mention xerophytic? Yes, the leaf tips brown and dry off, but I'm told (?) that this is a natural way for the plant to survive through dry conditions. So... except for the slightly big size for a plant shelf, it's working out well for me, and I might just keep the rest of the seedlings.



Educational Exhibit at the Denver Convention



Calceareboea coccinea at the Denver Convention



Yes, that's a plastic bag serving as a saucer.



Diastema sp. in ed luteolum at the Denver Convention



Announcement: **Begonias Abound**

The Begonia Society's Potomac Branch will be having its 28th Annual Show and Sale on:

Saturday, August 29th from 9 am to 4:30pm
&
Sunday, August 30th, from noon to 3:30pm

at
Green Spring Gardens
4603 Green Spring Road
Alexandria, Virginia 22312
www.greenspring.org

Green Spring is near I-395 inside the beltway, off Little River Turnpike.

Many different types of Begonias, including terrarium plants and plants recently collected in Vietnam will be available at the sale. For more information, contact Johanna Zinn, jazinn@cox.net or 703-323-7513.

* * * * *

Spot the begonia in my gesneriad prop box!



And as I don't actually grow many of these, the following are some begonias at Al's Orchid Greenhouse in Leesburg.

--Ki



Leaf propagation



What to Do With New Plants

by Kyoko Imai



Plants on the sales table at the National Capital Area Chapter's 2008 Show.

Humidity, roots, and isolation. I think those are the top three things on my checklist of things to do with new plants.

Many plants will be coming from a humid environment such as a greenhouse or a propagation dome/chamber. That means they are used to high humidity, and a sudden move into dry air can cause the plant to wilt to nothingness. To be safe, I put new plants in a humid enclosure - perhaps a vented container or bag - to let them adjust to my conditions gradually.

Humidity is also essential for plants that have limited roots: without a good root system, the plant cannot draw water up from the potting mix. Just because it's in a pot doesn't mean that it has good (or any) roots - it could be a recent cutting, or a root-challenged plant. I gently check all pots for roots - a slight tug at the cutting, visible roots growing out of the bottom, a gently unpotting just for a root check.... Gone (mostly) are the days I lost a new plant because I didn't realize it had no roots.

And of course, isolation. Regardless of how reputable the plant's origins, isolation is a good idea. By isolating plants, I not only avoid spreading pests and other problems to the rest of my plants, I also pay a little extra attention to the new comers and catch cultural and other issues earlier. All in all, well worth the extra space required for isolation.

And now for a re-cap of what to expect from a gesneriad sales table. Because many gesneriads can be propagated from seeds, rhizomes, tubers, tip cuttings, leaf cuttings and probably some other plant parts I'm forgetting, a sales table can have some of all of these in various stages of propagation.



New acquisitions from the raffle table at a National Capital Area Chapter meeting. Plants, cuttings, rhizomes.



Tubers and rhizomes in bags with chopped sphagnum moss.

- **Rhizomes.** Rhizomes can be broken into pieces and covered lightly with potting mix,

or even broken up into individual "flakes" or "scales" and sown on the surface of the mix like seed. The April 2007 issue of *Petal Tones* has a great article on propagating from rhizomes.

- **Cuttings.** If the cutting looks dry, it may help to soak it in room temperature water before planting it. Also, I always re-cut leaves and stems under water. Most gesneriad cuttings will root well when placed in moist (not soggy) potting mix. I usually cut *Episcia* into 4-leaf stolons with about an inch of stem. With *Streptocarpella* and *Columnnea*, I bury two or three leaf nodes, pinch off the tip, and use a very light mix. I prefer to put down *Codonanthe* and *Aeschynanthus* as two-leaf cuttings rather than bury 1 or 2 leaf nodes.
- **Plants in pots.** Some of the plants will be established flowering-size plants, while others will be seedlings or cuttings. Note the humidity and root issues discussed above.
- **Pots with string.** If there is a short piece of string (a "wick") hanging out of the pot, then that plant was probably wick-watered. In other words, the string dangled into a reservoir of water, and the pot was automatically watered as a result of the wick pulling water up from the reservoir. The potting mix used for wick-watering is usually lighter (less water-retentive) than a non-wicked mix.
- **Keep crowns dry.** Whether it's a plant or cutting, keep the crown or growing tip dry. The crown is where the newest leaves come out, and water in the crown can be a cause of rot. A corner of kitchen paper or tissue will easily soak up the water without harming the plant.
- **Watch plant depth when repotting.** If anything needs to be repotted, watch the depth at which you plant it. Some plants such as *Streptocarpus* should be planted at the same depth. Others will root along the stem, so potting deeper may sometimes be better.

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NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

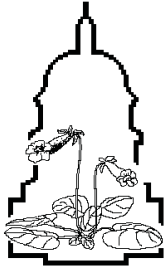
Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

Directors: John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees: Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor

Newsletter Editor and Website: Kyoko Imai
petaltones@gmail.com
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



Petal Tones

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

Volume 40 Number 9

September 2009

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

I hope you've all had a great summer. I know we helped a lot of folks have one of the greatest gesneriad summers they've ever experienced. We all deserve to give ourselves a great big pat on the back for pulling this one off the way we did. We're a small chapter but no one who attended Convention in July 2009 will ever believe that. It all came together flawlessly – trips, speakers, plant sales and of course, the show. THANK YOU ALL for the great job!



Tour at the National Arboretum

But now it's time to face our next set of challenges. The Arboretum has some stimulus money to spend, and that may mean losing our meeting place for up to a year or more. The good news for us is that the reconstruction seems to have been delayed until some time next year, so we may be okay for the remainder of this year through the spring. Frank Daspit may have more to say about this at the meeting.



We have a show to put on in March. It may seem early to think about that to most of you, but now's the time to pick a Show Chair and all the sub-chairs, as well

as finalize the venue. Will we have it at the Arboretum? I hope so but at this point the availability is still up in the air. Where else could we have it? A Mall? A Nursery?

We also have to put together a list of programs for the year. Ki's survey has given us some ideas, but we have to finalize the schedule and confirm all the speakers. I'm sure Brian would appreciate the names and contact information of any good speakers that you know or have heard.



I think we're in for another great year.

Jim

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

September 12, 2009: Ken Meier – Gesneriads in Ecuador

Doors open at 10:30. Program starts promptly at 11:00.

October 10, 2009: doors open at 10:30 AM; Program TBD

December 12, 2009: Holiday Party

FRELINGHUYSEN CHAPTER SHOW

The Frelinghuysen Chapter of the Gesneriad Society is holding its annual show on **October 4**. Details will be available in the October issue. Brian Connor and I will be

going up on the 3rd to judge the show. Please put this on your calendar. It should be a great getaway and a chance to see some more fabulous plants.

Jim

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Hi. Me again. Sorry about the delay in getting this to everyone. There were a number of technical difficulties, starting with the total collapse of my laptop. I've ordered a new motherboard, for those of you who know a little about computers, and will probably require a whole weekend to put it in once I get it.

Then I thought I'd just put it all together on the Macintosh. Problem is I don't have Office on the Mac and I couldn't for the life of me figure out the word processing program that I do have on it.

Third choice: my wife's Vista computer. The problem there is that she has Office 2007 and I had problems with it too. So here I am at work on Tuesday morning (5:30 am right now) putting together Petal Tones.

This will be a small issue. Ki's Petal Tones Blog has pretty much covered the Convention for us. Lot's of great photos of the winning plants, which Ki is continuing to update. If you haven't been there yet and you're reading this on your computer, click on this link to be taken there for a quick look:

<http://petaltones.blogspot.com/>

I need some help with Petal Tones. We all have things we could share and I need some of you to put them in writing and get them to me. Places you've visited. People you've seen. Plants that are doing especially well for you. Get out the computer (and camera) and share with the rest of us.

Jim

Ken Meier – Orchid Grower

Wait a minute! Isn't this a Gesneriad group? Ken is an avid orchid grower, collector and judge. He recently went on a collecting trip to Ecuador and discovered a number of non-orchids growing among the plants he was there to photograph and collect. I remember that same feeling as Mauro and I sometimes had to push aside orchids and bromeliads to get to the gesneriads. Come see Ken's remarkable photos of Gesneriads in their native habitat. Ecuador is home to many of the plants we love (and let's try to help him identify them).

They're not always show quality when growing in their natural habitat!



LITTLE SHOW

Guess what? Brian Connor is now a judge! It's going to be so much easier now to have Little Shows. If you have a plant worthy of a show but no show to enter it in, bring it to our meeting. Brian and I will likely tap one of the former judges in our group to be the third panel member, but Little Shows will get judged during the break between our program and the business meeting. **I would like to see us get some practice at arrangements too (for the spring show), so there will be an arrangement title in each Newsletter. For September, how about "Back to School": a "Happy 10" x 10" x 10" arrangement using a "back to school" accessory.**

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Just a note to remind you, if you are a member of the NCAC and would like to participate in this seed club, just watch your e-mail for a list from Brian Connor. As Mauro posts new seed lists Brian will send the list out to everyone in the Chapter. There is no cost to you; it's part of your membership privileges.

The NCAC is allowed up to 36 packages of seed a year. Send your requests to Brian and he will place the order with Mauro (three total orders of 12 packs each). Brian can be reached at: vicepresident@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org.

Naturally first priority will be for Gesneriad seeds, but if you see something else on the list, add it to your request. If we don't get requests for 12 packets of Gesneriads Brian will fill in with other plants if he has requests. The key is, we are supporting Mauro no matter what we order. Your responsibility is to grow the seeds you get and bring extra plants to the raffle table so that the rest of us can enjoy them too. By getting these new plants into general distribution we're helping to preserve their existence. So many of the natural habitats that these plants came from are no longer there.

In the past some of have been disappointed by getting

very small numbers of seed. This time the seed will only go to the person who ordered it. If two of us want the same seed the packet we order will be split in half. But never more than that. If three or four of us want the same seed we'll order more packets of that seed.

We all saw some interesting new plants at Mauro's talk in July. This is the way to get those exciting new varieties.

Don't Forget the Raffle Table!

Raffle tickets are only \$0.50, or 3 for a dollar, but they provide a great source of income to the NCAC and a great source of plants to new and old members and even visitors to the meeting. Items suitable for the table include any and all objects that plant lovers would appreciate:

Gesneriad plants, rhizomes, tubers, cuttings, seeds

Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings

Growing supplies (pots, labels, soil, leca, sphagnum)

Places I've Been.....

One of the really big benefits of my job is to be able to travel all over the US (and the world) on the company's dime and get to meet people that I've only known through e-mail or even snail mail correspondence. Or to see old friends that have moved away. You all know about my visits with Mauro. But I've also seen Michael Kiehn at the University of Vienna. And numerous friends throughout the US.

This August I had to visit a location in North Carolina. Being one of the moderators for gesneriphiles, I know where a lot of the members live and try to look them up when I'm going to be close by. Not only does this put a face to the name, it gives me some nice dinner conversation with someone other than a co-worker. This trip I looked up Harry Witmore, a co-moderator of gesneriphiles..

For those of you who don't belong to g-philes and don't know who Harry is, try this:
<http://www.cloudjungle.com/portal/>.

Harry is a plant grower. His wife Linda is a birder. This past year they visited Panama where they both got to do their thing. You can read all about that on Harry's personal blog/website: <http://www.witmore.net/portal/>. Oh, yes, Harry's also an artist and has some wonderful paintings and drawings of both birds and plants scattered around the house.

I started out by saying that Harry is a plant grower. I didn't limit that comment to Gesneriad grower. Harry has only been growing Gesneriads for about 5 years. Harry grows just about everything. Aroids, begonias, ferns, and lots of other plant families. The yard is literally packed with baskets hanging from trees, makeshift hangers made of branches, hangers on fences, and pots of all types and sizes lining the paths through his tree covered yard.

I certainly wouldn't want to have to pull all those plants

into the greenhouses in the fall, but that's exactly what Harry does. Out for the summer, in for the winter. Except for those things too big to move, or that are climbing all over the greenhouse walls. Did I mention he has several greenhouses too? And how about the terrariums he has scattered about under lights throughout the house?

He has one terrarium which started out as a 125 gallon aquarium. He turned it on end so that it's close to six feet tall including the base, added a door, a misting system, a wood fiber lining and has it filled with plants native to Panama. What a great way to remember a trip!

The visit with Harry was certainly enjoyable. He and Linda provided a great meal – chicken, southern style potato salad (hot peppers in it) and fried okra (being a "Northerner" I had never had this before). The electricity was out almost the entire time of my visit, but luckily came back on just around 9 pm so that I could see the terrariums.

I'd like this to be a regular column in Petal Tones. But I don't want to be the only contributor. Please let us all now about places you've been, shows you've attended, nurseries with gesneriads (or not) and people you've seen. One of the pleasures of any hobby is being able to share it. And the people who grow Gesneriads are always worth sharing.

Jim

Here are a few unlabeled photos from Harry's garden and greenhouses:





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President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

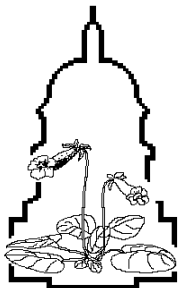
Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

Directors:
John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees:
Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor
Newsletter Editor: Jim Roberts
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Website and Blog: Kyoko Imai
web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



Petal Tones

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

Volume 40 Number 10

October 2009

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

Fall has finally arrived. Nights are getting cool and its time to bring in the last of the plants if they're not in already. Be sure to isolate any that you do bring back into the home. See Brian's article in this issue on thrips. They're just one of the nasties that will thrive in the nice warm, humid, plant room full of food and flowers put there just for them.

Take one last walk around the yard or through the woods before it gets too cold to do so. Keep your eyes peeled for interesting seed pods, rocks, branches, vines and other materials for dish gardens, terrariums and arrangements. This is the ideal time to find those necessary props, not after the snows have covered them on the ground or broken the stems at just the wrong place. Keep them in a safe place for March.



Freylinghysen Chapter Best in Show Chirita USBRG98-083

Show judged by Jim and Brian (and others) October 4, 2009

And just as we think we can finally get some rest after caring for the outdoor gardens it's time to really start working on the indoor plants. The SHOW is only 5 months away. Plenty of time to put together some really nice specimen plants, but only if we get started now. The rules state that the plant you enter must be in your possession and grown by you for three months prior to the show. The Holiday Party in December will be your last chance to pick up something to grow on for the show.

Don't forget to bring something nifty for the Raffle Table this month. Who knows, maybe your toss-away will end up as someone else's blue ribbon.

And speaking of the show, again, Brian has volunteered to be Show Chair. If you'd like to help by chairing one of the committees, please e-mail him at vicepresident@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org.

Time to get excited all over again!

Jim

COMING EVENTS

October Meeting: Saturday, October 10th

Program: Peter Shalit's Talk "Knowing and Growing the Genus Chirita" from the 2009 Convention CD (Peter won't be here!)

Location: National Arboretum Classroom (downstairs)

Time: Doors open at 10:30 and the presentation will start at 11:00

Don't forget to bring plants for the raffle table and for Show & Tell. We'll be short on judges at the meeting so there won't be a little show.

Also remember: Parking may be difficult – there's going to be an Orchid Show going on in the Auditorium.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

December 12th - Holiday Party 10:30 am

Also Coming Up:

National Capital Orchid Society's 62nd Annual
Orchid Show and Sale
October 10-12, 2009 (Saturday to Monday)
U.S. National Arboretum

Thousands of Orchids for Sale! *Free Lectures and Workshops!*

"ORCHIDS IN THE CAPITAL" SHOW, SALE AND WORKSHOPS!

Come to the 62nd annual NCOS Orchid Festival for activities that will entertain everyone from the interested observer to the obsessed orchidist. Each day will highlight easy to grow (but hard-to-find) orchids for the home. Also featured daily will be exhibits, a vendor tent with thousands of orchids and supplies for sale, a juried show, an "Orchid Doctor" booth, food service, and free workshops. For more information, please visit www.ncos.us.



FREE ADMISSION

October 10th - 12th, 2009
Saturday 9-5
Sunday 10-5
Monday 10-3

At the U.S. National Arboretum, 24th & R Streets,
NE, Washington, DC 20002

For directions, call the Arboretum at (202) 245-2726
or visit www.uma.usda.gov. For more information
on the Orchid Show, visit www.ncos.us.

Thousands of Orchids for Sale!
Free Lectures and Workshops!
Free Admission!



NCOS—Supporting Orchid Culture and Conservation since 1947

MAAVS SHOW

MAAVs will be November 12 - 14, 2009 in historic Williamsburg .

MAAVs is an association of African Violet Clubs throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, so it's a high quality combined show.

If you have a chance, go!!! In those dark days of late October, November you will be jonesing for a great plant sale and flower show.

A substantial percentage of the show plants are gesneriads, although over 50% will be AVs.

Plant vendors include Lyndon Lyons and Robs Violets, who have fantastic gesneriads for sale as well as AVs. There are other vendors present and sometimes you even find other plants for sale like begonias. Cape Cod Violetry will be selling also, they carry supplies and pots (and he usually has AVID, CONSERVE and MARATHON if you ask him and you have the need---not to make this sound like an illicit drug deal!)

WHERE:

Williamsburg Woodland Hotel and Suites
105 Visitor Center Dr
Williamsburg, VA 23185
Phone=757-220-7960

WHEN:

Friday Nov 13 and Saturday, Nov 14 are the days to visit because.....the Plant Sales will be open to the public!!!!
9:00-5:00 Friday, Nov 13, Commercial Plant Sales Open (Azalea room)
9:00-4:00 Saturday, Nov 14, Commercial Plant Sales Open (Azalea room)
The show will be open:
1:30- 5:00 Friday, Nov. 13, Flower Show Open- (Oak room)
9:00-4:00 Saturday, Nov 14, Flower Show Open- (Oak room)

P.S. Our own Laurene Jones is Registrar for the MAAVS Show if you need more information.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

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Brian just placed an order and seeds will be coming to those of you who ordered in the next few days. You can place an order at any time, so if you missed this order get your requests to Brian now and you'll be at the top of the list next time he orders. The NCAC is allowed up to 36 packages of seed a year. Send your requests to Brian and he will place the order with Mauro (three total orders of 12 packs each). Brian can be reached at: vicepresident@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org.

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Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings

Growing supplies (pots, labels, soil, leca, sphagnum)

Places I've Been.....

Johnson's Garden Center by Lee Linett

One-stop shopping for plant supplies is always convenient and gas-saving. Throw in a large selection of plants (ferns, orchids, aroids, bromeliads, Bonsai and Bonsai-suitable, cacti and other succulents) and seasonal as well as bedding, herbs and decorative -- well, one could spend a couple of hours just looking. Unfortunately gesneriads aren't well represented, except for small to standard-sized "non-Optimara" brand Saintpaulia. Small growers like sellaginella and ficus for terrariums have a spot as do Marantas and Hoyas and a few unusual companion plants.

Planters of all sizes and shapes; cache pots; clay pots from azalea to "you've gotta be kidding" size; a large selection of Bonsai pots and dishes; a half dozen different soil testing kits plus water garden containers and plants are just some of the many, many items stocked. Indoor and outdoor gardening supplies abound and the staff is very helpful. If you can't find

what you want, someone will check out the storeroom or order it for you.

My local Home Depot doesn't carry Pro-Mix. Johnson's does. Home Depot has perlite and vermiculite, but not both at the same time. Johnson's has both. Together.

Johnson's is large, well-kept and clean. There's a big cut-flower cooler at one end and plant/ gift items by the ton all over the place with a big selection of hand-made items like wooden multi-level bird cages, display shelves and baskets.

There's an ever-changing large collection of orchids - right now it's Phals. A few months ago it was Masdavillas, Oncidiums and mini cats. The orchid lady has a good eye for plants and they're very reasonably priced.

Johnson's is located on Rte 108 (Laytonsville Road) in Olney. North on Georgia Ave. to 108. Turn left and go approx. 3 miles on 108. Johnson's is on the right.

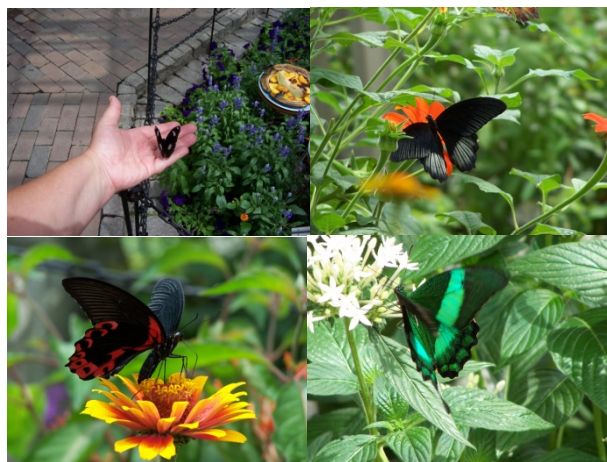
5011 Olney-Laytonsville Rd., Olney, MD 20832
Phone: 301-987-1940 Fax: 301-987-1947

www.johnsonsfloorists.com

Brookside Gardens by Donna Beverin

In perusing a little magazine about Maryland I got at the library as a freebie, I saw an ad for the "butterfly conservatory" at Brookside Gardens. I googled it and read the website and mapquested the directions in hopes of visiting the butterfly garden with my nieces one weekend...but time flies and got busy with work etc. Then I registered for the Gesneriad Society Summer Convention in Silver Springs and in mapquesting those directions I thought, why not see where the Brookside Garden is in relation to the hotel for the convention....and low and behold it was 15 minutes up the road...or down the road...not sure.... So I got to the convention safely on Friday and enjoyed the convention during the daytime and that evening decided to drive to Brookside to get my bearings so I could visit the butterfly conservatory the next day after the convention. Well I found it easily in Wheaton Maryland and then started by meandering through the gardens next to the greenhouse and was so amazed at the plant material just around the greenhouses. The gardens were open free to all who wanted to walk around the grounds til dusk.

So the next day I enjoyed the convention and bought a bunch of plants and left one of the lectures abit early so I would have time to visit Brookside before the Butterfly conservatory closed at 4pm. Well, I hated to leave before the auction, but I had so much fun at the Butterfly greenhouse. All those amazing butterflies flying all around me, landing on me even on my hand....I had a pink shirt on they really liked. Then I found a seat and sat with my camera and just enjoyed taking tons of pictures.



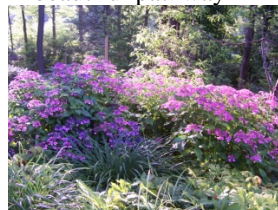
Then I went outside and walked the gardens. It is a very easy walk wherever you decide to go.



This beautiful, dainty Euphorbia was in a huge decorative pot.



A beautiful pathway



The hydrangeas were gorgeous in the early evening light.



Hibiscus Waimaea was spectacular. I have a 2 year old at home I purchased from Kartuz but it has not bloomed for me yet...



Buddleia Lindleyana which you don't see very often, was full of blooms



I emailed the horticulturalist at the Gardens because I could not figure out where the water was for this lotus. He said they grow mazus reptans around the base next to the Brugsmansia. So beautiful.



Another cute little plant



Bear's Breeches *Acanthus mollis*
These are just a few of the amazing number of plants, roses, herbs, shrubs and trees....you should take the time to visit...you will have a great time!

<http://www.montgomeryparks.org/brookside/>

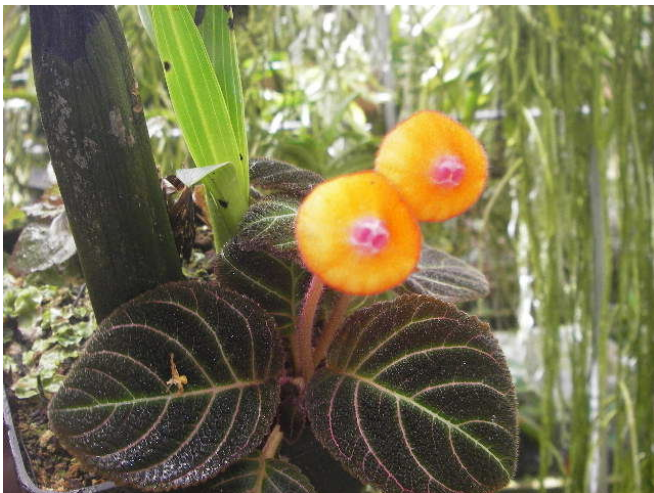
September Meeting in Review by Karin Fontneau

The September meeting of the National Capitol Gesneriad Society was very interesting for me. With the raffle plants there were a couple of small bowls used as terrariums, and I suddenly realized that I had 2 or 3 of these sitting on my potting bench taking up space!! So, with my raffle choices(wonderful large selection for raffle this month!), I picked out small, high humidity plants which I had never before been able to grow. Now I have *Chirita Hisako*, *Sinningia 'Danielle'*, and *Aeschynanthes Humilis* sitting in a lovely 8" oval bowl with the top covered by Saran Wrap all looking very well. In a smaller 4" bowl there is a very wilted *Strep. Salmon Space* which is sulking as it didn't get enough water when I went on vacation the first part of August. But, the newest leaf is not wilted so I will watch it and hope it comes back. Both bowls have charcoal and perlite in the bottom that the plants sit on/in. The rest of the 8 plants I brought home are sitting in a tray with perlite on the bottom and a clear dome cover on top. *Kohlerias*, *chiritas*, and *sinningias* seem happy!! I know that soon the *chiritas* will have to be moved to a bigger container-thank heavens for cookie containers with clear lids! Wonder where there will be room and all those outside plants have to come in shortly...guess I have to rearrange pots. And give most of those outside plants their second spraying so no pests come in with them.

Once again, as has happened at every Gesneriad meeting I have attended, I brought home plants to play with that give me mostly good results at growing them. Any questions are answered at the meeting, plus I signed on to G-files and learn more with all their comments. This is a fun way to grow a sometimes difficult group of plants.

And let us not forget Ken's wonderful slides.....





Strange and Dangerous, Thrips Carry Plant Viruses

By Brian Connor

The word thrips, strangely, is used as both the singular and plural form of these peculiar little beasts. Some plant enthusiasts consider thrips a minor inconvenience, hardly more troublesome than springtails or fungus gnats. Direct damage to flowers and leaves from their feeding is seldom fatal for established, healthy plants. Thrips are not even mentioned as an insect pest in some of my favorite plant books from the 1970s. A few species are even predators for red spider mites. So why worry? Thrips can carry and spread incurable plant viruses (tosspoviruses) that can wipe out a precious gesneriad collection. That's why.

There are a wide variety of thrips. Probably the most likely culprit for gesneriads is the Western Flower Thrips (*Frankliniella occidentalis*). These thrips mature through several stages in their brief, destructive 1-2 month life cycle. Larvae and adults feed on plant material (the pupal stage is non-feeding) but are tiny and difficult to see. Adult thrips look like small grains of rice and are able to hide in flower buds and tender new growth. Their favorite snack is pollen so the best place to see them active is in flowers. You may need a magnifying glass to be certain. Look for a 'grain of rice' that moves. Adults have wings and can spread to other plants, but are subtle, not like white fly.

- ◆ Signs of thrips: Malformed or discolored flowers, necrotic spots or streaks on flowers, flowers fall off/die prematurely, blasted buds (without other causes), pollen spills in flowers, malformed growth tips, tiny black debris on flowers or new leaves- that is actually thrips fecal material [attractive, isn't it?] during a heavy infestation.
- ◆ What to do if you have thrips: Disbud everything (I mean everything!) and saturate every surface of your plants with CONSERVE insecticide. However, it is not recommended to spray more than 3 times a year with CONSERVE, to avoid pesticide resistant bugs. After spraying, monitor the thrips population, which is hopefully zero, with blue sticky cards.

- ◆ Look out for viral infection: Western Flower Thrips are important vectors for Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus (INSV) and Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus. These viruses have no cure and can infect gesneriads, especially INSV. After or during infestation, look for peculiar brown/black spots and rings on leaves. Other symptoms are leaf necrosis, sudden wilting and failure to thrive, which admittedly can be due to other causes (fungus, poor culture). The only way to know for sure is to have plant material tested if you have a high level of suspicion. Discard plants that suddenly develop strange spots or rings for no apparent reason. Cuttings of infected plants will still harbor the virus.
- ◆ Prevention is worth a pound of cure. I can't say it enough: isolate new plants and even plants that have been to show. Preventing an infestation is easier on you and your plants.



Thrips feasting on Saintpaulia pollen

From the Editor

Thanks so much to everyone who contributed to this issue. I'm still having some major computer problems, including my computer at work now, so this issue has been a real challenge for me. I still have some articles left to put into the November Petal Tones, but will find a way to add anything more that you send me.

Remember, no meeting in November. Enjoy the Chirita Program while I'm off working in Indianapolis.

Brian and I judged the Frelinghuysen Chapter's Show on October 3. I'll leave off here with some of the Blue Ribbon winners from that show. I don't have names or plant ID's to go with them all, but we all like to look at pretty plants so here they are.





National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

A chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

"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 several times a year on the second Saturday of the month in the Administration Building of the U.S. National Arboretum. For details, please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, the website, or contact one of the people below. All are welcome and new attendees are invited to a free item from the raffle table.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org

NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

NCAC Blog: <http://petaltones.blogspot.com>

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

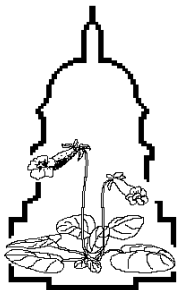
Directors:
John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees:
Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor
Newsletter Editor: Jim Roberts
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Website and Blog: Kyoko Imai
web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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





Petal Tones

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

Volume 40 Number 11

November/December 2009

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Holiday Greetings!

It feels like forever since I last saw everyone! I missed the October meeting because of a business trip to Indianapolis, and November was an unofficial meeting at MAAVS. From the reports that have come back to me, I really missed a lot with both events.



Camelia in snow

There's no doubt now that winter is here. The top of the *Titanotrichum olhamii* has browned off in the garden, although there are still a few green leaves close to the soil line. *Sinningia sellovii* will be tried out there for the winter this year, and it too still has some

green stems but is mostly browned off. I'm pleasantly surprised to see that *Hemiboea bicornuta* has not shown any signs of frost damage. I got one report back on gesneriphiles that it has survived in the Pacific Northwest down to temperatures in the teens, so it sounds like there's hope for it.



Hemiboea bicornuta with snow on overhanging bushes

But back under lights where most of us grow there isn't a whole lot different going on now than there was before the cold weather struck. The stands are a bit more crowded since bringing plants in from the garden, but not because of garden plants next to plants that were there before. Garden plants go into the windows on the second floor, as far as possible away from the important plants as possible. The plants

Meeting Schedule: (All meetings at National Arboretum)

- December 12thHoliday Party starting at 10:30
"Thieving Gesneriphiles Brown Bag Gift Exchange" (see below)
Raffle Table
- January 9thRoom opens at 10:30
"Planting and Growing a Terrarium with Gesneriads" by Neale Stuart-Merriman starting at 11:00
Raffle Table
- February 13thRoom opens at 10:30
Roundtable discussion: "Tips and Tricks to Shaping Up and Grooming Show Plants"
- March 12thPlant Show Set-Up and Entries
- March 13-14th "Going Green with Gesneriads" Show

that were there got moved down to the basement lights.

Also taking up room are all the plants that are being propagated for the plant sale in March. Our treasury needs a bit of a bump. We had a very successful convention, but not a big success financially for us. The reception ate up most, if not all, of our plant sales profits. But that's okay too. The purpose of the convention was to have fun and share that fun with Gesneriad nuts from around the world. I think we were all very successful at that aspect of the convention.



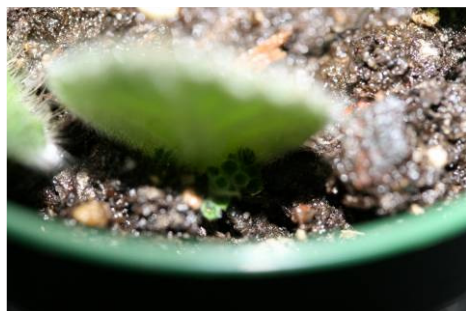
Right after I missed the meeting in October I decided it was time to get all the seed out of the refrigerator and put it on top of wet soil under lights. I now have 40 pots of Gesneriad seedlings growing! Well,

actually 39. A packet of *Begonia* seeds snuck in there too. The two packets I got from the Brazil seed fund are growing too, as I hope all the seeds that everyone else ordered are doing.

I also have 15 pots of *Petrocosmea* leaves rooting, with between 4-8 leaves per pot. I hope the rest of you



are thinking about the plant sale too. As you shape up your plants now for the show in March, put down cuttings. There's



Petrosmea pups coming up under the leaf – one month old!

still time for leaves to put up pups, and plenty of time for stem cuttings to root and grow.

For now, let's just think about all the joy that our plants bring us

and share some of that joy at the December holiday party. There will be a business meeting after the party, but the main program will be food and a gift exchange.

Jim

Gift Exchange!

Last year we tried a "Thieving Gesneriphile Brown Bag Gift Exchange" which turned out to be a lot of fun. If you want to participate this year, bring a plant-related gift wrapped in a brown (or plastic) bag. Nothing extravagant. In light of the "thieving" aspect, joke gifts sound very appropriate too. Something that costs (or would be worth) about \$10. Anyone who participates will get a raffle ticket. Tickets will be drawn and here's where the fun begins.

The very best ticket is the first one drawn. That person gets to pick any of the brown bags on the gift table. Winner number two gets to choose anything from the table, BUT if he/she likes what the first winner got better, he can steal it away and give winner number one his/her gift. Winner three can steal from winners one or two. Winner four from one through three. So the later in the process you win the more gifts you can choose from to steal. But then at the very end, poor winner number one, who never had a chance to steal anything, can swap his/her gift for any other gift won by anyone else. Let's have fun!

Holiday Party Food

Just as a guideline, if your last name has an even number of letters bring a main course or salad. If your last name has an odd number of letters, bring a dessert. Or ignore the guidelines and bring whatever you want. I've had several e-mails asking what people should bring. I doubt everyone will bring the same thing so I'm not worried about 20 dozen donuts or 20 dozen deviled eggs. The main program will be centered around eating, drinking (non-alcoholic only), and having fun.

Condensed Chiritas by Lee Linett

Everyone knows to project future growth/ propagation of the plants in the available space they have. Right? Well, after the Convention plant sale I found I had to rethink and built another

stand where my Chiritas claim two shelves, a bit more than 16 1/2 sq. ft. with just a few in scattered locations elsewhere.

I did have to remove some leaves to "arrange" them and by the time of our show & sale....

Some observations: the green and darker green-leaved Chiritas like 'Wutan,' hetrotricha, and 'Gotham' grow best, for me, with more light (towards the center of the fluorescents: 1 daylight, 1 warm white, on 14 hours a day). The sinensis types like 'Hisako', angustifolia, and 'Stardust' also grow well in this general location. Heavily patterned leaves like 'Diane Marie,' 'Deco' and 'Patina' take up the other 2/3rds to the ends of the lights. The in-betweens like 'Piccolo,' sclerophylla and 'Nimbus' are tucked in and around the others.

My potting mix: equal parts of Pro Mix, perlite, vermiculite, 1/4 part non-scented cat litter, 1/4 part charcoal.

If you use packaged mixes like Schultz, Hyponex and Miracle Gro, keep in mind that they contain slow release fertilizer, so don't start fertilizing right away; wait a few months then fertilize at 1/4 strength.



A gathering of Chiritas at the MAAVS Show

Some growers advise underpotting Chiritas. I usually do this because I've run out of the next size up, not because of any



More Chiritas at MAAVS

planning. Humidity hovers between 65 and 70 % due to the many leaves rooting in water scattered throughout the growing areas plus the plants are

sitting on damp vermiculite in the trays. My mini orchids, ferns, episcias, begonias, aroids and epiphyllums do have a crisp fresh look.

Air circulation is via an oscillating fan indirectly moving air over, through and under the shelves.

Temperature is an average of 75°F daytime and 70°F at night.

Propagation: Rooting leaves in water or mix is easy. I use the same mix for propagation as I do for potting and if I have the time, I'll pot up each leaf in its own individual pot or solo cup, cut down to half its height. Everything is then put into a clear-lidded prop box or salad bar container. Label. Label. Label!

Note: The *sinensis* types tend to make multiple plants whether water or mix rooted. Wait until the plantlets have a couple of sets of leaves before separating and potting. Often the original leaf can be re-used to start another batch of plants.

The somewhat succulent, fleshy-leaved plants like *gemella*, 'Jade Moon' and USBRG98-083 root best, for me, in mix.

Chiritas often produce multiple crowns or off-shoots on their "necks" which some growers politely call caudiciform. 'Vertigo' and *sclerophylla* are prone to this. Remove the offsets or top the plant and enclose until roots have formed. The exception to "denecking" is USBRG98-083. With age the "trunk" gets larger and fatter and kind of looks like a palm tree or perhaps a bonsai if you allow several well placed shoots to develop and grow out.

Flowers can be many as with 'Kazu' or *tamiana* or single like *gemella*, but all are held above the foliage and can be enjoyed for a week or more. They're in the pale to mid lilac-colored range except *tamiana* which has a white with purple markings colored flower.

Now that I've gotten the Chiritas in mostly one location, care and culture-wise, I believe I can add to my wish list and actually have room for a few more: 'Betty,' 'Cynthia,' 'Louise' (or 'Louisa'), *balansae*, dwarf var. *latifolia*, *bogneriana*.

Companionable Plants by Lee Linett

Of Gesneriads or everything else you're growing, which are the companionable plants and which are the companion plants? Do you grow *Episcias* and *Epiphyllums* in the same area or do you grow *Epiphyllums* and *Episcias* in the same area?

Some of our members are orchid specialists, others are *begonia* specialists, and then there's #218 who recreates a tropical environment with palms and aroids in his backyard every summer.

Many of you have a book (kept up-to-date, of course) or a computer list of your plants, so take some time for a little experiment that uses these lists.

Count up the total number of plants you have – not only under lights, but on windowsills, on top of the refrigerator, in the hallway, at work, outdoors or under greenhouse benches. Be sure to include terrariums and dish gardens. Don't forget little plants such as *sellaginella*, *lycopodium* and (live) mosses. Don't count multiples of the same plant; e.g. seed flats, leaf

cuttings or six pots of your favorite plant. Just use "1" – one genus and species, one genus and species (the same as the previous one, but a cv. Or var.), one hybrid, one misc (a victim of a lost label, but if you believe you know the genus, add it). Next, put all the listed genera into their respective families. In the case of unknowns, use that ever-popular "misc." The final step, and to some of you it produce surprising results, is to figure the percentage of each family represented in your collection. This can be extended further by figuring the percentage of each genus represented within the family – in particular, Gesneriads.

Do you have more Chiritas than *Columnneas* which you thought were your favorite? Are *Petrocosmeas* outpacing *Episcias*? Have *Sinningias* surpassed *Saintpaulias*?

It would be interesting to know what you, the members of the NCAC, grow and what you thought you grew!

Many years ago, Irwin Rosenblum, a Past President of the Society, gave a lecture on Gesneriads and he emphasized the opportunistic nature of the plants, considerably aided by their multitudes of very fine seeds which easily disperse into the tiniest of crevices (hence *Streps* on rocks); into caves; and mistaken by ants and carried into nests (*Codonanthe*).

Gesneriads have come to occupy many ecological niches using spaces they adapted to and used to their benefit. In our growing environments we can use this knowledge wisely and gain additional space for new acquisitions.

Be creative; put less light-demanding Gesneriads underneath the overlapping foliage of other plants. Go vertical by hanging by hanging *Columnneas* and *Aeschynanthus* from *Philodendron*-entwined tree fern totems. Place *Petrocosmea* along the perimeters of the plant shelves that now hold "twist-ems," pots and a pair of scissors.

Gesneriads are companionable plants in that they grow with many plants of other families and niche-in to fit. They're also excellent companion plants that can highlight or backdrop a particular collection or growing area.

Several issues of *Petal Tones* ago, Ki asked readers what their mixes were. So, what do you grow in those mixes?? Numbers, please! Oh, and remember, to get a percentage divide the large number (the total collection) into the small number.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Just a note to remind you, if you are a member of the NCAC and would like to participate in this seed club, just watch your e-mail for a list from Brian Connor. As Mauro posts new seed lists Brian will send the list out to everyone in the Chapter. There is no cost to you; it's part of your membership privileges.

Those of us who got seed in October probably already have lots of great seedlings up and growing. You can place an order at any time, so if you missed this order get your requests to Brian now and you'll be at the top of the list next time he orders. The

NCAC is allowed up to 36 packages of seed a year. Send your requests to Brian and he will place the order with Mauro (three total orders of 12 packs each). Brian can be reached at: vicepresident@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org.

Naturally first priority will be for Gesneriad seeds, but if you see something else on the list, add it to your request. If we don't get requests for 12 packets of Gesneriads Brian will fill in with other plants if he has requests.

Don't Forget the Raffle Table!

Raffle tickets are only 50¢, or 3 for a dollar, but they provide a great source of income to the NCAC and a great source of plants to new and old members and even visitors to the meeting. Items suitable for the table include any and all objects that plant lovers would appreciate:

Gesneriad plants, rhizomes, tubers, cuttings, seeds

Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings

Growing supplies (pots, labels, soil, leca, sphagnum)

Desperately Seeking

If you have any of the following and can share, please get in touch with the seeker and make arrangements to bring a piece to a meeting or otherwise get the plant to him/her. If you're looking for something, send your request to the editor. Petal Tones has a huge distribution and your chances of getting something that you've just seen and can't live without, or something that you haven't been able to find for a while are excellent.

Gasteranthus villosus	Jim Roberts
Columnnea purpureo-vittata	Jim Roberts
Petrocosmea ormosa	Jim Roberts
Begonia hoehneana	Jim Roberts
Streptocarpus 'Maasen's White'	Marlene Finch
Streptocarpus 'Falling Stars'	Marlene Finch
Streptocarpus 'Captain Blood'	Barbara Stewart
Chirita sinensis 'Angustifolia'	Barbara Stewart
Chirita 'Betty'	Lee Linett
Chirita balansae	Lee Linett
Chirita 'Louisa'	Lee Linett
Streptocarpus 'Dales Scarlet Macaw'	Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'Summer Parfait'	Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'Blueberry Butterfly'	Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'HL Snowbaby'	Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'HL Boyish Grin'	Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'HL Purple Martin'	Brian Connor
Sinningia 'Gone Salmon Fishing'	Brian Connor
Smithiantha 'Sassy Redhead'	Brian Connor
XAchicodonia 'Very Good'	Brian Connor
XNiphimenes 'Lemonade'	Brian Connor

E-Mail Addresses

Just a quick reminder to all NCAC members that if you don't have an e-mail address, or don't want your address made available to the group at large, you can request an address on our web-site. Just notify Ki at web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org and she can set you up.

You can even have that address forward to your personal address if you want.

2009 MAAVS

Things Go Better... with African Violets

Submitted by Brian Connor



Saintpaulia 'Pixie Blue' – Best in Show at MAAVS

Despite torrential rains in Williamsburg, VA, the MAAVS 2009 flower show and convention was a triumph of horticulture and design. Transporting plants in the storm was probably almost as challenging as growing the plants themselves. Every MAAVS show has its own flavor and this one had an abundance of semi-miniatures. There weren't as many large plants as usual, but the standards that were in the showroom were stunning. Linda



Abplanalp won horticultural sweepstakes with species, standards, semi-miniatures and novelties like 'Saintpaulia Botanika.' Linda has also crossed *Streptocarpus* 'Hera' with 'Falling Stars.' One of the offspring is a semi-miniature

Streptocarpus with red flowers (she named it 'Little Ruby Slippers'). Best in show was an outstanding trailer, 'Pixie Blue.,' from Nell Reese.

Marie Burns won second best in show with the standard 'Rockin Robin' and also best miniature ('Rob's Love



Saintpaulia 'Rockin Robin'

Bite'). Show chair Judi Du Pont's hard work was rewarded by winning best semi-miniature ('Ness' Angel Face'). There was a multitude of *Chirita* to accompany AVSA President Ron Davidson's talk on growing that genus. Leonard Re



One of the perfect *Petrocosmea* at MAAVS

conducted an interactive judging workshop that gave me some insights to appropriate scoring of plants. Dale Martens also gave an outstanding talk on growing happy gesneriads. There was a fantastic *Columnnea lehmanii* from

Olive Ma Robinson that looked very happy indeed. Olive also took home best design. Sue Hoffman won design sweepstakes and



Columnnea lehmanii

and Barbara Stewart won several design and

horticulture classes.

As a note, AVSA National will be in Raleigh April 11-18, 2010 (that's 5.5 hours from Baltimore). Interestingly, AVSA 2011 will be in Philadelphia. That's right, the same year the Gesneriad Society National Convention will be in Philly! MAAVS will move to upstate NY for 2010 and 2011 may turn out to be a pleasant surprise! More on that later... In the next 2 years there will be a number of opportunities for NCAC members to visit phenomenal shows featuring gesneriads within driving distance. How far will you travel to get your gesneriad fix?



Episcia 'Karlyn'



Saintpaulia grandifolia



One of the 'Buckeye Series' *Saintpaulia* hybrids at MAAVS



Saintpaulia velutina



Saintpaulia 'Little Ottawa'



Rosemary Macaluso Dish Garden



Olive Ma Robinson's Arrangement of "Nestles"



Olive Ma Robinson's "Slinky"



Olive Ma Robinson's Arrangement of "Meow Mix and KenLRation"



Sharon Long's Arrangement of "Meow Mix and KenLRation"



Sue Hoffman's Arrangement of "Band-Aids"

NCAC Membership

Larry Skog wants to let you know that 2010 annual dues will be collected at the December meeting. Dues are \$10 per person or persons at a single address, per year.

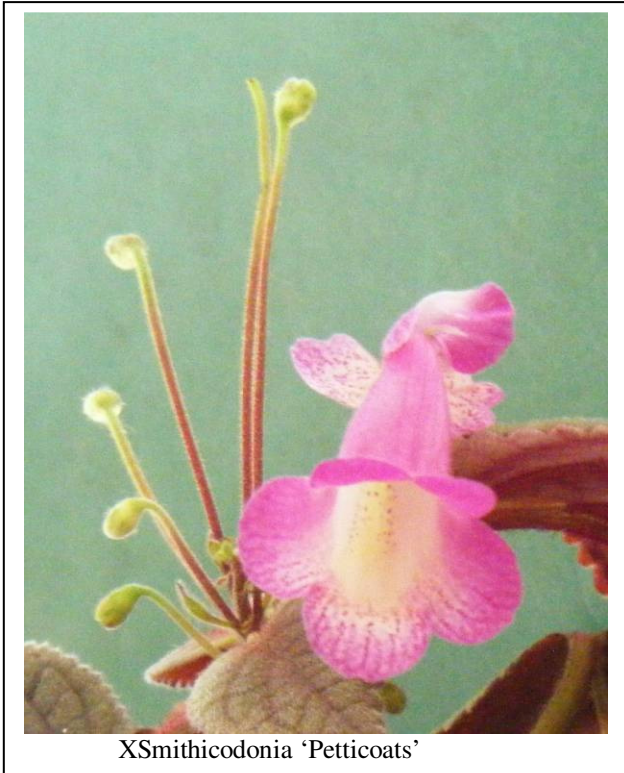
Show Awards

We still don't have anyone committed to being Awards Chair for the March Show. The position involves soliciting awards from members, friends, garden centers and other plant societies to be awarded at the Awards Dinner on Friday evening, March 13th. Talk to Brian if you are interested. The soliciting may not be much fun, but giving the awards at the dinner makes up for it. If you're not interested in Chairing but would like to donate an award please talk to either Larry Skog or Brian.

From the Editor

I feel like tying a "Tom Sawyer" on all of you. Putting the newsletter together really is a lot of fun. I've had great help getting articles from members, and lots of photos have come my way. But it always seems to come down to putting this together at the last minute, at work, between 5 and 7 in the morning before the phones start to ring. I will gladly give this up if anyone out there is willing to take it over. I'll even work as co-editor for a while until the new editor is comfortable with the process. Thanks to Brian and Lee for helping to fill this issue with pictures and articles. Please send you articles to me and if you want to help with the next issue, please get in touch!

Just a couple more Photos submitted by Brian
(guess he's working on his show entries all ready)



XSmithicodonia 'Petticoats'



Eucodonia 'Adele'

How about sharing a photo from your light stands for the next issue??

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

A chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

"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 several times a year on the second Saturday of the month in the Administration Building of the U.S. National Arboretum. For details, please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, the website, or contact one of the people below. All are welcome and new attendees are invited to a free item from the raffle table.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org

NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

Directors:
John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees:
Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor
Newsletter Editor: Jim Roberts
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
or
Petaltones@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Website and Blog: Kyoko Imai
web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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