

Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 1

January 2010

Happy New Year!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well, we've all made it to the second decade of the third millennium. Do you all remember the scares that accompanied the beginning of this century? Computers were all going to crash. We wouldn't have access to any of our money in the banks. Power and water systems would fail. Yep, a bunch of panic over nothing.



The Holiday Party Feast

Now we can devote our energies to the real hazards out there, like the speed camera that has been installed on New York Ave, between Rte 295 and Bladensburg. (I'm not going to admit to how I found out about it.) Or the terrorist's threats. Or computer viruses. Or identity theft. Or thrips and white fly and mealy bug (oh, my!). Who would have thought that just 10 years ago we were still working with computers that couldn't be relied upon to be

Meeting Schedule: (All meetings at National Arboretum)

- January 9th Room opens at 10:30
 "Planting and Growing a Terrarium with Gesneriads" by Neale Stuart-Merriman starting at 11:00
 Raffle Table
 "Little Show" (practice makes perfect!)
- February 13th Room opens at 10:30
 Roundtable discussion: "Tips and Tricks to Shaping Up and Grooming Show Plants"
 Raffle Table
 "Little Show" (more practice!)
- March 12th Plant Show Set-Up and Entries
 1-5 PM
- March 13-14th "Going Green with Gesneriads" Show
- March 13th Awards Dinner, Colonel Brooks at 9th and Monroe NE

able to tell the date when it rolled over from '99 to '00. The thrips has nothing to do with technology. Just thought I'd throw that in there to show that we all have different priorities on what we see as a hazard in our lives.

I hope you've all made some plant related resolutions. You know, something like:

1. I resolve to grow 10 new Genera in 2010
2. I resolve to bring at least 10 items for every meeting's raffle table
3. I will bring one entry every month for "Little Show"
4. I will bring at least five entries to our March Show and at least one to Vancouver in July
5. I will try my hand at Artistic or The Arts entries in March

After a year and a half of plant disasters down in the plant room I'm seeing a lot of positives. The unfiltered water is not killing the plants, and that's a very good thing. Plants are putting out lots of new growth, and I'm even getting flowers. What a nice change. However, I'm still learning how to cope with very dry air and a very warm plant room. Even with the heating ducts closed off the temperature in the plant room averages 75-80 degrees and the humidity is down at around 35%. And that's with

dumping over 50 gallons of water onto the plants every week.

Let's all share our growing experiences and help each other learn more about this exciting plant family in 2010 and beyond. Write something that your editor (me) can include in Petal Tones. It doesn't have to be a long article. Just a quick tip that we could all use. But most of all, have fun and share that fun with everyone you come in contact with.

Jim

PLANTING AND GROWING A TERRARIUM WITH GESNERIADS

Presented By Neale Stuart-Merriman

The January program should be quite a treat for all of us. Neale Stuart-Merriman has quite a background in building terrariums. When she lived in New York one of her terrariums was selected and photographed to be included in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Handbook of Growing Indoors (I don't have the exact name of the handbook, but Neale can fill us in). She also prepared a 6 foot round terrarium for the Queens (NY) Botanic Garden which was presented to Mayor Abe Beame and displayed in Lincoln Center. Back then Neale was going by the name Wendy Stuart, if you want to try to find more information on either of these projects.

Neale will be putting together a terrarium in a 12" square container, using mostly gesneriads. She has her own techniques and we'll all learn a lot from her. She'll talk to us about plant selection, the growing medium used in her terrariums, and how to care for the final planting. A well-planted terrarium can go for months or years with very little maintenance. I have one terrarium with begonias and gesneriads that has been only watered once in the last 5 years. It still flowers and everything looks healthy.

TERRARIUM CONTAINERS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Johanna Zinn

For those of us who grow plants in terrariums, finding appropriate containers is sometimes a challenge. Even with Internet shopping available to most of us, purchasing a terrarium that is just the right size, shape, height, appearance, or price can be difficult.

Fortunately, in addition to using containers designed as terrariums, begonias and other plants will grow in most clear containers that have a cover or can be covered. Some will grow well in the extra humidity provided by the sides of the container, and will not need a cover.



Straight-sided doesn't have to be square!

Glass containers that work well include bowls, brandy snifters, large hurricane lamps, cloches, fish bowls, pickle jars, aquariums, cake dish covers, trifle bowls, and display boxes or cases. Many of these can be purchased new at kitchen stores, craft stores, at discount stores such as Ross, Marshalls, or T.J.Maxx in the home section, or at pet stores. Glass cloches or terrariums can be purchased at your local nurseries or via the internet or catalogues. Containers purchased without a cover can be sealed with glass circles or lids that can be cut to the appropriate size at a glass shop, with plastic wrap, or disposable plastic plates available at party or grocery stores. Used containers can be purchased at antique/junk shops, Goodwill or Salvation Army, or garage sales.



Curved-sided doesn't have to be this fancy

Plastic containers such as disposable salad bowls, fish bowls or aquariums, soda bottles, display boxes or small

display cases, cloches, sweater boxes, clear ice buckets, large pretzel jars, or cookie containers are suitable for growing plants. Party stores sell multiple sizes of disposable salad/fruit/punch bowls and some sell large clear ice buckets. Put one bowl or ice bucket on top of the other to make a terrarium. If the bowl or ice bucket has a rolled edge, the top and bottom can be held together with hair clips called claws. These resemble the clips used to hold orchid stems to a stake, and come in multiple sizes that fit most rolled edges.

Some local nurseries stock a few bowl terrariums and Wardian cases, or may be willing to order one for you. Logee's [www.logees.com] and Cedar Creek Violets have ten inch and fourteen inch plastic terrariums for sale that separate in the middle of the container. That makes it convenient to plant and groom your plant. Lee Valley Tools [www.leevalley.com] has a package of 5 plastic ventilated cloches that measure twelve inches high by thirteen and one-half inches wide. Put a deep saucer under the cloche for planting medium and you have created a contained atmosphere. Craft stores such as Michaels or Hobby Lobby sell small to large inexpensive glass bowls. Botanic gardens often have gift shops that sell terrariums.

Trade plant catalogues with friends or look at catalogues at local horticultural parks or libraries for terrariums for sale. Type terrarium into Google or another search engine and you should have several options from which to choose. E-bay also has a good number of terrariums listed. If you are determined and flexible, you should be able to find a container to suit most humidity-loving plants.

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. Brian just placed the second seed order and if we're lucky the seeds will be distributed at the January meeting. Still time to germinate them and pot up some for the sales table in March. 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)

Do you think Ken might have a chance at winning some of the raffle items??



Johanna looks over her raffle options

WHAT IS A TERRARIUM?

Lee Linett

I think that people define terrariums in several ways, but they all come down to what can be grown in a clear container ... from a tank that was used previously for tropical fish (yard sales & flea markets often have them) to assorted-sized glass containers at the dollar store (Dollar Tree or even Five \$ and Under) ... usually found in the glasses/vases aisle ... or a crafts store like Michael's (again, vases & glasses, but also bubble bowls from sm. to lg. and square or taller rectangular glass containers). The container can hold one or a couple of minis or if larger, an entire landscape.

Technically speaking, those clear plastic salad bar containers are terrariums but better suited for propagation.

Or, if you have the time, make your own from Plexiglas or Lexan (Home Depot or Lowe's) custom-made to fit a particular spot. Use a sealer such as silicone "cement" rather than hot glue; it will hold up better.

My overall best success, plus it looks better, is with a 5 gal. fish tank purchased from an aquarium supply store (there are many on line as well as the actual aquarium stores throughout the Metro area). Another success is a very large cheese ball container made of plastic (Ken had one for pretzels, from Cosco, @ the orchid sale); it's also kind of a failure because the label was hard to remove, so that's the back. You can't use solvents like nail polish remover because the plastic gets cloudy. (try "goo-gone" a glue remover made specially for this label glue. – ed)

The following is reprinted from the Feb 2007 Petal Tones, in response to questions at the Holiday Party about Underwater Arrangements:

TIPS FOR UNDER WATER DESIGN Carol Hamelink

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

First, as is common advice for anything new, experiment. I did this last weekend and found that things I thought would be a problem weren't, but things I had never even

considered ended up being very distracting.

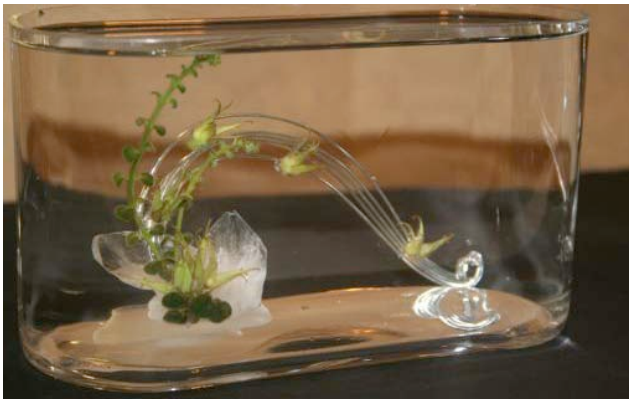
I'm not going to go into the basic elements of design – that's a topic for another time. Instead, I'd like to answer some basic questions I had before I could even try an underwater design.

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

Construct your design in an empty container. As with any design category, your design should fit your container. Your design must not touch the sides of your container or break the water surface at the top. The design should be anchored firmly to the bottom of your container. This was easier than I expected – that pliable green florist clay works very well. I'm told you can glue your design to the bottom of your container, but I have not tried that. Once you are happy with the way your design looks in the empty container, it's time to add the water. I was concerned that adding the water would be difficult, but it went fairly easily. Just don't pour it onto the design. Instead, pour the water down the sides of the container slowly. If your container is round, you will have to pour the water onto something that deflects it to the sides of the container. Room temperature water is best. Water that is too hot or cold will shock your plant, and may discolor the leaves or even kill the plant.

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

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



Underwater design from Convention '09

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

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



Arrangement at Denver '08

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

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 (any except atratus).....	Jim Roberts
Columnnea purpureo-vittata.....	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
XNiphimenes 'Lemonade'.....	Brian Connor
Columnnea pulchra 'Orange Crush'.....	Quentin Schlieder
Sinningia pusilla.....	Quentin Schlieder
Raphiocarpus petelotii.....	Quentin Schlieder

STRESS FOR SUCCESS?

Lee Linett

Two years ago this month, January, we had one of those days where the daytime temperature almost made it into the low 60's. Late that afternoon it suddenly got cold and January was back in full force especially with powerfully gusting winds that brought down tree limbs on some of the above-ground lines.

I'm very glad that I didn't water any plants that day because the thermometer read 50 at the light unit against an east wall with a window at one end; I didn't check the one against the north wall. I'm sure the temp dropped more overnight, but at least the plants weren't sitting in cold and wet soil. The power was out about eight hours

and came back on in fits and spurts so I didn't water for two more days, just in case... Cold and wet at a plant's root level almost always spells disaster/dropped leaves. (Columneas/death).

Strangely and happily, none of the plants died - even the ones in terrariums, bubble bowls and plastic bags. I didn't see a single "melted down" pink *Episcia* nor did I have to pick up a bunch of fallen leaves.

Our show was in March and one week after the show, *Petrocosmea* 'Momo' bloomed with a greater than usual display of inflorescences. Three days later, *Chirita gemella* also put forth a nice display of flowers. The following week saw lots of flowers and buds on *Columneas*, *Aeschynanthus*, *Nematanthus*, other *Chiritas* and *Petrocosmeas*, *Sinningias*, species *Saintpaulia* which also made lots of offshoots, heavily-budded *Kohlerias*, two *Drymonias*, and a *Nautilocalyx*. Plants other than gesneriads were correspondingly budded or in flower.

Normally, the plants, including the gesneriads, would have flowered a month or so later under my growing conditions. I believe it was the unexpected stress of the drop in temperature, lasting several hours that caused them to alter their schedule.

Plants tend to respond to stressful conditions in several ways such as total demise; partial demise; stunted growth; etiolated growth; poor foliage color including bleaching and burning; dry or wet dropped foliage; a greater susceptibility to insect/ mite/ pathogen attack. Many will forge ahead and try to reproduce ASAP. I believe that they forged earlier than usual due to the somewhat prolonged cold of several hours (8+) and they didn't die because the potting mediums were on the dry side.

For a less stressful New Year for your plants, follow good growing procedures, encourage your neighbors and the County Highway Dept. to trim trees that overhang power lines, and follow Brian's schedule for flowering for show.

RECYCLE THIS **Lee Linett**

For our past several shows, we've had a class for recycled containers, but you don't have to wait for a show to recycle. Suitable materials are everywhere.

Egg cartons: use the pressed paper ones to start outdoor seeds or plantlets. Separate top from bottom and poke a drainage hole in each cup; use the top half as a tray. Each cup can be planted in the ground or a larger pot when the plants are ready and the egg tray will disintegrate. The Styrofoam ones also can be used but are best for indoor

use.

Shredded waxed paper: food and fruit gift baskets usually have their contents snuggled in this. It makes excellent cushioning for plants and protection underneath for their leaves when transporting to a show. A cross cut or diamond cut paper shredder also produces good cushioning material.

Squeezable bottles: dishwashing liquid and shampoo bottles are convenient watering containers for those one or two small plants that need extra water or a shot of fertilizer or are at the back of the shelf where a watering can is unwieldy. Keep a few on the shelf, filled with water, which will be at room temperature.

Tops: they come in a myriad of shapes and sizes from lipstick tubes to liquid laundry detergent and can be used for placing that one flower in an arrangement to serving as a cachepot.

Plastic pint size berry baskets: line with sheet moss, coir, or long-fiber sphagnum and tie a length of twine at each corner and knot them at least 10" above the basket. Fill with potting mix; plant *Achimenes* rhizomes or small *Columneas* and hang outside for the summer.

Toothbrushes: if you follow your dentist's advice and replace your toothbrush every three months, why not plan to coincide that event with a pot-scrubbing session? Soak the used toothbrush in alcohol or peroxide for a few minutes, rinse, then scrub away the fertilizer salts and algae.

Paperclips: use them for hanging plastic bags of leaf or stem cuttings or even small pots of rooting material from shelf edges or up the sides of the stand. Bend out one end of the clip, poke it through the top of the bag, then slide the bag around the U, re-bend the other end to fit as a hook on the shelf edge.

Packing "peanuts" and beads: if you must use them, at least de-static them by tossing in a couple of dryer sheets, close the carton, shake it around, let sit for a half hour, then repackage the beads keeping the dryer sheets in with them. In truth, those beads and peanuts make very good cushioning material!

Other packing material: the Styrofoam slabs, chunks, and oddly shaped pieces usually used for cushioning anything from electronics to furniture make good protective holders for planting tools such as scissors; awls; knives; tweezers, and other sharp or pointed instruments. Just poke the pointed end into the foam for safety.

Wine corks: hot glue a bunch or corks together to make a

totem; wrap in moistened long fiber sphagnum; secure the sphagnum with monofilament fishing line; wrap the root end of Episcias, Nematanthus, Columneas, or Aeschynanthus in moistened long-fibered sphagnum; place on top of the bottom layer of long-fibered sphagnum; cover the wrapped root ball with another layer of long-fibered sphagnum and secure that with fishing line. Place the totem in a clay pot or other stable container. Keep the sphagnum moist.

Products come packaged in so many kinds of containers that can be salvaged whole or used for parts and items that are intended for one use often can be used in other ways once they wear out. Use it, recycle it, bring it to our show!

Lee, our Hospitality Chair, always sets up a beautiful table. The Holiday Party was no exception!



NCAC Membership

2010 dues are \$10 per person or persons at a single address, per year. Please send your check to Larry.

Wanted: Editor for Petal Tones

3 month training period until you're on your own.

Contact Jim Roberts if interested.

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.

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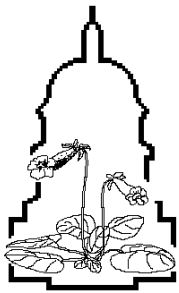
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The Gesneriad Society

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Usually my procrastination does no harm. To me or to those I live or work with. This time mother nature put a real damper on my objectives to get Petal Tones out by Sunday, February 7, and to get a lot of weekend time in with my plants.

I have tons of moss growing in the woods around the house. All different colors and types, from the beautiful dark green carpet types to coarse brownish green taller moss and even to patches of moss/ lichens that look great in terrariums and dish gardens. I was even going to put a notice here that anyone who wanted or needed moss for the show for arrangements, natural plantings, dish or tray gardens or terrariums could come out and help themselves. Now I'm afraid it may not show itself again until after the March show.

I have a nice tractor with a snow blower attachment on the front. The snow from a typical storm gets tossed 30-40 feet out into the woods when I clean the driveway. This storm, however, proved to be too much. The belt that drives the blower snapped in half about 10 feet out of the garage. The rest of the driveway had to be done by hand shoveling. All 400 feet of it. And now we're going to get another 12-18 inches tomorrow night. Update: we got 27 inches here. My poor aching back and arms and shoulders and chest and Time to move further south. This is the weather that convinced me it was time to leave Massachusetts.

I'm all dug out and hopefully will be again by Saturday morning. Note: I wasn't and neither were many other members. We had to cancel the meeting and even though we still have a lot to discuss for the March show we're going to have to do it over the phone and by e-mail.

I know we have a lot of new members in the Chapter. These are members who have no plant show experience except what they saw at the Annual Convention in Silver Spring last Summer. PLEASE, don't be intimidated by what you saw there. There is no point value assigned to the size of the entry. A small, perfectly grown plant is just

Meeting Schedule: (All meetings at National Arboretum)

February 13thRoom opens at 10:30
 Roundtable discussion: "Tips and Tricks to Showing Up at a Plant Show"
 Show Starts
 Planting
 "Little Show" (more practice!)

March 12thPlant Show Set-Up and Entries
 1-5 PM

March 13-14th "Going Green with Gesneriads" Show
 March 13th Awards Dinner, Colonel Brooks at 9th and Monroe NE

April 10th "Alpine Gesneriads" by Michael Riley a PowerPoint program presented by the Gesneriad Society. Also, a rhizome Exchange – time to share those Achimenes and Eucodonia and other Summertime gesneriads.

Cancelled-Snow

judged on quality – good leaves, lots of flowers, ornamental value, cleanliness. There are points deducted if the judges consider the plant to be "immature." However, if a plant is of flowering size it is mature and an experienced judge will know that.

PLANTING AND GROWING A TERRARIUM WITH GESNERIADS

Presented By Neale Stuart-Merriman



The January program was, as predicted, quite a treat for all of us. Neale Stuart-Merriman has a strong background in building terrariums. That knowledge and experience came through loud and clear as she shared her techniques with us.

Neale brought a finished terrarium with her so show us what our efforts should look like after a few months. She suggests planting 3-4 months before a show so that everything will grow together. So if you haven't planted your terrarium yet, get to it now. You'll notice that she keeps the name tags in the terrarium. It's so very easy to

forget what's in the planting, and it's also very important to list everything in the planting for the show.



At the meeting she put together a terrarium in a 12" square container, using mostly gesneriads. She likes to allow one third of the terrarium to be blank; i.e., without plants, so that the eye is drawn into the space and experiences a feeling of being in the middle of the space and being able to look around as if the design **is** reality. Variations in height are important to add interest, and it's vital to keep plants in scale with the size of the container. Remember, plants grow faster in a terrarium, under high humidity and otherwise perfect conditions. If you choose plants that are "just the right size" today they may be way out of scale by the time of the show. Look for interesting differences in texture and leaf color, and if well balanced the space can look great even without an open flower.

A few additional tips:

- 1) Neale uses a mixture of milled sphagnum with a standard soil mix. Avoid anything with perlite or vermiculite. These materials are not found in nature and will ruin the natural effect you are trying to obtain.
- 2) Do not let the soil show, especially at the front of the terrarium. On curved-sided terrariums the front of the terrarium is on all sides.
- 3) Use live moss, or even sheet moss to cover soil that may be exposed otherwise.
- 4) Fill in deep areas behind rocks or driftwood with overturned pots or other containers. This will reduce the amount of soil mix you will need and also keep the overall moisture level of the soil down.
- 5) A grate or screen over stones at the bottom of the container for drainage, covered with long fibered sphagnum or nylon stocking to keep the soil mix from falling into the drainage area, will help keep you from overwatering.
- 6) Don't feel that the terrarium you put together is **ONLY** for the show. A properly planted terrarium is easy to care for and will provide months, if not years of enjoyment. You may have to do some trimming, and plant replacement as plants overgrow their space, but the increased

humidity make them ideal for an office setting where you may not be able to grow many gesneriads out in the open.

- 7) The best moss is sidewalk moss. For those who don't know what that is, it's the moss that grows in the cracks between sidewalk slabs. Here is some on my patio. If you want any, just come over and dig through 4 feet of snow and you can have it. If you break it up and put it through a sieve, each little plant will form a colony. Sprinkle the plants on a porous brick sitting in water in an enclosed container and you will always have moss available for a dish garden, terrarium or as groundcover in a bonsai pot.



Sidewalk moss (patio moss)

Step-by-Step to Planting a Terrarium



Start by placing large rocks or driftwood



Fill behind the rocks with soil and overturned pots and then start placing plants for height and color



Add some glass beads for a water effect in front and more plants to fill the space (leaving unplanted space to draw the eye in). Sit back and watch your version of a grotto by the pond grow together and become more real looking as time passes.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

This same notice will appear every month. 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 second order of seed was going to be distributed at the February meeting. Since the meeting was cancelled Brian will mail you your packets if you placed any requests. If you don't have the latest seed list, ask Brian to send it to you. New lists are put out by Mauro several times a year, and Brian places his orders shortly after these lists appear so that we have the best chance of getting something new and exciting that has been added to the list. 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)

Gasteranthus – A Special Gift at the Raffle

Many of you may not know Robert Simpson. He hasn't been to many meetings lately, but we all should know him for the beautiful, large, perfect specimens of *Gasteranthus* he grows off in the corners at home and brings to meetings every once in a while for us to all drool over. I don't know where my mind was in January. For some reason I didn't get a picture of the large plant of *Gasteranthus atratus* that he brought to the meeting. Because I didn't get a photo of his plant I'm going to have to put in a photo of a much smaller plant that won a blue ribbon at Convention. By coincidence, one of our members, who wishes to remain anonymous, submitted an article on *Gasteranthus* for this issue before we knew Robert and his plants would come to the meeting in January.

But even more special than Robert bringing his plant of *G. atratus* to the meeting, he brought pots full of *G. atratus* and *G. villosus* for us to break up and share. I hope everyone at the meeting was able to get a piece of both plants and is growing them at home now.

Here's a plant of *G. atratus* at the Denver Convention in 2008.



It's really hard to get a good photo because it has to live in 100% humidity. As soon as you try to take it out of its environment, or even open the cover to frame up a nice shot, it starts to wilt. That's what was so nice about Robert's plant. You could see it clearly through the sides of the container.

The other plant, *Gasteranthus villosus*, may not have as distinctive a leaf, but the flower is still pretty dramatic and eye-catching. Here's a plant that I lost a couple of years ago and can now take off of my "desperately seeking" list (thanks again Robert).



GASTERANTHUS ATRATUS

By Anonymous

Last year Quentin brought a couple of *G. atratus* for our raffle table and I was lucky enough to get an early-drawn number so I snagged up one then the other one later on and gave it away. The plant can be overlooked quite easily, especially given the lighting over, way overhead, the raffle table.

G. atratus is one of those gesneriads that has very different, very strikingly-colored foliage that most growers would call black until the plant receives too much light which, for me, is anything closer than a foot away from the end of the fluorescent lights. In that case, the leaves take on a green color which gets greener as the plant gets more light. There's nothing wrong with this and the plant won't be harmed, however, one of the reasons for growing it is the contrast of a black, textured leaf with large, yellow flowers. Riveting, appealing, seldomly seen ... but well worth a bit of extra effort to achieve.

The extra effort comes in providing a tall enough terrarium or plastic bag in which to grow the plant which can top more than a foot, not including flowers, if it's happy. The leaves aren't shy either; they can be a few inches. Fortunately, for the grower with limited space, tip cuttings with two or three sets of leaves can be taken and propagated.

Growing: My *G. atratus* is planted in long fibered sphagnum in a plastic pot in a tall plastic container which is kept covered. Temperature inside the container usually is 75 or close to and humidity is high ... of the drippy kind that forms on leaves and inside the container. Light is indirect, from fluorescents, and the container is about 18" away from the end of the unit and also is somewhat shaded by some large alocasia and begonia leaves. I fertilize very sparingly (1/4 strength twice a month). Once a week I rotate the container a quarter turn to keep the stem growing as straight as possible.

Propagation is easy because every part of the above-ground plant will reproduce and it even sprouts from the base. A leaf or part of a leaf with vein(ing) will produce a plant or plants. Part of a stem, sans leaves, but with a node also reproduces. And, of course, there are stem cuttings and seeds.

In a landscaped terrarium, I suggest keeping this *Gasteranthus* in its own pot of long fibered sphagnum to make it easier to remove or shift around. Cover the pot top with sheet moss and contrast the plant's dark leaves with a piece of white quartz or other light-colored rock placed in back of it. It's an easy gesneriad to grow ... just keep it a bit below low light levels for its best color. Warmth and humidity are its other requirements.

MEALS AT THE SHOW

Lee Linett always does a terrific job coordinating meals for the show workers, judges, clerks and members at large. We didn't have our meeting in February to discuss this, so please get in touch with Lee at slinky238@gmail.com.

She plans to have a some snacks available during the show set-up on Friday, a small breakfast for show workers, judges and clerks on Saturday, and a lunch on Saturday for the Show Committee, judges, clerks and eventually all Chapter members who need a little pick-me-up after working so hard.

If you have a special dish you'd like to make, or would just like to contribute towards the effort, please contact Lee. She can tell you what her needs are. Thanks.

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.

BANANAS, CROCS AND GESNERIADS

Kyoko Imai

Columnnea purpureo-vittata.....	Jim Roberts
Petrocosmea formosa.....	Jim Roberts
Streptocarpus 'Maasen's White'.....	Marlene Finch
Streptocarpus 'Falling Stars'.....	Marlene Finch
Streptocarpus 'Captain Blood'.....	Barbara Stewart
Chirita 'Betty'.....	Lee Linett
Chirita balansae.....	Lee Linett
Chirita 'Louisa'.....	Lee Linett
Drymonia variegata.....	Lee Linett
Petrocosmea "Tim's Bantam series"-any!.....	Lee Linett
Saintpaulia nitida.....	Lee Linett
Saintpaulia velutina.....	Lee Linett
Saintpaulia sp. 'Cha Simba'.....	Lee Linett
Episcia 'Malay Ebony'.....	Lee Linett
Episcia 'Tricolor'.....	Lee Linett
Episcia 'Ronny'.....	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
XNiphimenes 'Lemonade'.....	Brian Connor
Columnnea pulchra 'Orange Crush'.....	Quentin Schlieder
Sinningia pusilla.....	Quentin Schlieder
Raphiocarpus petelotii.....	Quentin Schlieder

Note: The list is getting long. If you get one of your requests, please notify me so that I can remove it from the want list. Jim

AWARDS DINNER

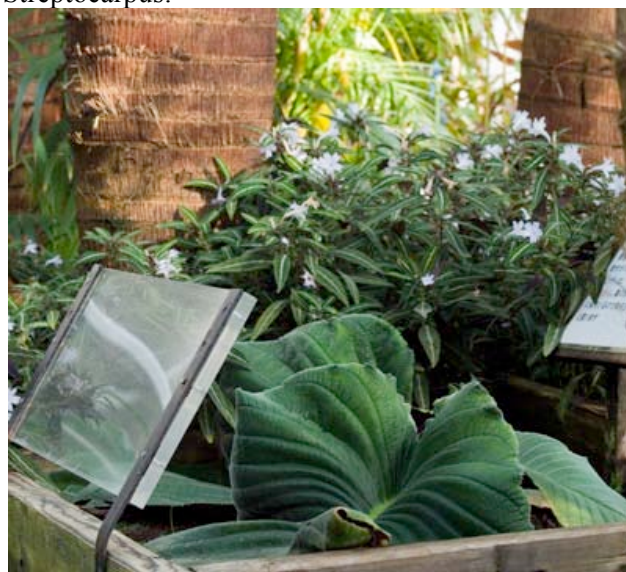
One of the best parts of the Chapter Show is the Awards Dinner. All the work of putting together a show is done. The plants are in place. Ribbons have been awarded. Weeks of talking to the plants (yelling at them?) to get them into perfect shape. Packing them up, along with hundreds of sales plants, into a space designed for half that volume and getting them to the show in perfect condition. All those jobs are done. It's amazing how much faster a show packs up when it's going out the door rather than being brought in.

On Saturday night we hold an Awards Dinner. Prizes are handed out. We get to visit with the judges and each other in the nice relaxed atmosphere of Colonel Brooks restaurant. If you would like to be a part of this, please contact Frank Daspit at FADipper@aol.com or Nell Hennessy at nell.hennessy@fiduciarycounselors.com.

So there I was, about two hours south of Tokyo on the Izu peninsula looking for something to do. From the looks of the guide book, the coastal side of the Izu peninsula sports a lovely drive and a million and half tourist traps - a teddy bear museum, a music box museum, some sort of a fairy tale museum etc. etc. - all crammed along the coastal road. Nothing looked enticing... but then on a second flip through, I spotted a tiny photo of a greenhouse with water lilies growing in a grid. Promising, right? Grid = named cultivars, and probably a fair number of them. Besides, it was a freezing cold day, so a greenhouse sounded like just the thing. The only catch: the place was called the Banana Wani Garden ("wani" being Japanese for crocodilia), which sounds like a kids' theme park.

It turned out to have several greenhouses crammed with plants, all very well kept. It's not luxurious, or architecturally noteworthy, or spacious or new: just a serious collection well beyond bananas and crocs. (I later found that the English name is Atagawa Tropical and Alligator Garden - a more accurate description.) The Atagawa area, like much of the Izu peninsula, has hot springs and the greenhouses make use of the naturally hot water. There was a banana house of course, but also tropical fruiting trees, a fern house, a bromeliad house, palms, Nepenthes, some 100s of species of orchids, and I'm sure I'm forgetting some more.

Walking through one of the first greenhouses, I almost fell over backwards on seeing a display of a unifoliate Streptocarpus:



Streptocarpus wendlandii. According to the sign, the common name in Japanese is Cow's Tongue.

This was when I realized this place might have an interesting selection of plants and wished I had more time

to look around. Then, I walked into this 9-10 ft tall wall - can you spot the gesneriads?



I only found a couple of tags on the wall:
Solenophora tuxtlensis, and *Columnnea schimpffii*. Here
are some close ups:



Further along, in an off-limits area along a passageway, I
spied some *Smithiantha*:



And what would be lining the walls in the water lily
house? Mostly bromeliads, but also a stray *Sinningia* and a
cascade of *Episcia*.



This really was an unexpected treat. I rarely manage to
step into a greenhouse when I visit Tokyo, as there aren't
many in the area. Atagawa is right on a train line, so I



might visit again. But, for my next visit - which I hope will not be in the middle of winter - I've flagged a botanical garden that is mostly outdoors. I doubt I'll find any gesneriads, but you never know....

FINAL REMINDER

2010 dues are due. If you haven't sent your dues in yet, please send them to Larry Skog as soon as possible. Dues are only \$10 a year per household address.

Editor Wanted

Contact Jim Roberts if you are interested in getting into the fascinating world of publishing. Three issue training period.

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(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.

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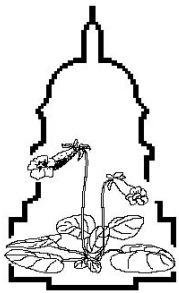
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Programs: Brian Connor
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editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
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Website and Blog: Kyoko Imai
web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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jkb25@cornell.edu
(202) 328-8145



Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 3

March 2010

It's Show Time!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This issue of Petal Tones is a little bit different than our normal monthly issue. In it I'm going to be putting a little bit of information about our show, and how it is judged and a little bit about our April meeting. The issue is much shorter than usual, instead of our normal 8-10 pages, to keep down printing costs. That's right. This issue is being printed so that we can use it as a handout at the show.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

In the interest of space, the normal notice about the Brazil Seed fund is being condensed here. The National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society belongs to a seed fund run by Mauro Peixoto in Brazil. Many new collections of seed are made available here, and members of NCAC can request this seed, at no charge, through Brian Connor. Write to Brian for more information at vicepresident@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org.

DON'T FORGET THE RAFFLE TABLE!

At every meeting members with extra plants, cuttings, supplies donate them to the raffle table. Tickets for the raffle are only 50 cents each (3 for a dollar) and everyone who attends the meeting gets one ticket just for showing up (including guests). Here's what you'll see on the table at a meeting:

- Gesneriad plants, rhizomes, tubers, cuttings, seeds**
- Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings**
- Growing supplies (pots, labels, soil, leca, sphagnum)**

MEALS AT THE SHOW

Lee Linett always does a terrific job coordinating meals for the show workers, judges, clerks and members at large.

Meeting Schedule: (All meetings at National Arboretum)

- March 12thPlant Show Set-Up and Entries
1-5 PM
- March 13-14th”Going Green with Gesneriads” Show
- March 13th Awards Dinner, Colonel Brooks at 9th
and Monroe NE
- April 10th “Alpine Gesneriads” by Michael Riley
a PowerPoint program presented by the
Gesneriad Society. Also, a rhizome
Exchange – time to share those
Achimenes and Eucodonia and other
Summertime gesneriads.

We didn't have our meeting in February to discuss this, so please get in touch with Lee at slinky238@gmail.com.

She plans to have a some snacks available during the show set-up on Friday, a small breakfast for show workers, judges and clerks on Saturday, and a lunch on Saturday for the Show Committee, judges, clerks and eventually all Chapter members who need a little pick-me-up after working so hard.

If you have a special dish you'd like to make, or would just like to contribute towards the effort, please contact Lee. She can tell you what her needs are. Thanks.

DESPERATELY SEEKING

We normally have a list here, in every issue, of plants being sought after by individual members. In the interest of space this list is being left out until the April issue. After the plant show and sale many of the wishes may get fulfilled and many more may get added to the list.

AWARDS DINNER

If you would like to be a part of this, please contact Frank Daspit at FADipper@aol.com or Nell Hennessy at nell.hennessy@fiduciarycounselors.com by Tuesday, March 9. The \$26 price tag includes salad, entrée and non-alcoholic drink. Choose between prime rib, salmon or Pasta Florentine.

WHAT IS A GESNERIAD AND HOW ARE THEY JUDGED?

Gesneriads are a highly evolved plant family found on every continent (North America, South America, Africa, Australia, Europe and Asia) as well as on the islands of the Caribbean, and many of the Pacific islands including Hawaii, Japan, and New Zealand. They have been compared to Orchids in their degree of diversity. Just as orchids are considered to be at the top of the monocot evolutionary tree, Gesneriads are close to the top of the dicots.

What makes them so desirable as houseplants is their ability to adapt to less than ideal conditions. There are miniatures for those with little growing space, trees for those with a greenhouse, upright growers, trailers and everything in between. This show should provide a good feeling for the diversity of the family. Oh, yes, Saintpaulia (African Violets) are members of the family too. I thought I should mention that since so many grow that one. Many are just as easy or easier, and others are a real challenge even for the most experienced of us.

With this type of diversity, how in the world are they judged? Well, first off the judges all have a lot of experience growing the many genera. They know the potentials of the various plants; know what they should look like and how they should grow. Examine the score sheets as you tour the show room. You will see points awarded for quantity of bloom in the flowering classes, and for ornamental value in the non-flowering. You will also see lots of points for issues such as grooming and the overall cleanliness of the plant, and it's overall condition (did it receive constant good care, or is there a problem that occurred sometime during its growth?)

A plant with lots of flowers is not guaranteed a ribbon in a Gesneriad Show. Plants are judged competitively in each class, and only one blue, one red and one yellow ribbon can be awarded. However, because judging panels vary on experience and knowledge, the blue ribbon winner in a class may not get awarded the "Best in Class" when special awards are handed out. Special awards are awarded by larger groups of judges and any plant scoring over 90 points can be awarded the "Best in Class" award, even if the team of judges that scored the class originally only awarded it third place.

As you tour the room, look at the comments on the score sheets that the judges make. They will often explain why a plant that you really think looks great didn't win the blue ribbon, or why the ribbon was awarded elsewhere. These comments are all supposed to be supportive and positive to encourage future participation, but in combination with the point tallies help the grower do a better job at growing the plant for the next show.

There are growers who enter shows to "rack up the ribbons." Gesneriad shows and exhibitors are generally not like that. You will see a wide diversity of plants in a Gesneriad Show. Growers are encouraged to enter plants to help educate the public as well as other members of the group. Something that is rarely seen in flower may be entered in the show even though the foliage is damaged or the quantity of bloom is not sufficient to win a ribbon, just because the grower has succeeded and wants others to see what the plant looks like in flower.

THE APRIL MEETING

Our April meeting will cover two very different topics, but topics that should be covered at this time of year.

Alpine Gesneriads: The first will be a PowerPoint program produced by The Gesneriad Society and Michael Riley called "Alpine Gesneriads." I have not seen the program myself, so I'm not sure if Michael's program only covers the "true" alpiners in the family or if it covers all of the "winter-hardy" gesneriads.

That's right, this diverse family not only grows in tropical environments, but also in parts of the world where winter snow-cover is normal and cool temperatures are required for survival. I have a plant in my garden that is native to Taiwan. It comes up every year and flowers beautifully with yellow and brick red spikes of tubular flowers. I also have plants that are native to the Balkan Mountains of Europe and others found in the mountains of China.



Titanotrichum oldhamii from Taiwan

The "Best in Show" at the 2009 International Convention held here in Silver Spring, Maryland was *Conandron ramondioides*, a Japanese plant. I've overwintered this species outdoors in a very protected location, but it came back for three years in a row until the slugs found it irresistible. Tim Tuttle, a *Petrocosmea* hybridizer in Pittsburgh, PA, finds that *Petrocosmeas* won't hybridize

or set seed unless the temperatures are down in the low 40's or even in the 30's. Sounds like they too might survive one of our more mild winters.



Conandron ramondioides from Japan

Grown by Bill Price of Vancouver, BC

Even some *Sinningia*, found in Brazil where snow cover and freezing temperatures are a rarity, will survive outdoors with minimal or no protection, as far north as New England. The challenge that most of us have is keeping these plants cool enough in the summer. If planted outdoors the true alpine plants need to be protected from the scorching sun we tend to get here in the Maryland – DC – Virginia regions.

Rhizome Exchange: A small number of plants from Mexico, Central and South America produce special underground stems called “scaly rhizomes.” Each scale is actually a dormant leaf ready to spring into growth when conditions are favorable. These plants are content to sit in their pot all winter without any water, or can be harvested in the Fall and stored in plastic bags, and will quickly sprout and grow in the Spring and Summer months. They are ideal for growers with limited indoor growing space but with a partly shaded deck or patio to put them on for the Summer.



Achimenes 'Purple King' in rock garden

A bonus to growing these plants is that they generally produce many more rhizomes than you want to keep for yourself so that they can be shared with friends, neighbors, or fellow Chapter members who are looking for something new.



Achimenes 'Glory' - Denver 2008

Bring your extra rhizomes, either in bulk if you really have a lot, or in baggies of 2-3 per baggie. We'll swap around so that we can all grow them this Summer and maybe have huge pots growing for our next show (Fall of 2011).



Seemannia nematanthodes

Bring Rhizomes of:
Achimenes
Eucodonia
Seemannia
Smithiantha
Kohleria
Gloxinia
and all other related plants and their Intergeneric hybrids.

Visit the Chapter website for information on joining the group or making contact with any of us:

www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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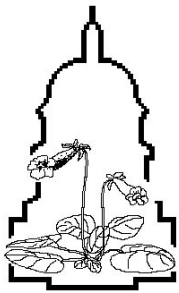
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**Join Today
(show special only)**

**Join
The Gesneriad Society
Today**

**Get National Capital
Chapter Membership
at half-off**

\$5.00 per household



Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 4

April 2010

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

And the winner is..... EVERYONE! I keep saying this in e-mails to the group, but you all did a great job of putting on our best and biggest show ever. We had wonderful participation from established and new members. Even the judges entered the show. We added nine (maybe ten) new members to the Chapter. We signed four new members up to the Gesneriad Society. The Sales Table was phenomenal. The judges who came to judge the show all had a great time and had nothing but praise for not just the plants, but the members of the Chapter who were so helpful and accommodating. So, once again, THANK YOU.

Most of this issue will be devoted to the Show, but we also have a great article from one of our newest members (who just happened to win Best in Show). Enjoy the pictures and I hope to see all of you at the April meeting next weekend.

SHOW REPORT By Brian Connor

The sensational plants from new exhibitors are my most vivid memory of the 2010 NCAC show, **Going Green With Gesneriads**. The March 13, 14 show at the Arboretum was an amazing effort that was accomplished by many people in the chapter working together. I say that with all sincerity because in early January I was a little worried. I wondered if the worst winter in decades would bury us in another snowfall the weekend of the show. Also, my plants were not blooming much during the winter and it seemed neither was anyone else's! However, by the end of January, the plants seemed to sense longer days and started to grow faster and set flower buds-in the nick of time.

The show ended up larger and with more entries than expected! And it poured rain Saturday, but that was preferable to the blizzards of the past two months. The judged exhibits totaled 115 and there were 7 for exhibition only. There were over 70 horticultural entries,

Meeting Schedule: (All meetings at National Arboretum)

April 10th "Alpine Gesneriads" by Michael Riley - a PowerPoint program presented by the Gesneriad Society. Also, a rhizome Exchange - time to share those Achimenes and Eucodonia and other Summertime gesneriads.

June 12th Picnic - 11:00 am. Location to be determined at the April meeting

about 20 artistic arrangements and plantings and nearly as many in the arts and crafts depicting gesneriads.

First-time exhibitor Andrew Norris won Best in Show and the People's Choice Award with his outstanding *Petrocosmea* collection, staged imaginatively on rocks with moss. Novice Beverly Nissenbaum won Best *Streptocarpus* with a stunning *S. 'Silvia'*. In fact, the Judges took quite a while to award the *Streptocarpus* class. This was due to



Beverly's Strep. 'Silvia'

the high quality of the entries such as a fine 'Cape Essence' (Ken Meier) and 'Fleischle Roulette Cherry' (Carol Hamelink). Carol also showed a tiny but beautiful *Sinningia* 'Little Wood Nymph.' The terrariums from Neale Stuart-Merriman and Kyoko Imai were exquisitely landscaped. Barbara Stewart exhibited a lovely, mature *Chirita*



Ken's S. 'Cape Essence'

'Rachel.' The lesser known gesneriads were well represented by *Nautilocalyx* species from Johanna Zinn (including a *pemphidus*, one of my favorites) and from Jim Roberts, a terrific *Pearcea* species that was covered

volunteers for making it happen. Thank you exhibitors for your creativity and making it a high quality show that was enjoyable to the public. We expect great things from Beverly and Andrew in the future!

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

The Chapter has just finished ordering seeds on the membership that expired on April 1, and Brian will be distributing those seeds to everyone in the next few weeks. For those new members who don't know how this all works, or what the Brazil Seed Club is all about, here are the rules. Mauro Peixoto is a Brazilian who lives outside of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Together with Alain Chautems of Geneva, he makes expeditions into the wilds of Brazil and collects seed of native plants. Not, just Gesneriads, by any means, but since Brazil is the natural habitat of most *Sinningia*, *Codonanthe*, *Nematanthus*, *Paliavana*, *Vanhouttea*, and other Gesneriads, the National Capital Area Chapter belongs to a Yahoo Group which supports his efforts and where Mauro rewards those who support him by supplying seed from the plants in his collection. Several times a year he updates this seed list and we get a copy. Anyone in the Chapter who is interested in growing seed should contact Brian Connor at vicepresident@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org. Brian will send you a copy of the seed lists as he gets them. Chapter members can then order seed through Brian and get the seed to you. We try to limit the seed to just Gesneriads, but there are so many different plant families on the list that you can also order other things. If there aren't enough Gesneriads on the requests from members Brian will fill out the order the other plant family requests. So far we've limited each member to two packets per order, but we're going to have a discussion on this at the April meeting. Rules:

- Share the seedlings on the raffle table once you get them growing.
- If Brian gets requests from two people for the same variety he will order one packet of seed and split it.
- If Brian gets requests for the same variety from three people he'll order two packets

This is a great way to bring new species into cultivation in the US and also helps prevent a species from becoming extinct. Mauro collects from all over Brazil and his conditions are hot and very humid. Some of the plants he collects like it a bit cooler and struggle in his greenhouse. We in the US may actually have better conditions for some of the plants than he does!

DON'T FORGET THE RAFFLE TABLE!

At every meeting members with extra plants, cuttings,



Ki's Terrarium



Neale's Terrarium

with red hairs. The educational exhibits and photographs were outstanding also. I loved the recycled planter made from an old vinyl record album.



Alice Tangerini's superb education exhibit

On the whole, it was a memorable show. There were 37 first place, 36 second place, 22 third and 4 honorable mentions awarded at the show. I could go on and on about highlights. Thank you to all of the show chairs and

supplies donate them to the raffle table. Tickets for the raffle are only 50 cents each (3 for a dollar) and everyone who attends the meeting gets one ticket just for showing up (including guests). Here's what you'll see on the table at a meeting:

Gesneriad plants, rhizomes, tubers, cuttings, seeds

Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings

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

DESPERATELY SEEKING

Following is a list of plants being sought by members. If you are a member of the Chapter and want to add something to the list, simply send your request to me and I'll add it to the list. If you have a plant that someone is seeking please get in touch with that person and arrange to bring it to a meeting when you'll both be there, or arrange to mail it.

- Columnnea purpureo-vittata..... Jim Roberts
- Streptocarpus 'Maasen's White'..... Marlene Finch
- Streptocarpus 'Falling Stars'..... Marlene Finch
- Streptocarpus 'Captain Blood'..... Barbara Stewart
- Chirita 'Betty'..... Lee Linett
- Chirita balansae..... Lee Linett
- Chirita 'Louisa'..... Lee Linett
- Drymonia variegata..... Lee Linett
- Drymonia variegata..... Josh Heath
- Petrocosmea "Tim's Keystone series"-any!Lee Linett
- Saintpaulia nitidaLee Linett
- Saintpaulia velutina.....Lee Linett
- Saintpaulia sp. 'Cha Simba'.....Lee Linett
- Episcia 'Malay Ebony'Lee Linett
- Episcia 'Tricolor'Lee Linett
- Episcia 'Ronny'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
- XNiphimenes 'Lemonade'..... Brian Connor
- Columnnea pulchra 'Orange Crush' Quentin Schlieder
- Sinningia pusilla..... Quentin Schlieder
- Raphiocarpus petelotii Quentin Schlieder
- Columnnea eburnea Josh Heath
- Columnnea purpuriomarginata Josh Heath
- Gloxinella lindeniana Josh Heath
- Kohleria villosa..... Josh Heath
- Episcia 'Silver Skies'..... Kyoko Imai

Note: The list is getting long. If you get one of your requests, please notify me so that I can remove it from the want list.

What's amazing is that after the huge sale we just held, people are still looking for more plants. Here's a small shot of one small portion of 30 plus feet of sale plants.



Jim

How I Grew My Show-winning Petrocosmeas By Andrew Norris



Best in Show Petrocosmea Collection

The March show was a whirlwind of excitement and reward for me. It was my first show, my first exhibition, my first blue, and my first Best In Show! I met so many amazing people and the air was heavy with congratulations, jubilation, and information.....it was the greatest experience I've had in my short time growing and I was surprised to learn that I did indeed have show-worthy and in fact, show-winning plants! I will attempt to introduce myself and outline as best as possible my

growing conditions and what I felt brought me such exciting results.

I am a 26 year old male, who became interested in violets after having to move and leave my space hogging animal hobby behind. I have always kept or grown something and usually many things. I am empty without something that I can put my head and hands into. I was a purist....I did not even want to consider other gesneriads...I was ONLY going to grow violets. I ordered my first 5 or so plants from eBay vendors and became a frequent poster on the African Violet forum on GardenWeb. Using the AVSA site, I found the Baltimore African Violet Society. It was through this group that I saw my first *Streptocarpus*. It was 'Raspberry Network' grown by Marie Burns. I HAD to have one!! I began looking at pictures of other gesneriads, while searching for information about Streps and growing violets. It was while researching Streps, that I saw those perfectly symmetrical rosettes of *Petrocosmeas*...I knew they were to be too rare and unobtainable for my small budget and limited resources.

I continued acquiring and assembling my wish list of AV varieties and keeping the desire for *Petrocosmeas* on the back burner. I attended my first violet show, courtesy of my local violet club and there I saw my first *Chirita*...I was hooked! I went home and began looking at all of the vendors I had found through my short affiliation with the BAVS and from my interest in violets. I looked for the vendors with the most species and I read what little I could find on growing *Petrocosmeas*. I began dreaming of complex 'potions' of gritty and alkaline growing media and lighting stands. And it was in fact not long before I did buy my first Rubbermaid shelf, shop-lights, and bulbs. I bought yarn and pots, labels and lime....I was going into the deep end of the pool now!

I ordered my first order of *Petrocosmeas* from Cedar Creek Violets, then followed that with an order to Lyndon Lyons, where I ordered a few more and my first *Chiritas*. I nabbed another *Chirita* and *Pet* at my next BAVS show in May, and also bought myself a handful of Streps, including what proved to be an elusive 'Raspberry Network'. In the time period between December 2008 to May 2009, I had amassed a collection of about 30 violets, 5 Streps, and my collection of *Pets* and *Chiritas*. I had *Petrocosmea* *rosettifolia*, *nervosa*, *begoniifolia*, *barbata*, *flaccida*, 'Momo', *parryorum*, *kerrii*, *sericcea*, *sericcea* HT-2, *minor*, *minor* spp. #5, and *foresttii*. My plants were all in thumb pots and they were just as captivating in their tiny pots as they were at the grandiose sizes I saw in pictures online.



Petrocosmea minor - photo by Andrew Norris

So began my journey to winning Best In Show.

The rest of this article will be divided into headings for ease of reference and to condense what is already a rather lengthy article.

Lighting:

After careful consideration and my own experience with different types and brands of light, I decided on one 3k 48" bulb and one 6,500k bulb, both T8s. The higher Kelvin rating mimics sunlight and is best for foliage growth and the 3000k stimulates flower production. These bulbs were both Sylvania, which was no accident, as I prefer these to other bulb brands for the amount of useable light they emit and the lamp life. The bulbs were intended for flowering violets, but since I grow my Streps with my *Chiritas* and *Pets*, they got the same treatment. A dual combo of 6,500k would probably be as good or even better for foliage growth in *Pets* and *Chiritas*. I found that my prefab shelves leave some length between the plants and the fixtures to be desired, but the *Pets* do ok at about 12" away from the bulbs, on for 6-12 hrs a day. I would prefer 18" between the plants and the bulbs and this is certainly needed for my *Chiritas* and the Streps need the height to accommodate their tall flower stalks. The silvery leaved plants with the most hair (*sericcea*, *nervosa*) get the center of the stand, while *rosettifolia* and *begoniifolia* do well towards the back, front, or sides. The *minor* complex gets the sides of the fixtures as well.



Petrocosmea rosettifolia – photo by Andrew Norris

Repotting:

I was originally terrified to repot my Pets. I had heard that many people lose their plants after repotting. I learned that they are not nearly so delicate. I advise, when the plants get to be the size in diameter of the average plum, or about 2" across, that they go into 6" pots. I have repotted mine twice, from thumbs, to 4", to 6". I find that the tight and brittle foliage makes repotting impossible, without breaking down the plants, with many of them. For this reason, I prefer to over pot and allow the plant to get large. A plant in a smaller pot will be self limiting in size as the rim of the pot causes the outer rows of leaves to break off over time, from the pressure of the plant's own growth. I do not disturb the roots unduly and I see no need for repotting more often than once annually, if the plants are doing well. They seem not to require the scheduled repotting of flowering violets, perhaps because of the plants lack of flowering they do not exhaust the soil as quickly and the cooler temperature the Pets prefer facilitate better preservation and longer performance of the potting media.

I like to repot with dry mix and I use baby spoons and small cups to tuck soil around the plants. Moist media sticks to everything and much harder to work with. I always work with a dust mask to avoid breathing in the dust resulting from working with dry media and gloves are a nice option as well. I run the shower over them lightly when finished and this wets them through and through, including the wicks and cleans the pots, while removing dust from the foliage. I use cool water, but not cold water



Petrocosmea begoniifolia

and a gentle spray. Let the water drain from them and then place them under the lights, on reservoirs.

Pot size:

As I mentioned above, I tend to over pot and I think this serves Petrocosmeas well for obtaining large, symmetrical specimens. Mine would have been even larger, had I not repotted mine in December, b/c they were self-limiting in pots that were not large enough to accommodate their brittle rosettes as the grew in their 4" pots. A plant the size of a plum belongs in a 6" pot in my opinion, if what you want is a large plant. If you want flowers, than the same plant might be confined and allowed to grow into a 4" pot, but squat pots should be used in either case. My plants are in intermediate depth pots, not deep, but not squat, they may just be standards, but they were what were on hand. They could certainly do with shallower pots, though the additional depth in my current pots does not harm them. It's also worth mentioning that the plants did flower in 4" pots, when the foliage was overhanging the rim by one or two rows, which implies the roots were at the sides of the pot, but not necessarily occupying the depth of the pots.

Soil mix:

This is where I think I might have something worth mentioning. My soil mix contains one ingredient that some have heard about and tried before, but also one that is not usually seen. What I use is called Turface. It is used most commonly by turf builders who create turf zones for golf courses, playing fields, and tracks. It is a fired clay granule that is neutral in Ph and acts as a buffer, when used in growing media. It absorbs water and nutrients for use by the plants. It is aerating, light weight and does not degrade over time. I find it to be easy to find in some places and harder to find in others...lucky me, I live where I have to have 5 gallons shipped from eBay vendors for \$50.00 a bag!! Price aside, I just love the stuff for growing nearly anything. My theory is that that the shape and edges of the Turface cause plant roots to branch and make more feeder roots, when the run up against the material.

This has the advantage of the plant utilizing more fertilizer and absorbing more water, resulting in better foliage growth.



Petrosocmea sp. HT-2 grown and exhibited by Barbara Stewart

I also use coarse vermiculite, coarse perlite, peat moss, and pelleted dolomite lime in my soil mix. The exact proportions are not really exact, but it goes something like this:

A 1-1.5" layer of perlite goes in the bottom of the pot, then for each gallon of mix I use 1/2 gallon of peat moss, 1/8 gallon of perlite, 1/8 gallon of Turface, and 1/4 gallon of vermiculite. To this, I add 3 bathroom cups full of the pelleted lime. Mix well and you have my trade secret mix. I use the same mix for all of my gesneriads and begonias, just with less lime. I tried testing for Ph, but it just didn't seem accurate and lost its value to me. I just buy the same brand of peat and expect it is somewhat standard in its Ph. I suspect you will have the same results by just adding the cups of lime as I mentioned. If you want to fuss with Ph, I would aim for a Ph of 7.4-8, being sure to acclimate plants that may have been growing in more acid media.

Temps:

I keep my pets cool. No higher than 78F in the summer and in the low 50sF in the winter. I use the day length as a guide and try to approximate this with my lighting schedule, though I never use less than 5-6 hours of light. I like using an unheated basement or closed room, where I can turn off the heat register and crack the window. Several of the pets actually formed tightly closed, dormant centers; similar to hibernacula seen in sedums and sundews, if you are a carnivorous plant grower. The plants grow slowly or not at all with this chill and put on a bloom for me in November into December. I find that the parryorum and kerrii prefer a bit warmer and would be best kept at about 60F at the lowest, though there was no real ill affect at the lower temps. I begin to increase the light with the day length and the temperatures warm on their own, with the change in seasons. A chill is needed for many pets to bloom and from what I have read to set

fertile seed. I am not one for hybridizing and growing from seed at this point, so my expertise falls short in that realm and I urge you to seek out Tim Tuttle's blog on *Petrosocmeas*, as he goes in depth about his experiences with pollination and seed setting.

Fertilizers:

I probably should/could have reduced the amount of fertilizer my plants got in the winter, but I didn't. They did just fine at the rate of 1/8 teaspoonful per gallon of water of Peter's 20-20-20 or Optimara. I also like to mix a half and half bloom booster/20-20-20 mixture on occasion for Pets that I expect to flower and any gesneriads I want to encourage blooming. This 50/50 regime works as a continuous method equally well and so does using 1/4 teaspoonful per gallon, but since I like to use the same water for all my plants, I use the lesser amount.

Humidity:

I never did pay too much attention to this. I have had it be higher in a basement setting and while growing on egg-crate, suspended over water trays, but had equal success on individual reservoirs in household humidity. Having the register turned off and the window cracked, as well the plants being grouped together all makes for adequate growing conditions and zero mildew. I had an ugly time in a centrally heated house with violets and mildew this winter, however.

Watering:

Again, when the plants were kept cooler, I probably could have allowed them to dry a bit, but mine have always and will still be kept on wicks with reservoirs that are always full. I don't have the diligence to check on plants frequently enough to allow them to dry out. If I had time to monitor daily, I would probably let the reservoirs dry in the winter and monitor daily for the plants' needs.

I only ever use distilled water with all of my plants and when I don't have enough from my dehumidifier (not run in the plant room), I buy and use spring water. I do this, because I am on a city water supply that adds fluoride to the water. This is known to accumulate to the detriment of plant growth. If I was on a well and had neutral to slightly basic water, I would be fine with that and rainwater would be an option, where acid rain is not a problem.

If your water is too acid, try adding the lime to the water you use for watering your plants, but do flush them every 8 weeks or so to prevent too alkaline of conditions.

I use wicks run from the bottom of the pot to the opposite side of the top, to form a diagonal. I use one wick for up to an 8" pot and all I use is acrylic yarn in the standard width. This has suited all of my wicked plants and I have never needed a larger wick or more than one. Sometimes I have

to clean the wicks of algae, so that they do not stop transporting water to the plants' roots, but that is once every 6 months or less. I find the pets placed on a pint container as a reservoir need topping off less than once a month 3 times all Winter! I love this approach to growing gesneriads.

Propagation:

Leaf pullings of any crisp leaf had worked for me for all Pets. The newest center leaves are unsuitable, but the older, outer few rows are ideal. I root mine in warmer temps of 68F-78F, in covered trays of moistened media. I find that they root well in any reasonably lit location and most produce plantlets in a few weeks, with a few taking a couple of months. Suckers are also a viable option and are treated the same way as leaf pullings. As soon as the plantlets show a rosette pattern, they can be potted up into 2" pots and treated as adult plants.

Grooming/Display:

I find the Pets get all of the grooming they need when repotting. I do remove whole rows of leaves, when one in a row is damaged and I remove immature leaves as well. None of my plants sucker except for 'Momo', barbata, nervosa, kerrii, and rosettifolia. Kerrii and rosettifolia only suckered after flowering, while 'Momo', nervosa, and barbata are constant suckers.

I choose to remove all suckers as soon as they are seen from all of the plants. Kerrii is almost always in bloom and therefore gets suckers that need to be removed every 8 weeks or so. Nervosa goes through suckering periods and then is well behaved, and rosettifolia ceased suckering after blooming was finished.

I have never had any pest or disease problems with any of my gesneriads, other than the violets.

For showing, I like using moss, rocks, and woodland decor, such as bark, dead leaves, lichen, and twigs. I think that grouped together this way, they look naturalized and in their 'element'. I would like to try growing them in rock planter made of pumice or tufa, maybe even simulated rock, concrete planters. If you chose to grow a group in a natural style container, try ageing it outside and allowing it to grow mosses and lichens to really authenticate the look. For me, it was also important to show off the variety of Pets that are out there, so I chose different foliage types, heights and forms for my collection. Group taller plants towards the back or center and try to arrange a collection that looks good from all sides. I admittedly did not do this so well the first time, but no one seemed to notice my lapse in staging.

For display at home on the light stands, I do the same; that is place the taller and larger plants towards the back and

smaller to the front. I also like to group similar foliage types together.

I bet trying pets in the outdoor shade garden would also be a great way to show them off, though they would not survive the Pennsylvania Winters. They could be grown in planters or amended soil and would look nice amongst woodland or Japanese style plantings. I expect slugs, deer, and other herbivores to find the less hairy ones quite edible, so be aware!

I hope I have covered all of the bases to get anyone interested in Petrocosmeas a good start to growing them. They have proven easy to acquire, grow, and make great companions to your other gesneriads or houseplants. They are tolerant of different temperatures, lighting, and watering habits, and the different foliage types are sure to have something to offer everyone. I find the leaves of Petrocosmea parryorum even have a sweet smell, when gently rubbed between the thumb and index finger!!! Give Pets a try and have fun growing your own show-winning plants!

AWARDS REPORT

Jim Roberts

The generous donation of awards by so many of you made my job very easy this year and very difficult at the same time. I only had a few hours to tally up the votes by the judges and come up with who won what for the Awards Dinner at Colonel Brooks. The dinner was, as usual, well attended and very nicely done. Thanks again for everyone's generous support. A list of all the awards is attached to the end of Petal Tones.



Judging the Show - photo by Jim Christ

JUDGES REPORT

By Jim Roberts



Judging the Show - photo by Jim Christ

The judges for this year's show had an especially difficult task ahead of them. Not only did we have two judges who couldn't make it, but we had an extra large show and a large number of special awards that had to be voted on after the ribbons were all handed out.

Feedback from the judges was all very positive. They loved the fact that we allowed them to hit the MASSIVE sales table before judging started, and all appreciated the \$5 coupon as a Thank You. Lunch went amazingly well, all crowded together around a long table in a narrow room. Thanks Lee, for being such a great hostess!

And they all loved the show. It was a big job, but one that they will remember for a long time. We've already got volunteers from the group to come in and judge our next show. And BTW, the next show should be even larger since many more plants are generally show-worthy in the fall than in March. Five teams next time??

THE APRIL MEETING

Our April meeting will cover two very different topics, but topics that should be covered at this time of year.

Alpine Gesneriads: The first will be a PowerPoint program produced by The Gesneriad Society and Michael Riley called "Alpine Gesneriads." I have not seen the program myself, so I'm not sure if Michael's program only covers the "true" alpines in the family or if it covers all of the "winter-hardy" gesneriads.

That's right, this diverse family not only grows in tropical environments, but also in parts of the world where winter snow-cover is normal and cool temperatures are required for survival. I have a plant in my garden that is native to Taiwan. It comes up every year and flowers beautifully with yellow and brick red spikes of tubular flowers. (I checked on April 1 and the plant is already showing it's head above the soil line, even after one of the coldest and snowiest years in Maryland history.) I also have plants that are native to the Balkan Mountains of Europe and others found in the mountains of China.

The "Best in Show" at the 2009 International Convention held here in Silver Spring, Maryland was *Conandron ramondioides*, a Japanese plant. I've overwintered this species outdoors in a very protected location, but it came back for three years in a row until the slugs found it irresistible. Tim Tuttle, a *Petrocosmea* hybridizer in Pittsburgh, PA, finds that *Petrocosmeas* won't hybridize or set seed unless the temperatures are down in the low 40's or even in the 30's. Sounds like they too might survive one of our more mild winters.

Even some *Sinningia*, found in Brazil where snow cover and freezing temperatures are a rarity, will survive outdoors with minimal or no protection, as far north as New England. The challenge that most of us have is keeping these plants cool enough in the summer. If planted outdoors the true alpines need to be protected from the scorching sun we tend to get here in the Maryland – DC – Virginia regions.

Rhizome Exchange: A small number of plants from Mexico, Central and South America produce special underground stems called "scaly rhizomes." Each scale is actually a dormant leaf ready to spring into growth when conditions are favorable. These plants are content to sit in their pot all winter without any water, or can be harvested in the Fall and stored in plastic bags, and will quickly sprout and grow in the Spring and Summer months. They are ideal for growers with limited indoor growing space but with a partly shaded deck or patio to put them on for the Summer.

A bonus to growing these plants is that they generally produce many more rhizomes than you want to keep for yourself so that they can be shared with friends, neighbors, or fellow Chapter members who are looking for something new.

Bring your extra rhizomes, either in bulk if you really have a lot, or in baggies of 2-3 per baggie. We'll swap around so that we can all grow them this Summer and

maybe have huge pots growing for our next show (Fall of 2011).

Bring Rhizomes of:

Achimenes
Eucodonia
Seemannia
Smithiantha
Kohleria
Gloxinia

and all other related plants and their intergeneric hybrids.



Kohleria warszewiczii - rhizomatous plant grown and exhibited by Brian Connor

The Baltimore African Violet Club's Annual Show and Sale

NEW LOCATION THIS YEAR!!!!

The Shops at Kenilworth
800 Kenilworth Drive, Towson, MD 21204

Friday, May 7th and Saturday, May 8th
Fri. Sales 9 am to 5 pm Show 1pm to 5pm
Sat. Show and Sales 9 am to 5 pm

Theme of our show is "Violet Mardi Gras". Gorgeous show plants, hundreds of beautiful sale plants including violets, other gesneriads, and unusual houseplants, supplies, leaves, cuttings, soil mix, plant rings, self-watering pots and much more. Experienced growers will be there to answer your growing questions. Free admission.

Any questions, you can contact Shirley Huffman
bshuffman2@aol.com
301-854-2021

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC) A Chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

"The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars."

(NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981.)

NCAC meets 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

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Website and Blog: Kyoko Imai
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Membership: John Boggan
jkb25@cornell.edu
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Going Green with Gesneriads Awards List

Award	Amount	Donated by	Won by	Plant/ Entry
Best in Division I, Horticulture	\$25	Lee Linett	Andrew Norris	 <p style="text-align: center;">Petrocosmea Collection</p>
Best in Show, Horticulture	\$25	Chapter	Andrew Norris	 <p style="text-align: center;">Petrocosmea Collection</p>
Sweepstakes in Horticulture	\$25	Chapter	Brian Connor	7 first/2 second/2 third
Runner up Sweepstakes in Horticulture	\$15	Kyoko Imai	Jim Roberts	6 first/ 6 second/ 2 third
Best New World Gesneriad, Division I	\$25	Quentin Schlieder	Brian Connor	 <p style="text-align: center;">Seemannia 'Medea'</p>
Best in Section A – Tuberous	\$25	Johanna Zinn	Carol Hamelink	 <p style="text-align: center;">Sinningia 'Little Wood Nymph'</p>

Best Miniature or Semi-mini Sinningia	\$25	Kyoko Imai	Carol Hamelink	 <p>Sinningia 'Little Wood Nymph'</p>
Best in Section B – Rhizomatous	\$25	Karin Fontneau	Brian Connor	 <p>Seemannia 'Medea'</p>
Best Kohleria	\$25	Carol Gates	Brian Connor	 <p>Kohleria 'Peridots Rolo'</p>
Best in Section C – Fibrous-rooted	\$25	Brian Connor	Brian Connor	 <p>Episcia 'Showtime'</p>
Best Old World Gesneriad, Division I	\$25	Jim Roberts	Andrew Norris	 <p>Petrocosmea Collection</p>

<p>Best Chirita</p>	<p>\$25</p>	<p>Brian Connor</p>	<p>Barbara Stewart</p>	 <p>Chirita 'Rachel'</p>
<p>Best Petrocosmea</p>	<p>\$25</p>	<p>Jim Roberts</p>	<p>Andrew Norris</p>	 <p>Petrocosmea Collection</p>
<p>Best Streptocarpus</p>	<p>\$25</p>	<p>Carol Gates</p>	<p>Beverly Nissenbaum</p>	 <p>Streptocarpus 'Silvia'</p>
<p>Best Saintpaulia</p>	<p>\$15</p>	<p>Richmond AVS</p>	<p>Brian Connor</p>	 <p>Saintpaulia 'Pixie Redhead'</p>

Best in Section E – Grown for Foliage	\$25	Brian Connor	Jim Roberts	 <p>Pearcea rhodotricha</p>
Best in Division II, Artistic	\$25	Lee Linett	Neale Stuart-Merriman	 <p>Terrarium Curved-sided</p>
Best in Artistic	\$25	Chapter	Neale Stuart-Merriman	 <p>Terrarium Curved-sided</p>
Sweepstakes in Artistic	\$25	Carol Hamelink	Neale Stuart-Merriman	<p>4 first/ 2 second</p>
Best Arrangement Classes 51-60	\$10	Jim Roberts	Jim Roberts	 <p>'Salsa Verde'</p>

Best Arrangement in Class 69 (novice)	\$10	Jim Roberts	Brian Connor	
				Challenge Class
Best in the Arts	\$25	Chapter	Jim Roberts	
Best in the Arts	\$10	Doris Hill	Jim Roberts	
Sweepstakes in the Arts	\$25	Chapter	Jim Roberts	
Best Novice in Horticulture, Class 49-50	\$10	Jim Roberts	Beverly Nissenbaum	
Best Novice	\$10	Old Dominion AVS	Beverly Nissenbaum	
Best Novice Overall (classes 49,50,69)	\$15	Lee Linett	Beverly Nissenbaum	Streptocarpus 'Silvia'
Best flowering Gesneriad	\$15	Doris Hill	Carol Hamelink	
				Sinningia 'Little Wood Nymph'





Challenge Class

Chirita minutomaculata photo

3 first/ 2 second

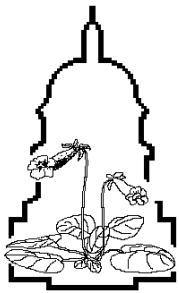
Streptocarpus 'Silvia'

Sinningia 'Little Wood Nymph'

Best Rarely Seen	\$10	Robert Simpson	Jim Roberts	 <p>Pearcea rhodotricha</p>
Best New Introduction	\$10	Robert Simpson	Jim Roberts	 <p>Petrocosmea 'Imperial Butterflies'</p>
Best Terrarium/Dish Garden/Natural	\$15	Quentin Schlieder	Neale Stuart-Merriman	 <p>Terrarium Curved-sided</p>
Best Collection of Gesneriads	\$10	Quentin Schlieder	Andrew Norris	 <p>Petrocosmea Collection</p>

Best Trained or Sculptured	\$15	Carol Hamelink	Jim Roberts	
				Drymonia serrulata 'Bronze' bonsai
Best Use of a Recycled Container	\$10	Carol Hamelink	Barbara Stewart	
				Recycled Container - Vinyl Record
Best in Section Q – Crafts	\$10	Barbara Stewart	Jim Roberts	
				Kohleria collage
Best Educational Exhibit	\$10	Kyoko Imai	Alice Tangerini	
				Botanical Illustration - Start to Finish
BEST IN SHOW	Rosette	The Gesneriad Society	Andrew Norris	
				BEST IN SHOW Petrocosmea Collection

Many thanks to Jim Christ for most of the photos on these pages.



Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 5

May/ June 2010

PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Summer is here and the gardens are doing great. Both indoors and out. The plants under lights just seem to sense that this is the time of year for them to put on a big growth spurt, even though they have no hint of day-length or humidity changes going on outside. We use the air conditioner full time in the spring and summer months – allergies prohibit opening any windows. So if anything, the air is at least as dry in the plant room over the summer as it is during the heating season.

The one thing that the plants have going for them in the summer is a bit of temperature relief. The plant room is always close to 80 during the winter, even with all the heat vents in the room closed. In the summer the A/C keeps the room in the low 70's.

Of course, the plants have no idea that I've been injured and can't attend to their needs. I finally planted the rhizomes that I brought home from the April meeting yesterday. Lots of work that needs to be done is just going to have to wait a few more weeks for my arm to get a bit more functional. It has full range of movement now, but not without a lot of pain. And forget about trying to pick up anything with it.

Once again I'm going to have to disappoint our readership with a very small issue of Petal Tones. I only have one article submitted (which I'm holding on to for the July/August issue) and I've just started typing with two hands again. Please think about sending me something for the July/August issue.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

The Chapter has just finished ordering seeds on the membership that expired on April 1, and Brian should be in the process of distributing those seeds to everyone in the next few weeks. For those new members who don't know how this all works, or what the Brazil Seed Club is all about, here are the rules. Mauro Peixoto is a Brazilian

Meeting Schedule: (All meetings at National Arboretum)

June 12th

Picnic – 11:00 am. Sweetgum picnic area at Greenbelt Park. See details below!

who lives outside of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Together with Alain Chautems of Geneva, he makes expeditions into the wilds of Brazil and collects seed of native plants. Not, just Gesneriads, by any means, but since Brazil is the natural habitat of most *Sinningia*, *Codonanthe*, *Nematanthus*, *Paliavana*, *Vanhouttea*, and other Gesneriads, the National Capital Area Chapter belongs to a Yahoo Group which supports his efforts and where Mauro rewards those who support him by supplying seed from the plants in his collection. Several times a year he updates this seed list and we get a copy. Anyone in the Chapter who is interested in growing seed should contact Brian Connor at brian_connor@bd.com Brian will send you a copy of the seed lists as he gets them. Chapter members can then order seed through Brian and get the seed to you. We try to limit the seed to just Gesneriads, but there are so many different plant families on the list that you can also order other things. If there aren't enough Gesneriads on the requests from members Brian will fill out the order the other plant family requests. At the April meeting we increased our membership and everyone should be able to order and get seeds with every order we place. Rules:

- Share the seedlings on the raffle table once you get them growing.
- If Brian gets requests from two people for the same variety he will order one packet of seed and split it.
- If Brian gets requests for the same variety from three people he'll order two packets

This is a great way to bring new species into cultivation in the US and also helps prevent a species from becoming

extinct. Mauro collects from all over Brazil and his conditions are hot and very humid. Some of the plants he collects like it a bit cooler and struggle in his greenhouse. We in the US may actually have better conditions for some of the plants than he does!

DESPERATELY SEEKING

Following is a list of plants being sought by members. If you are a member of the Chapter and want to add something to the list, simply send your request to me and I'll add it to the list. If you have a plant that someone is seeking please get in touch with that person and arrange to bring it to a meeting when you'll both be there, or arrange to mail it.

Columnea purpureo-vittata.....	Jim Roberts
Streptocarpus 'Maasen's White'.....	Marlene Finch
Streptocarpus 'Falling Stars'.....	Marlene Finch
Streptocarpus 'Captain Blood'.....	Barbara Stewart
Chirita 'Betty'.....	Lee Linett
Chirita balansae.....	Lee Linett
Chirita 'Louisa'.....	Lee Linett
Drymonia variegata.....	Lee Linett
Drymonia variegata.....	Josh Heath
Petrocosmea "Tim's Keystone series"-any!.....	Lee Linett
Saintpaulia nitida.....	Lee Linett
Saintpaulia velutina.....	Lee Linett
Saintpaulia sp. 'Cha Simba'.....	Lee Linett
Episcia 'Malay Ebony'.....	Lee Linett
Episcia 'Tricolor'.....	Lee Linett
Episcia 'Ronny'.....	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
XNiphimenes 'Lemonade'.....	Brian Connor
Columnea pulchra 'Orange Crush'.....	Quentin Schlieder
Sinningia pusilla.....	Quentin Schlieder
Columnea eburnea.....	Josh Heath
Columnea purpurimarginata.....	Josh Heath
Gloxinella lindeniana.....	Josh Heath
Kohleria villosa.....	Josh Heath
Episcia 'Silver Skies'.....	Kyoko Imai

Note: The list is getting long. If you get one of your requests, please notify me so that I can remove it from the want list.

Jim

DON'T FORGET THE RAFFLE TABLE!

At every meeting members with extra plants, cuttings, supplies donate them to the raffle table. Tickets for the raffle are only 50 cents each (3 for a dollar) and everyone who attends the meeting gets one ticket just for showing up (including guests). Here's what you'll see on the table at a meeting:

Gesneriad plants, rhizomes, tubers, cuttings, seeds

Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings

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

ANNUAL PICNIC

The past two years we've held our annual picnic at Greenbelt Park in Greenbelt, MD. The park has some nice shaded picnic tables with barbeque pits that are available on a first come basis. That's what we're going to do again this year. The first ones there will claim two or three tables in the Sweetgum Picnic area. We generally start to show up at around 10:30, ahead of the crowd, so we haven't had any problems getting some tables locked down. We'll grill some burgers and dogs and have a nice potluck selection of salads, sides and desserts.

At the April meeting it was voted on and approved that the Chapter would pay for the meats for the picnic. However, no one has volunteered to do this so we're going to use the same procedure that we've done in the past. Bring your own meat for the grill, along with buns or whatever, and a side dish or dessert to share with a few people (no need to bring enough for 20- we'll all have plenty to eat!).

The Chapter will supply plates, cups, knives, forks, spoons, iced drinks (soda, water, tea) and condiments.

This is a social event. There will be no business meeting, but we will have a plant raffle. Since this is an outdoor meeting, feel free to bring garden plants as well as Gesneriads for the raffle. I don't think any of us restrict our growing to just Gesneriads.

This is a great opportunity to mingle and ask questions, especially for the new members, but also for the officers of the Chapter who seem to find the entire meeting so busy that there is no time to just chat with other members. I hope that most of you will be there.

The picnic will be held even if there is light rain forecast for the day. If heavy rain is forecast we will reschedule for later in the summer. Contact Jim Roberts on the morning of the picnic if you're in doubt about the weather. Jim's phone number is 443-838-1935.

Directions to Greenbelt Park:

Our park address is 6565 Greenbelt Road Greenbelt, Maryland 20770. Off I-95. Take Exit 23 Route 201 Kenilworth Avenue South (toward Bladensburg). Take a left on Greenbelt Road . (Greenbelt Road is an overpass over Route 201 that is also known as Route 193.) The park is a quarter mile on the right hand side of Greenbelt Road across from Fridays restaurant and Marriott Courtyard. From Washington, D.C. , Take (Route 295) Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Take Greenbelt Road west (It's the exit right after I-95) Veer right onto Route 193 Greenbelt Road West. The Greenway shopping center on the left. Proceed on Route 193 Greenbelt Road west.

The park is on the left hand side at the 3rd traffic light across from Fridays restaurant, Capitol Cadillac, and Marriott Courtyard.

If lost, please call one of the following:

Park Headquarters 301-344-3948 Monday through Friday 8-4.

Ranger Station 301-344-3944 Seven days a week 8-4.

U.S. Park Police Station at entrance of park open twenty fours a day 301-344-4250.

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC) A Chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

"The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars."

(NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981.)

NCAC meets 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

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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
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Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

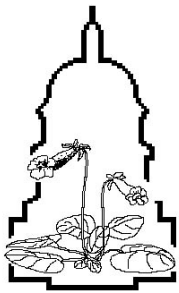
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Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor
Newsletter Editor: Jim Roberts
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or
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Website and Blog: Kyoko Imai
web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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



Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 6

July / August 2010

PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Here it is July 24. Convention photos are showing up on websites and on-line photo-galleries. Judging from the quality of the plants in the photos, it must have been another really fantastic event. I wish I could have been there, not just for the plants, but to see the people that I only get to see once a year.

There's no way the company is going to keep me away from the Philadelphia Convention in 2011. This year they scheduled a mandatory meeting for Tuesday through Thursday of Convention Week. Vancouver is a long way to travel if you can't get to enjoy all the other events that go along with Convention: the Judge's Workshop and The Gesneriad Hybridizer's meeting on Wednesday, the outings on Thursday. Sure I could have arrived on Friday afternoon and seen the show and heard some of the lectures, but it didn't happen this year.

Instead I took the time to look over my own collection. I haven't started to clean it up yet (as Brian can attest), but I took notice of what is doing well at this time of year. Plants that do well at this time of year are the plants I should concentrate on separating from the rest of the collection and giving them special attention.

And for those plants who don't quite get ready for Convention, there is always our show next September...

SEPTEMBER MEETING

John Boggan is a long time member of the Chapter and has created many of the hybrids that we see in our Chapter and Convention shows. He has worked with *Sinningia*, *Chirita*, *Kohleria* and most recently has been working with creating *Seemannia* hybrids. We'll tour John's "Tropical" garden and see how he uses Gesneriads as annual bright spots in amongst the banana and canna and palms. We'll also hear about his *Seemannia* hybrids.

Meeting Schedule: (Most meetings at National Arboretum)

September 11, 2010 – FIELD TRIP!! Our own John Boggan is hosting the meeting at his home in DC. Address and directions in the September Petal Tones.

October 9, 2010 – Smithiantha. Quentin Schlieder will present a talk on *Smithiantha*, a very ornamental genus of rhizomatous gesneriads. National Arboretum

December 11, 2010 – Holiday Party – National Arboretum



Part of John's garden summer 2009

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Brian has informed me that he still needs a few more requests for seed before he can send in the next order to Mauro. If you have already requested 4 packs and would

like a pack or two more, or if you've been thinking about ordering and just haven't done so yet, please get in touch with Brian.

Here are the rules: You have to be a paid member of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society. That's it. The one and only rule. Brian has a list of the current available seed which he'll forward to you upon request. Brian is able to order 24 packets of seed 3 times a year. Once he gets the seed from Mauro he'll either bring it to a meeting or mail it to you. If two people order the same seed, he'll split the packet in half. If more than two order he'll order two packets.

Mauro uses the funds we pay him to get supplies for his greenhouse and pay for repairs and help. We help in his conservation efforts by allowing him to collect and maintain many rare and new gesneriads, and also get those same rare plants into cultivation where they are less likely to be lost forever.

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JIM STEUERLEIN SINNINGIA GIVEAWAY

Jim Steuerlein is a very special Sinningia hybridizer. At his home in Florida he officiates the cross-pollinations of many very different and diverse Sinningia species and hybrids to produce some really spectacular plants. Over



S. conspicua x polyantha - the parent

the past year or so, since joining gesneriphiles, he has shown a number of these strange but beautiful hybrids to the world.

Now we're going to have a chance to grow them. Jim sent a care package for the Chapter. Everyone will get a plant of *Sinningia* (*conspicua* x *polyantha*) selfed. The parent is beautiful but there is just no telling what we might get out of the selfing. Jim picked a selection of tubers that hadn't flowered yet but have produced some distinctly different leaf types and growth habits. Everyone who attends the September meeting will get one. The idea is to grow these many plants on to exhibit either at Convention in Philly or at our show next September. We can even name them if we feel the one we have is worthy of a name.

Oh, I almost forgot. Jim also sent a couple dozen other assorted tubers and cuttings which will be distributed. Everything from his very interesting *Sinningia* 'Yma' (*S.* sp. 'Rios das Pedras' x *S.* sp. 'Florianopolis') to the beautiful hybrids with *Sinningia guttata* that have spikes of spotted flowers that look like they've got some *Smithiantha* in them.

These plants will all be in a special raffle. Remember, if you take one please propagate it to share with the group and PLEASE grow it for next year's show.

Jim also sent a few named hybrids such as his *S.* 'Venus Featherwinkle', *S.* 'Li'l Georgie', and *S.* 'Croc Party'. I'm going to save a few pictures for the September issue of *Petal Tones* to keep the interest high.



***Sinningia* 'Yma'**



Sin. *guttata* hybrid and Sin. 'Prudence Risley'



Sinningia macrostachya* x *guttata



***Sinningia eumorpha* x *perisiana* F2**



Sinningia guttata x (sellovii x 'Apricot Bouquet')
Another of Jim's hybrids

World Gesneriad Conference

The World Gesneriaceae Research Conference 2010 will be held at Marie Selby Gardens in Sarasota, FL on 13-15 October, 2010, sponsored by the Gesneriad Research Center at Selby. WGRC will be followed by gesneriad show sponsored by the Suncoast Chapter of The Gesneriad Society on 15-17 October also at Selby Gardens.

The World Gesneriaceae Research Conference 2010 will bring together several researchers, students, enthusiasts, and growers to discuss recent developments in research in the plant family through a series of lectures, posters, tours, and social events. The keynote address will be given by Dr. Anton Weber of the University of Vienna, Austria who has devoted his research career to the study of Old World Gesneriaceae.

Everyone interested in Gesneriaceae is invited to attend both the Conference and show. Registration for the Conference is now open and information about either the Conference or show can email wgrc2010@gmail.com or gesneriadresearch@gmail.com. Dr. John R. Clark, Director of the Gesneriad Research Center at Selby Gardens, is chair of the WGRC Steering committee. Also, check out the Gesneriad Research Center's Blog: <http://gesneriadresearchcenter.blogspot.com>.

At the April meeting of NCAC, members agreed to support student research in Gesneriaceae, and the funds agreed upon will be used to support a student to attend the WGRC.

Pepper's Greenhouses

Donna Beverin

While searching Google for begonias I came across a website "www.accentsforhomeandgarden.com". In reading the homepage I saw the business started in 1985 was located in Delaware and was called Pepper Greenhouses.



Being a native of Delaware I was so surprised that I had never heard of Pepper's. Located in Milton Delaware, I set about doing a map quest for the physical address is 13034 Cedar Creek Road, Milton, DE 19968. My sister, Mary lives in Greenwood, De which is close to Milton and I had actually gone house hunting in Milton with her years ago before she moved to Greenwood with her family. As it turns out the greenhouses are just around the corner from the Milton Restaurant where we stop occasionally for a dinner on the way home from the beach.

Well, the next day my sister and her oldest daughter had a First Communion retreat so I was spending time with my other niece and nephew, so we took a ride to Pepper's and enjoyed a quick visit. The kids are nature lovers and had fun looking around.



Walking in the front door and heading left is the large greenhouse with cacti, houseplants, tropicals and unusuals: Bougainville, jasmines, begonias, gesneriads, vines and tropicals, while to the right leads to a hallway with greenhouses to the left and right. Each greenhouse is well labeled at the entrance: annuals, perennials, herbs, geraniums and water plants with hibiscus. At the end of the hallway leads to the trees and shrubs. I really enjoyed the herb room where I found a huge variety of salvias, which I collect in my outdoor garden. Also, the varieties of scented geraniums was extensive as well.



The next day I went back solo and spent about 3 – 4 hours looking at everything! There were so many

unusual plants to look at and learn about. Plus the plants in 4 inch pots were so economical averaging around 3.95 per plant. I have returned several times since. Still, I have not taken much time to check out all the rooms of statuary, flower pots and home accents. Various fountains punctuate your walk and bring delightful sounds of falling water as you meander the corridor to the greenhouses.



In stock are *Columnnea*, *Aeschynanthus*, *Episcia*, *Kohleria*, *Nematanthus*, *Streptocarpus*, *Streptocarpella*, *Sinningia sellovii*, and *Saintpaulias*. I bought 2 beautiful *Columnneas*, one variegated w/o a name and the other Fujiyama. Of course, for the latest gesneriads and expert nomenclature I would depend on our meetings, but for the variety of all types of plants, visiting Pepper's is a treat.



During a conversation with Mrs. Pepper, she said they were dairy farmers when one of her sons decided to grow pumpkins and corn for the local fair and built a rudimentary greenhouse. That summer was a drought so the produce did not fare well in the fair but the experience was enough for her son to realize he really enjoyed gardening and things just grew from there and in 1985 they went into business. Recently her son began the website offering their plants through the mail and ever since their business has greatly expanded. Sounds like a lot of folks did not know they existed. I would compare Pepper's with Logee's and if you get a chance to make a day trip, you surely will enjoy your trip and the prices!

ORNATE COLUMNNEAS

Lee Linnet

When you see the flower show section "Gesneriads Grown for Ornamental Qualities..." which ones immediately come to mind? *Episcias*, of course. Also *Chiritas* and *Petrocosmeas*. Do you ever imagine the others, either species or hybrids?

How do you see the plants as ornamental? Most growers would say by looking down at the plant and seeing the tops of their leaves.

However, there are others that are best viewed from below, i.e., looking up at a hanging basket specimen or seeing the "back" of the plant or the reverse of the leaves. *Columnneas* of the group formerly called *Dalbergaria* compose "the others" and some such as *Col. fimbriallyx* have a single red spot a short distance from the leaf tip, on the back, while others such as *purpurimarginata* have leaves edged in red, again on the leaf reverse. I should have said compose **some of** "the others"; that's another article.



Columnnea sanguinea 'Gigantea'

Then the leaves begin to get fancier, from *Col. cruenta* which has a dark green leaf surface covered in red hairs and a reverse sporting splotches leading up to a red edge; to *sanguinea* and its varieties with their random red splotches - again on the leaf reverse; to the almost feather-like (reverse side) leaves of *eburnea* and the outrageous *medicinalis* where almost half the leaf, starting at the tip, looks as if someone dipped it in red paint and some ran down the edges. *Polyantha*, *ornata*, and *picta* to name a few others have various degrees of splotches and splatters in a Jackson Pollock kind of way.

As if the coloring wasn't enough, almost an entire

leaf reverse in red to the next one up the stem "normally" splotted, to another one with just a few splatters. Col. sanguinea 'Gigantea' is a good example of anisophylly, a leaf arrangement of one large leaf and one small leaf. In Gigantea's case, a very large (6" or more long) leaf and a tiny, tiny one (hardly more than an after thought).

Now what about flowers, you might be thinking --- well, I suggest you concentrate on the foliage because the flowers are not as colorful or outstanding as the columneas we usually grow for their flowers. They're small, well hidden, yellow and sometimes fuzzy like a caterpillar.



Columnea 'Gigantea' flower

"Goldfish Plant" sounds a lot better than "Caterpillar Plant"! But, don't be dismayed; the fruit/berries that are produced after pollination are decorative and ornate in a Halloweenish way. They're white and resemble eyeballs or even small lychees. They're squishy when ripe. Imagine a centerpiece, a sanguinea 'Gigantea' with blood red markings on the back of the leaves and clusters of eyeballs peeking out from the axils.

I grow these Columneas in clay pots because they can get top heavy; the weight of the pot and mix help to stabilize them. If I had the space or a greenhouse, the ideal way to grow them would be in hanging baskets.

In the wild, Columneas often are found growing in what has been called a "debris mix" which consists of pieces of tree bark, twigs, decayed or dried leaves and other plant parts, bones, insect parts, broken eggshells, bits of soil, reptile scales, feathers, animal/bird droppings, and whatever else filters down from the above tree canopy. In time, the hodgepodge of these materials eventually becomes a humusy home for a stray seed or two or perhaps a stem that has broken off and had a soft

landing. There are no saucers or trays to catch excess water; it just quickly drains away.

The mix I use consists of 2 parts Pro-Mix, 1 part perlite, 1 part vermiculite, 1/4 equal amounts (half & half) charcoal and non-scented cat litter. The roots have to anchor themselves well to keep the top growth from wobbling and some weight at the bottom also is needed. Although the mix drains quickly, some moisture is retained and this is OK.

If you've ever seen one of these Columneas, especially the hairy leafed and stemmed ones, in severe need of water, you'll understand. It's like nature's Velcro at work: the leaves droop down, touching those underneath as well as the stem. Even when the plant plumps up after watering, you'll still have to separate some of the stickers from the stickies. You might have to water a couple of times a week to keep the leaves from drooping.



Columnea sanguinea

Moderate light (east window) just past the ends of the fluorescents, about 9 or 10" (top of plant to tube) away works for me. When actively growing (producing new leaves, flower buds), I move the plant(s) a bit closer to the center of the tubes and increase fertilizer by a little more than 1/4 strength every watering but not as much as 1/2 and flush with plain water every fourth watering. Three or four times a year my plants get a shot of Epsom salt at the rate of 1 Tbs. per gallon of water.

Propagation is easy and my favorite method is by cuttings rooted in water, then transplanted. I don't have the space to put them in large plastic bags and they seem to do just fine. You'll see that some of these Columneas develop woody stems starting at

the base as they get older and they will lose their bottom leaves. This would be the time to take cuttings.

Grooming really is important in keeping the Columneas looking good. The hairy ones seem to attract whatever mote, be it dust or a speck of perlite that floats by. Cat and dog hairs and the lone fungus gnat aren't far behind. Use a soft bristled toothbrush, makeup brush, or a fuzzy-leafed African Violet leaf to brush away any particles and only brush in one direction.



Columnea orientandina

There are other ornate Columneas such as orientandina (which used to be a Pentadenia) which has red tips on both sides of the leaf and almost starts out with woody stems, thus giving it a tree-like look very suitable for dish gardens. The leaves are much smaller than the ones previously mentioned. And there are others that have pebbled leaves, ones that have leaves that look like patent leather, ones with variegated leaf color, and others with very small leaves. They're all ornate but I like the big, bold, in-your-face, red spotted ones best. They're easy to grow and when grown specifically for exhibition, usually elicit an, "Oh, my!"

Local Display Greenhouse Needs our Help!

Jim Roberts

The Druid Hill Conservatory, officially known as the Howard Peter Rawlings Conservatory and Botanic Gardens of Baltimore, wants to be able to display more Gesneriads than it has in its current collection.

Doris Hill, one of our Baltimore Members has been in contact with them and has asked that I approach the club for donations. I would think that they would much rather have full grown specimens that could be put on display right away, but they also have space to grow plants on. The Tropical house has room on the floor area for ground covers such as Episcia and

uprights such as Nautilocalyx, as well as plenty of room for hanging plants. We can discuss this at the September meeting.

I will work with Doris to get any donated plants to the appropriate person at Druid Hill. For those of you who haven't been there, this is one of the oldest public conservatories in the US. The Palm House and Orchid rooms were built in 1888. The Conservatory went through a major renovation in 2004. Both Brian and I have visited within this past year with Mark Zukaitis.



Where's the Gessies?? Aint None!!



Nematanthus ground cover

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(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.

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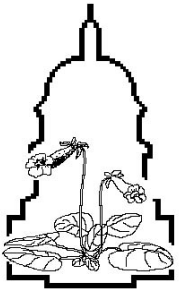
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Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 7

September 2010

PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Today is Labor Day. The "last day of summer" and the time for picnics and family get-togethers. This is also the day I will always remember as the day that my wife Barbara passed away. Somewhere between her 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. medications she passed quietly in her sleep.

Most of the new members of the club didn't know Barb. However, back in the 1980's and early 1990's she was the Sinningia lady. Barb and I ran a home business with close to 1300 different varieties of Gesneriads that we sold through mail order. Barb's specialty was the miniature Sinningia, and she had hundreds of varieties that she propagated vegetatively. She also did quite a bit of hybridizing with the little ones and I was recently lucky enough to obtain back Sinningia 'Piglet' which was one of her hybrids.

The business burned her out and she never regained an interest in plants. She always encouraged me to continue with the plants as a hobby. About 5 years ago I rejoined the Chapter and here I am today as your President.

I won't be at the meeting next weekend. However, it will be a very special meeting so I hope that most of you can attend. The Jim Steuerlein plants have done well outside for the summer and will be there for you all to pick through. I've taken my pick of both the *S. conspicua* x polyantha F2 plants and one of the other miscellaneous hybrids that Jim sent. Everyone should take one of the F2 plants. There is quite a variety of size, leaf color and leaf shape in the seedlings. If nothing else they will make quite an interesting educational exhibit at the show next Fall.

The tour of John's garden and his talk on *Seemannia* should not be missed. John doesn't make it to many of our meetings, but is a local expert on our favorite family.

I want to apologize for the quality of the photos from John's Flickr site. He offered higher quality images but

Meeting Schedule: (Most meetings at National Arboretum)

September 11, 2010 – FIELD TRIP!! Our own John Boggan is hosting the meeting at his home in DC. Meet us there at 10:30.

** Redacted. Email dcesneriads@gmail.com for location, which is near Columbia Heights metro station and the zoo.

October 9, 2010 – Smithiantha. Quentin Schlieder will present a talk on Smithiantha, a very ornamental genus of rhizomatous gesneriads. National Arboretum

December 11, 2010 – Holiday Party – National Arboretum

until I compiled everything today I didn't realize how grainy they would appear. I don't want to post the link without his approval, so maybe next month.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

John Boggan is a long time member of the Chapter and has created many of the hybrids that we see in our Chapter and Convention shows. He has worked with Sinningia, Chirita, Kohleria and most recently has been working with creating *Seemannia* hybrids. We'll tour John's "Tropical" garden and see how he uses Gesneriads as annual bright spots in amongst the banana and canna and palms. We'll also hear about his *Seemannia* hybrids.

Seemannia

By John Boggan

Seemannia is a South American genus of Gesneriaceae consisting of only four species of scaly rhizomatous herbs with brightly colored red, purple, pink, orange, or rarely yellow flowers. The genus was established in 1855 and was recognized by botanists until the 1970's, when Hans Wiehler lumped all of the *Seemannia* species into the genus *Gloxinia* after producing fertile hybrids between *Gloxinia perennis* and some of the *Seemannia* species. Subsequent research has confirmed a close relationship between *Gloxinia* and *Seemannia*, but also revealed that

Koellikeria erinoides and *Anodiscus xanthophyllus* were even more closely related to *Gloxinia perennis* than were the former *Seemannia* species. In part because of these newly discovered relationships, and in part because the *Seemannia* group is so distinctive, the genus has been resurrected and is now considered distinct from *Gloxinia*. However, in the horticultural trade the species are often still listed under *Gloxinia*.

All of the *Seemannia* species are worth growing, and in addition to indoor culture they make excellent container and bedding plants outdoors. Cultural requirements are similar for all the species: bright or dappled shade and a rich, well-drained soil that is neither too wet nor too dry. They overwinter as dormant scaly rhizomes, which are best kept dry to prevent molding and premature sprouting. In the right conditions some may be hardy to zone 7b, or perhaps even colder regions in a sheltered location and with some protection.

One interesting characteristic of this genus is that the plants produce multitudes of long, skinny “stringy rhizomes”. During the growing season these produce new plants at the tips, and towards the end of the growing season they produce tiny scaly rhizomes in addition to much larger scaly rhizomes underground.

All of the species are interfertile, and will also form partially fertile hybrids with *Gloxinia perennis* to form the hybrid genus *xGloximannia*. With our new understanding of the relationships between the species of these two genera, crosses with the former *Koellikeria* (now *Gloxinia*) *erinoides* and (now *Gloxinia*) *xanthophyllus* should be attempted.

Seemannia sylvatica is the most commonly cultivated species. It is a wide-ranging and variable species and has



been described under a variety of different names. One of the more persistent is *Seemannia latifolia*, a name still sometimes found in the horticultural literature and trade. The species is primarily Andean and ranges from southern Ecuador through Peru to Bolivia, with outlying populations in Paraguay and southern Brazil. The flowers are red or orange, rarely yellow. The plants tend to bloom

in late fall and winter, making them a good outdoor plant in frost-free parts of Florida (where they grow and bloom spectacularly in full sun) but mostly unsuitable for outdoor growing in colder climates. The meaning of the name is unclear; it could mean “wild” or “of the forest” but the original description provides no hints.

Seemannia nematanthodes comes from Bolivia and northern Argentina and is superficially similar to *S. sylvatica* in having bright orange-red flowers but the plants are more sprawling and begin to bloom in early to mid summer and into the fall. This makes them excellent container and bedding plants, and they are popular with hummingbirds. The flowers are produced on long thin pedicels, possibly accounting for the name, which means “*Nematanthus*-like”. This species does best when given direct sun for part of the day, preferably in the morning or



very late afternoon; direct midday sun will scorch the leaves. A recent collection from Argentina has been given the cultivar name ‘Evita’ by Plant Delights Nursery, and is described as being hardy to zone 7b.

Seemannia gymnostoma comes from northern Argentina, southern Peru, and Bolivia. The purple flowers are very



unlike those of the other species; in fact at one time this species was included in the genus *Achimenes*. Also unlike the other species the flowers have a relatively large limb with distinct purple spots. The leaves are softly hairy with distinctly scalloped edges. The name means “naked mouth” although the origin of this name is unclear; the mouth has distinct trichomes much like those of the other species.

Seemannia purpurascens is another variable species. The plants are tall-growing and somewhat weedy in appearance, with lavender, pink or magenta flowers that have a contrasting bright green limb. The leaves are



usually bright green but occasional individuals have very dark leaves with reddish-purple undersides; the species name was based on one such individual, hence the name. The species is common in Bolivia, less so in southern Peru. There are also widely separated populations in northern South America (Guyana, French Guiana and northern Brazil) that some botanists believe represent a closely related but still-unnamed species. The dark-leaved selections are the most attractive, and develop their best color in relatively deep shade. A plant distributed as this species but with brilliant orange-red flowers with a contrasting dark purple limb, collected on a Gesneriad Research Foundation expedition to Bolivia in 1996 (GRF 9670), is probably a natural hybrid, possibly between *S. purpurascens* and *S. gymnostoma*. My own hybrid, *S. purpurascens* ‘Purple Prince’, is a selected seedling from a cross between two wild collections of the species; the

leaves are very dark and contrast nicely with the pink flowers, which are produced from late summer until frost.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

The new list from Brazil Plants will be out soon. If you are interested in growing new and exciting species out of Brazil please get in touch with Brian Connor. He’ll make sure that you get a copy of the list when he gets it.

Here are the rules: You have to be a paid member of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society. That’s it. The one and only rule. Brian has a list of the current available seed which he’ll forward to you upon request. Brian is able to order 24 packets of seed 3 times a year. Once he gets the seed from Mauro he’ll either bring it to a meeting or mail it to you. If two people order the same seed, he’ll split the packet in half. If more than two order he’ll order two packets.

Mauro uses the funds we pay him to get supplies for his greenhouse and pay for repairs and help. We help in his conservation efforts by allowing him to collect and maintain many rare and new gesneriads, and also get those same rare plants into cultivation where they are less likely to be lost forever.

DESPERATELY SEEKING

The list of plants on this list has been stagnant for some time now. I’ve deleted the entire list and would like everyone to re-submit a short list of plants that you would like to obtain but haven’t been able to find anywhere. The list will get published here and if you have a plant that someone else on the list wants you can contact the requestor yourself to arrange for a trade or just to bring it to a meeting.

Jim

DON’T FORGET THE RAFFLE TABLE!

At every meeting members with extra plants, cuttings, supplies donate them to the raffle table. Tickets for the raffle are only 50 cents each (3 for a dollar) and everyone who attends the meeting gets one ticket just for showing up (including guests). Here’s what you’ll see on the table at a meeting:

Gesneriad plants, rhizomes, tubers, cuttings, seeds

Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings

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

JIM STEUERLEIN SINNINGIA GIVEAWAY

Jim Steuerlein is a very special Sinningia hybridizer. At his home in Florida he officiates the cross-pollinations of

many very different and diverse *Sinningia* species and hybrids to produce some really spectacular plants. Over the past year or so, since joining gesneriphiles, he has shown a number of these strange but beautiful hybrids to the world.

Now we're going to have a chance to grow them. Jim sent a care package for the Chapter. Everyone will get a plant of *Sinningia* (*conspicua* x *polyantha*) selfed. The parent is beautiful but there is just no telling what we might get out of the selfing. Jim picked a selection of tubers that hadn't flowered yet but have produced some distinctly different leaf types and growth habits. Everyone who attends the September meeting will get one. The idea is to grow these many plants on to exhibit either at Convention in Philly or at our show next September. We can even name them if we feel the one we have is worthy of a name.

Oh, I almost forgot. Jim also sent a couple dozen other assorted tubers and cuttings which will be distributed. Everything from his very interesting *Sinningia* 'Yma' (*S. sp.* 'Rios das Pedras' x *S. sp.* 'Florianopolis') to the beautiful hybrids with *Sinningia guttata* that have spikes of spotted flowers that look like they've got some *Smithiantha* in them.

These plants will all be in a special raffle. Remember, if you take one please propagate it to share with the group and PLEASE grow it for next year's show.

World Gesneriad Conference

The World Gesneriaceae Research Conference 2010 will be held at Marie Selby Gardens in Sarasota, FL on 13-15 October, 2010, sponsored by the Gesneriad Research Center at Selby. WGRC will be followed by gesneriad show sponsored by the Suncoast Chapter of The Gesneriad Society on 15-17 October also at Selby Gardens.

The World Gesneriaceae Research Conference 2010 will bring together several researchers, students, enthusiasts, and growers to discuss recent developments in research in the plant family through a series of lectures, posters, tours, and social events. The keynote address will be given by Dr. Anton Weber of the University of Vienna, Austria who has devoted his research career to the study of Old World Gesneriaceae.

Everyone interested in Gesneriaceae is invited to attend both the Conference and show. Registration for the Conference is now open and information about either the Conference or show can email wgrc2010@gmail.com or

gesneriadresearch@gmail.com. Dr. John R. Clark, Director of the Gesneriad Research Center at Selby Gardens, is chair of the WGRC Steering committee. Also, check out the Gesneriad Research Center's Blog: <http://gesneriadresearchcenter.blogspot.com>.

At the April meeting of NCAC, members agreed to support student research in Gesneriaceae, and the funds agreed upon will be used to support a student to attend the WGRC.

The Baltimore African Violet Club's Annual Fall Sale

The Shops at Kenilworth
800 Kenilworth Drive, Towson, MD 21204

Saturday, October 02, 2010

Hours: 9 am to 5 pm

Hundreds of beautiful sale plants including violets, other gesneriads, and unusual houseplants, supplies, leaves, cuttings, soil mix, plant rings, self-watering pots and much more. Experienced growers will be there to answer your growing questions.

Any questions, you can contact Shirley Huffman
bshuffman2@aol.com 301-854-2021

Vacation in Vancouver

Barbara Stewart



Ronnie and I spent a grand week exploring Vancouver and enjoying the Gesneriad Society convention. Our first day (Saturday) was quite long, partly because of the time zone changes and leaving Richmond, VA before dawn. We arrived in Richmond, BC the middle of the afternoon, and after exchanging our currency, hunting for our rental car, and locating the bed and breakfast where we stayed, we still had a good part of the day to explore the area.

Richmond has a large Asian population and many places to eat great Asian food, so we started out with an early dinner in a neighborhood Asian restaurant.

After we located the convention hotel, we drove through Vancouver and ended up on Stanley Island, a popular spot for all kinds of outdoor activities and great views of the city. Time seemed to move in slow motion, and I had to keep checking my watch to see if it was working right, because we had daylight until about 10:30 which made the day seem even longer.



On Sunday we set out early to the Lynn Canyon Falls where we crossed a suspension bridge over the falls and hiked the lush rainforest trails. Then we drove up the coast to Lighthouse Park where we hiked through some of the largest Douglas fir trees in the area. From the historic lighthouse, we had a spectacular view across the water to the city of Vancouver. A few miles further up the highway led us to a quaint village on a lake nestled in the snow capped mountains. There is an amazing variety of things to do and see in the Vancouver area. We visited several beautiful botanical gardens, spent a day cycling around Stanley Island, and shopped and dined in the lovely fishing village of Steveston.

Our final excursion was to Grouse Mountain, a ski resort north of Vancouver with lifts that take you to fabulous views of the city below. There was plenty of entertainment there as well, including a pair of playful grizzly bears in a natural habitat setting. We were there on July 1st, Canada Day, and joined the celebration with some temporary tattoos of the Canadian flag which were given to us by teenagers at the park. Although it is a national (and shopping) holiday, many Canadians celebrate by going to the US to shop where prices and taxes are much lower than in Canada.

We generally prefer to do our own tours, but we signed up for the special dinner tour to Bill Price's house on

Tuesday. Although I registered fairly early, I was disappointed to learn that the trip to Bill's was filled and we were put on a waiting list. Then I received an e-mail that said, because of the demand, the dinner would be served in two shifts, so more people could go. We opted for the second shift.



After sightseeing all day, and rushing back to our room to get ready, we pulled into the hotel parking lot just as one bus was leaving. We had a few moments of panic until we discovered the second bus hidden behind the hotel. It was nice to have someone else do the driving on this trip. Unfortunately, it was a very long ride because of a rush hour accident on one of the bridges. But we finally made it, and were welcomed by Bill who directed us up a short hill to his house.

We enjoyed a delicious bbq dinner and wine and the opportunity to stroll around the grounds and through the house to see the many different kinds of plants Bill grows. Ronnie talked with Bill about the fruit trees and vegetables growing in his yard while I checked out the house with plants in every room and the greenhouse outside. However, this did not truly prepare us for the amazing show plants that he entered and won so many awards for.

At the convention I took the judges school where Paul Kroll enlightened us on judging photography. I was fortunate to get the opportunity to judge the show with some very knowledgeable judges. We not only judged Bill's show winning collections, but also some entries in

design and the arts. Although the show was a little smaller this year, there were still many amazing plants to see and learn about.



One of the best things about visiting Vancouver was the weather. Although we didn't have a lot of sunshine, the temperatures were in the 60's every day, a pleasant relief from the miserably hot summer back in Virginia. We returned home on July 4th, spending the whole day traveling. After a short flight to Seattle, we flew straight to Dulles airport where we changed planes and took off in time to see fireworks going off everywhere on the ground below. It was a great welcome back from our wonderful trip to Canada.

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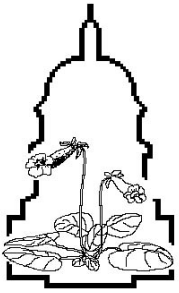
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Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 8

October 2010

PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Boy, I miss you guys. Having missed the September meeting I haven't seen most of you since the picnic in June. I'm going out of town on business tomorrow and should be back home late Friday so I'll be able to get to the meeting. I need a little shot in the arm to get me moving again with the plants.

I planned to put this issue together yesterday but decided my time was better spent watering the plants. They hadn't been touched since Sept. 5. Lots of brown and crispy leaves, and some are dead for sure, but there were also a number of plants still in flower and looking good. Even in trays that were completely empty of water.

I don't have all the details of what happened at the September meeting. I do know that we have groups working on finding a show location for next year and getting a slate of officers for the December elections. One topic near and dear to my heart is providing plants to various display gardens in the Baltimore/Washington area.

Doris Hill requested plants for the Conservatory at Druid Hill Park in Baltimore. This weekend I visited the National Aquarium. Do you know that there isn't a single Gesneriad in the entire display on the roof! I met with Chris Baker, one of the horticulturists responsible for the plants there. He'd love to get some Gesneriads out on display. He just doesn't know much about them. Some large species *Nematanthus* or *Columnnea* (all plants must be New World) growing in the trees would look great. Imagine large horizontal stems with *Nematanthus brasiliensis* flowers dangling down and moving in the breeze. Or the red windowpanes of *Columnnea gigantea*. Or some *Episcia* and *Nautilocalyx* as ground covers. Lots of possibilities, but he needs our help.

It seems that display gardens will do well with Gesneriads as long as there is someone working there who knows the family and has an interest. When Jonathan Ertelt worked at the Aquarium there were Gesneriads out on display.

Meeting Schedule: (Most meetings at National Arboretum)

October 9, 2010 – Smithiantha. Quentin Schlieder will present a talk on *Smithiantha*, a very ornamental genus of rhizomatous gesneriads. National Arboretum classroom (downstairs). Room opens at 10:30 and the talk starts promptly at 11:00. We're not sure of microwave availability so please bring foods that don't need to be heated up. Business meeting after the talk.

December 11, 2010 – Holiday Party – National Arboretum

When Elizabeth Varley worked at Longwood Gardens there were huge displays of Gesneriads. Our Charter calls for educating the public on Gesneriads. What better way to do so than providing them to places visited by hundreds or thousands or tens of thousands of visitors a year.

This is a discussion I'd like to continue at the meeting this month. Where can we put more Gesneriads on display? What types of plants will make the most impact on the public. Shows are great for getting the plants out in front of the public for a couple of days, but displays at public gardens make an even bigger impression.

This month is going to be very hard on me. I'll be in Raleigh this week, Detroit next week and Arkansas the week after. However, there is good to be had with the bad. While in Arkansas I'll be visiting with Jon Linstrom. Those who belong to G-philes have seen the photos of his amazing and complex *Sinningia* and *Sinningia* intergeneric hybrids. Hopefully I'll come back with pictures for a November article.

Which reminds me; where are all your articles? I have just about nothing for this issue. Is no one doing anything interesting with his or her plants? Nothing special in flower that you'd like to share with everyone? This is the time of year that we'll be having our show next year. If there really isn't anything in flower or looking good in anyone's collection, maybe we should forget about a show next year? DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!!!

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DESPERATELY SEEKING

I deleted the list of plants last month and no one has added anything back onto it. So I guess I'll start the ball rolling with a few wishes.

Streptocarpus holstii..... Jim Roberts
Chirita angustifolia..... Jim Roberts
Gesneria 'Yellow Bird' Jim Roberts

Jim

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The World Gesneriaceae Research Conference 2010 will bring together several researchers, students, enthusiasts, and growers to discuss recent developments in research in the plant family through a series of lectures, posters, tours, and social events. The keynote address will be given by Dr. Anton Weber of the University of Vienna, Austria who has devoted his research career to the study of Old World Gesneriaceae.

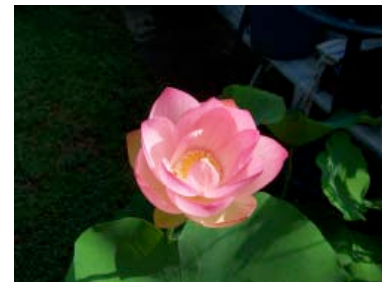
Everyone interested in Gesneriaceae is invited to attend both the Conference and show. Registration for the Conference is now open and information about either the Conference or show can email wgrc2010@gmail.com or gesneriadresearch@gmail.com. Dr. John R. Clark, Director of the Gesneriad Research Center at Selby Gardens, is chair of the WGRC Steering committee. Also, check out the Gesneriad Research Center's Blog: <http://gesneriadresearchcenter.blogspot.com>.

At the April meeting of NCAC, members agreed to support student research in Gesneriaceae, and the funds agreed upon will be used to support a student to attend the WGRC.

My love of Lotus

Donna Beverin

If you are an all around gardener who happens to love gesneriads, you may enjoy the experience of growing Lotus.



Presently I don't have a pond but someday!!! So for now I grow my lotus in a container and enjoy them so much! The flowers are so beautiful and fragrant and last for several days.

It is economical to purchase tubers in early spring via ebay or various aquatic plant websites for around \$8

to \$30 each. There are directions for growing these lovelies from seed and I have germinated a seed but not to maturity yet. So I stick to starting them from the tubers. The big thing to remember is to be very careful handling the growing tip of the lotus tuber while you prepare it for planting. I fill a large pot without holes with garden soil and dehydrated cow manure. Soiless potting mix with vermiculite, sphagnum and perlite will not work for this project!

Once the container is 1/2 filled with soil, lay the tuber into the soil with the growing tip facing up. Some say to pin it down with a piece of wire, but I never have. Fill the rest of the container with water. I add about an inch or two of water after the soil is saturated and continue adding water as the leaves grow. The lotus roots begin growing as the water warms in the spring and seem to find their way down into the soil. The heat of the spring days will result with round leaves floating on the surface and as the season progresses and the sun heats the water to 80 degrees and above, the tall umbrellas like leaves emerge. Round containers are best so the roots don't have to hit a right angle as they grow. I also add water just about every day all summer.

Technically these plants are hardy in zone 7 and lower, however I bring mine in my basement for winter and repot them in the spring. Just keep them moist and don't allow them to freeze. Then in spring, I just dump out the entire container and choose the best roots for repotting. There are many sizes of plants including miniatures and small lotus as you can see on in the blue container and the comparison picture of the 2 sizes.



Last year 2009 plants: Sacred Hindu and Red Children

Usually lotus bloom for me later in July however this year my large Sacred Hindu Lotus in the pics bloomed the week of June 18th with more buds

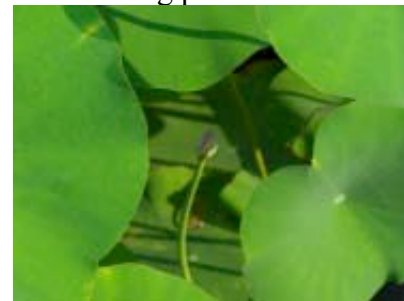
forming. The lotus are heavy feeders and I give them water lily plant tabs several times during the summer. You can find blooming lotus at some nurseries in late spring and they go for around \$40 to \$70 all potted up in water containers.



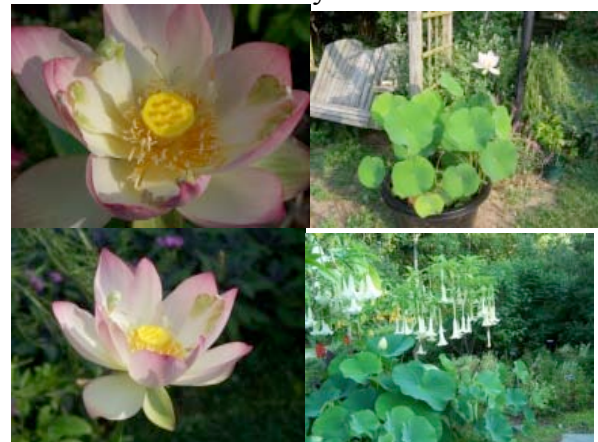
My new babies who have not bloomed yet



Blooming plant June 18th



New baby bud June 18th



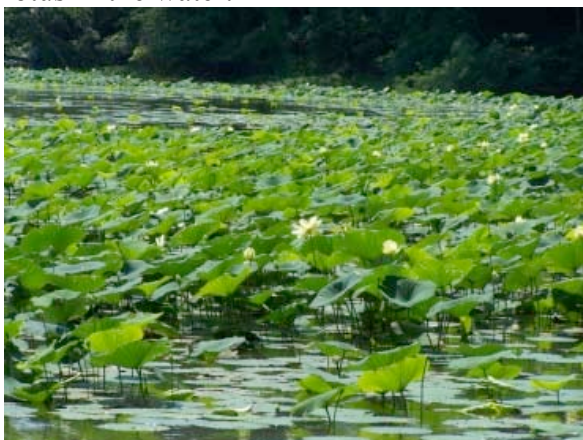
Blooms in June

Lotus at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, Maryland. I emailed with the horticulturist from the gardens and he said they have the pots submerged into the ground and can be kept in the ground during wintertime. I

would like to try that this year with one of my smaller pots. I just have not decided what area of my garden I want to dig to bury the pot of lotus. I may try with one of my smaller pots.



Huge pond of lotus at Lilipon's Aquatic Center Driving to work I saw a sign that read Lotus Festival. I googled and found that the Mount Harmon Plantation has an event in the summer called the Lotus Festival. Mt. Harmon is very close to my home on the Eastern Shore and it was a fun surprise to discover the yellow lotus grows wild in quiet estuaries of the Chesapeake. Visiting Mt. Harmon on July 31 was a wonderful day with low humidity to explore the grounds of the plantation, enjoy vendors, but mainly to sit in amazement just looking at the lotus in the water.



Nelumbo lutea: American Lotus : wild flower growing in the river by Mount Harmon Plantation on the Chesapeake. Take a canoe ride on the Sassafras River and find them! www.mountharmon.org If you already grow lotus I hope we can chat at a meeting and maybe trade tubers next spring! Enjoy!

Ed note: Thanks Donna for the interesting article. Pictures and all. Make any of you feel guilty???

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(NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981.)

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Petal Tones

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

Volume 41 Number 9

November/December 2010

PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE



Strep Concord Blue found at a local nursery

One of the great joys of my job is being able to travel at the company's expense and visit other Gesneriad growers around the US and the world during free periods. I've met with many over dinner or the day before or after a meeting. A few years back I met with Michael Khein in Vienna for an hour while the rest of the group was on a break at a coffee shop. Got a real quick tour of the greenhouses in at the University and then met up with the group just as they were boarding the buses for dinner.

A few weeks back I learned that I would be traveling to Hong Kong on business at the end of February. Friends in gesneriphiles got me connected up with a couple of growers there, so I've got my weekend before the meeting all booked up visiting with them.

Then I heard, out of the blue, from a person in China that traded with me over a year ago. He wanted to make another trade. A box should be getting here in a few days. No idea what will be inside it. But his making contact initiated a trip to visit with him. He is going to hire a guide for us and we'll have 4 days to tour around Kunming, China and see "10-20 different gesneriads" growing in the wild. I'm looking into how to bring them

Meeting Schedule:

December at the National Arboretum; 2011 Meeting Locations to be Determined due to Renovations at the Arboretum.

December 11, 2010 – HOLIDAY PARTY – See all the details below. There will be a business meeting after the party, and an important vote to determine your officers for 2011-12.

February 12

January 8, 2011 – Growing from Seed. Location yet to be determined. Brian Connor heads up the seed fund, offering up free seed packets from Mauro's seed fund out of Brazil. Members are reluctant to try because of past failures. Learn how to collect, plant and germinate seed and divide up Gesneriad plants once they're growing.

March 12, 2011 – Growing Saintpaulia for show. The only Gesneriad to have it's own society and its own specific rules for growing and showing. Learn from an expert (to be determined) the secrets to growing large perfect standard violets as well as miniatures and trailing types. Rules for judging violets in a Gesneriad show defer to the general rules as determined by AVSA except that the plants are judged competitively and not on their own merit (only one Blue Ribbon per Class).

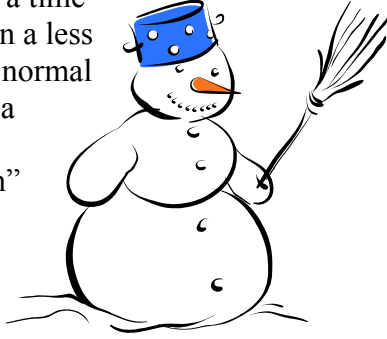
home with me, but even if I can't I will be taking lots of photos to share.

I know nothing at all about this person (age, gender, business he/she is in) but I've scheduled a trip into the heart of China based on a quick e-mail and an invitation. I don't know if he/she is a 14 year old student who's parents don't know anything about this invite, or a retired doctor who spends all his time growing and enjoying plants. Kind of scary and exciting at the same time. What bothers me most is that he/she hasn't responded when I've asked for more details about who he/she is. I just hope it's not some 30 year old Chinese temptress trying to hook a rich American husband!

Wish me luck!

HOLIDAY PARTY

The annual Holiday Party is a time for sharing plants and gifts in a less formal atmosphere than our normal meeting. There will still be a business meeting after the “Program” but the “Program” consists of a brown bag gift exchange and a larger than normal raffle table. Bring friends and family; anyone interested in growing plants that might be interested in joining the Chapter.



Here are a few details of the events:

- **Brown Bag Gift Exchange:** Bring a gift valued at under \$10 in a plain brown paper bag. Anyone who brings a gift will be given a special raffle ticket for the exchange. As tickets are called you will get to choose from any of the brown bags on the table. Suggested gifts: plant supplies, special plants, books, trays, pots, terrariums, etc.
- **Holiday Feast:** Everyone is asked to bring a main course dish or dessert to share. Because the Arboretum is in an unknown state of demolition we don't know if there will be a microwave to heat up any of the food, so plan on bringing food that can be served cold or at room temperature.
- **Plant Raffle:** The Holiday Raffle is generally the largest of the year. Use this opportunity to clear off all the duplicate plants you have on your shelves and let someone else grow them on. Seedlings? Sure! Cuttings? You Bet! Extra rhizomes or tubers? Why Not! Non-Gesneriads? Someone will want them! At three tickets for a dollar everyone should go home with a box full! **HINT: Bring an extra box for all the goodies going home with you!**

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

The new list from Brazil Plants was just sent out to interested members of the Chapter. If you are interested in growing new and exciting species out of Brazil please get in touch with Brian Connor. He'll make sure that you get a copy of the list.

Here are the rules: You have to be a paid member of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society. Each request should be limited to 3-4 seed selections so that everyone has an opportunity. That's it. Brian has a list of the current available seed which he'll forward to you upon request. Brian is able to order 24 packets of seed 3 times a year. Once he gets the seed from Mauro he'll either bring it to a meeting or mail it to you. If two people order the same seed, he'll split the packet in half. If more than two order he'll order two packets.

Mauro uses the funds we pay him to get supplies for his greenhouse and pay for repairs and help. We help in his conservation efforts by allowing him to collect and maintain many rare and new gesneriads, and also get those same rare plants into cultivation where they are less likely to be lost forever.

DESPERATELY SEEKING

I deleted the list of plants in September and no one has added anything back onto it. So I guess I'll start the ball rolling with a few wishes.

Streptocarpus holstii	Jim Roberts
Streptocarpus thompsonii	Jim Roberts
Chirita angustifolia	Jim Roberts
Gesneria 'Yellow Bird'	Jim Roberts
Streptocarpus starter plants/for China	Jim Roberts

If you are looking for a plant and can't find it listed with any of the Commercial Growers, list it here. Petal Tones has a wide distribution and chances are good that someone will be able to get you what you want.

Note: my contact in China wants to get started with Streptocarpus. He has no local sources and is looking for a variety of plants. Small plants and / or leaves are easiest to ship.

Jim

World Gesneriad Conference

Report by Larry Skog

Two NCAC members, Christian Feuillet and Larry Skog, attended the conference held at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, FL 13-15 October. About 100 attendees included about half professional botanists, horticulturists, students and research scientists who work on Gesneriaceae. The other half of the audience included many growers and officers of The Gesneriad Society. There were attendees from many parts of the world, Canada, UK, China and Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, Switzerland, Austria, as well as all over the U.S. The program included illustrated lectures and posters dealing with many topics in Gesneriaceae, including molecular

phylogeny, taxonomy, growing, tissue culture, geography and surveys of gesneriads in various countries (China, Brazil, Mexico, Mesoamerica), using gesneriads as teaching tools, conservation, morphology, and splash-cup seed dispersal. Christian gave a presentation on the Gesneriaceae of the Guiana Shield and their distribution, and John L. Clark and his students gave several lectures/posters on *Phinaea*, *Drymonia*, *Paradrymonia*, and *Nautilocalyx*. A presenter from China gave a fascinating picture presentation of *Chirita* and relatives in South China, including many species not yet in cultivation. Other genera discussed in separate presentations include *Shuarua* (a new genus of trees in the family from South America), *Sinningia*, *Columnea*, *Saintpaulia*, *Lysionotus*, *Titanotrichum*, as well as a whole session on *Cyrtandra*. Many other genera were also mentioned briefly in the lectures. Prof. Anton Weber from University of Vienna, Austria was the keynote speaker, and gave a series of talks beginning with an overview of research in Gesneriaceae, then a lecture on a new formal classification of Gesneriaceae, and a final lecture on etymology of generic names in Gesneriaceae. Several students were included among those who gave talks. Of them, some was able to attend due to travel grants which included funds donated by NCAC. There were other benefits for the attendees, including tours of the public and research greenhouses at Selby (www.selby.org), the gesneriad collections of Nancy Kast, a trip to Mote Marine Laboratory, and the gesneriad show and sale by the Suncoast and Tampa Bay Chapters of The Gesneriad Society, held Saturday and Sunday, October 16 & 17. The plant sale was huge, rivaling that at convention. For those with an interest in *Saintpaulia* there were lectures on *in vitro* methods of *Saintpaulia* conservation, and understanding the *Saintpaulia* registration numbers. The final talk was a presentation on the iPlant Collaborative and my-plant.org (a social networking website for gesneriad specialists).

December Elections

Your Nominating Committee has returned the following slate of officers to be voted upon at the December meeting. Elected Officers and Board Members will serve effective the January 2011 meeting through December of 2012. The slate, as always, is also open to nominations from the floor at the time of the election.

President ----- Jim Roberts
 Vice President ----- Brian Connor
 Secretary ----- Denise Whitman
 Treasurer ----- Larry Skog
 Board of Directors ----- Kyoko Imai
 Board of Directors ----- Aarti Shaw
 Board of Directors ----- Donna Beverin

Visit with Jon Lindstrom – U of Arkansas

A few days after our meeting in October I was asked by my company to attend a meeting at the offices of one of our biggest customers in Bentonville, Arkansas. I know that Bentonville is right next to Fayetteville, home of the University and Dr. Jon Lindstrom. For those of you not familiar with Jon, he's the hybridizer of XSinvana 'Mount Magazine' which has been grown and shown in our local shows and at the National GS Conventions. XSinvana is a cross between a *Sinningia* and *Paliavana*, two different closely related genera native to Brazil.

Jon teaches several courses at the University. His main research project is developing sterile *Buddleia* hybrids, but uses Gesneriads in his courses and with his graduate



Carol Hamelink's plant of XSinvana 'Mount Magazine' at our last show

students too. He has a lot of his research material growing in a heated but cool-in-the-winter greenhouse. *Sinningia* and other plants growing in here are forced into dormancy for the winter months. Or are forced to withstand the cool temperatures.

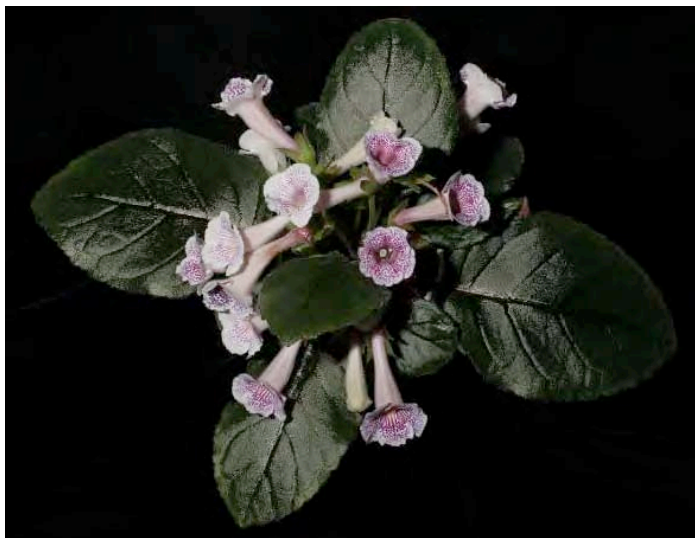
Some of his graduate students are involved in a project that should be very close to all of our hearts. They are culturing new hybrid *Sinningia* for distribution at the Philadelphia Convention in 2011. One of the plants is *Sinningia* 'Prudence Riskey', a heavy flowering medium sized *Sinningia*. The other is *Sinningia* 'Minnesota Nice' which is also a medium sized *Sinningia* that has *Sinningia*



Sinningia 'Prudence Risley' in tissue culture container



Sinningia 'Prudence Risley'



**Sinningia 'Minnesota Nice' grown by Dale Martens -
Photo courtesy of The Gesneriad Society**

guttata in its background and has the spotted flowers to prove it.

Gary Hunter, Plant Sales Chair for the Philadelphia Convention in 2011, has made an arrangement with Jon to sell "shares" to help fund this project. Each \$20 share entitles the purchaser to a plant of S. 'Prudence Risley' or S. 'Minnesota Nice.' The money collected goes towards supplies and providing some compensation to the graduate students doing the work. Plants which are produced beyond the need of the funded numbers will be made available for sale in the Convention Sales Room.

Jon has also produced some nice winter-hardy Sinningia which I will have on the raffle table in December. The first is called S. 'Arkansas Bells' and has returned for 6



**Sinningia 'Arkansas Bells' on campus –
flowers Spring through Fall**

years in a row in its garden on the U. of Arkansas campus. Fayetteville, Arkansas is in zone 6b so anything that overwinters there should do fine in our region which is somewhere between 6b (my neck of the woods) and 7b (downtown DC). The second in this series has just been named. S. 'Arkansas Empress' has a much larger flower.



Sin. 'Arkansas Empress'

Another interesting new hybrid that Jon has just named and released is XVanvana 'Harlequinade' (a cross between Vanhouttea lanata and Paliavana tenuiflora). One of these will be on the raffle table. The plant in Jon's greenhouse was much too large to try to grow under lights, so this might be a "greenhouse only" hybrid. But it would be interesting

to see what might happen under lights.



X Vanvana 'Harlequinade'

To see more of Jon's hybrids, go to his flicker page:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jonsplants/>

In addition to his Gesneriads you will see many of the other plants that he works with.

Making A Seasonal Terrarium Ken Moore

I probably should have checked out the January and February 2010 issues of *Petal Tones* before making my first-ever terrarium, because they have excellent information about what types of containers are good to use (basically anything!) and the media used and design of a terrarium. But, I didn't--I was at CVS after the chapter meeting in October and saw a \$6 pumpkin-shaped glass cookie jar and thought it would be perfect in which to grow the *Nautilocalyx pemphidius* cutting I picked up from the raffle table.



Going for convenience, not appearance, I used what I had available already at home to make the terrarium: I poured a layer of perlite, topped it with a layer of pre-moistened

sphagnum moss, and covered the whole bit with pre-moistened African violet potting mix. I placed *N. pemphidius* in there with some ailing *Fittonia* (which, as you can see, is doing much better than it had been for the eight months prior), offsets of *Cryptanthus*, and *Pellionia pulchra*. There are probably too many plants in here already, but I have even more that would do well in a more humid environment, so I'm on the lookout for interesting, cheap containers to grow them in. Although this one is not completely closed off, it seems to hold moisture exceedingly well (perhaps too well for the plants I put in it), so I removed the lid for a while to help equilibrate the moisture level (until I could at least see through the condensation).



The ridges of the container's pumpkin shape cause interesting optical effects when looking at the plants within. Maybe it isn't great for displaying at a show, but I find the plants fun to look at and photograph in different ways through the pumpkin glass. With and without flash offer new views of the plants--I prefer taking photos with the flash. The curvature of the container diffracts the light away from the camera's lens, making the photograph shadowy, like one serial killer plant is stalking an innocent hard-working-late-at-night plant in the shadows of an alley with a few beams of light peaking out of curtained apartment windows or from the street light at the end of the alley. It's perfect for this time of year, and reveals the deadly spook within your friendly neighborhood Gesneriad!



Constructing a Tropical Grow Chamber

By Josh Heath

For the last decade or so I've been collecting rare and unusual plants, mainly from the rainforest of tropical America. Most of these plants, especially aroids and gesneriads; require more humidity and warmth than can be provided in a cold basement. While my collection was small, I grew most of my plants in small terrariums. However, the size limitations of standard tanks severely limited the variety of species I could grow.

After looking at several commercial orchid grow chambers, I decided to build my own tropical grow chamber on as low a budget as possible. My criteria were an enclosure that would hold humidity and warmth, use standard and readily available T5 48" shop lights, and have a total cost of not more than several hundred dollars. It would also need to be waterproof as I spray my aroids and other epiphytes with water on a daily basis. Here is my step by step guide on how I built this grow chamber. I wanted the chamber to be lightweight but sturdy, so I decided on making the frame and side panels out of wood. For the frame, I used standard 1x2x8 pine strips. The basic frame for my enclosure is 50 inches wide and six feet tall. It is imperative to make sure that the inside width is wide enough to accommodate whatever type of 48" lighting you intend to use without difficulty. I chose to have three shelves, the top shelf being 24" high, and the bottom two are 18" high. On the very bottom is an external shelf to store potting supplies and to raise the growing space up off the floor. You can build this chamber to any size you need, and it is better to go bigger the first time than to run out of room later!



Figure 1: Here is the frame with shelf supports assembled. The very bottom is a tiny shelf made of 1/4" luan plywood that will be outside of the watertight enclosure.

The frame was assembled using course thread drywall screws and Gorilla Glue. Since the frame strips are

screwed on the ends, make sure you pre-drill your holes to prevent splitting. Any shelves will need to have bracing in the middle to support the eggcrate; the more bracing you use the better.

Once I assembled the frame, the next step is to paint it with several coats of 2-part epoxy paint to waterproof the wood. There are many choices of epoxy available; I used a product called Sweetwater which is made for painting ponds. Another good product is any of the Polygem brand epoxies which are both nontoxic and waterproof. After much consideration on what material to use for the sides of the enclosure, I opted to use 1/4" moisture resistant luan plywood. The plywood was cut to fit the sides, back, top, and bottom of the chamber. Only the bottom shelf is made with plywood, as the middle interior shelves are made of eggcrate. I also used luan for the very bottom external shelf. Paint at least 3 coats of epoxy on the plywood to ensure integrity.



Figure 2: Frame coated with gray epoxy paint.



Figure 3: Side panels painted and drying outside.

Now that the frame and panels are dry, attach the side panels to the frame using 1/2" screws. Once the "box" is assembled, seal all inside seams with a bead of clear silicone caulk. The next step is to make a front door. I used the same 1x2 pine strips as I used for the frame; and built a simple rectangular doorframe with at least two lateral braces. This was painted and attached to the enclosure using three stainless door hinges. I then trimmed and attached a heavy duty clear vinyl shower curtain and stapled it to the inside of the door using stainless staples or pins. The result is a large clear door that provides easy viewing of the plants and allows full access to the inside. As a final touch, I painted the entire outside with white latex paint.



Figure 4: Assembled enclosure with wood and vinyl door attached.

With the enclosure completed, you can now put in the two middle plastic eggcrate shelves. These help with ventilation and make the tank brighter. The final step is to install your light fixtures by screwing them into the bottom of each wood shelf support. As an extra precaution, I installed a 48" long by 12" wide strip of aluminum flashing on between the light fixture and the above shelf to prevent any water from dripping onto it. The type of 48" light you use is important; since this is a high humidity environment you will need to use water/weather resistant shop lights. These cost more initially, but should prevent possible problems with moisture. Drill a hole somewhere in the back corner of the chamber for the light cords to exit.



Figure 5: Lighting installed on bottom of shelves and top of chamber.



Figure 6: Aluminum flashing above light prevents dripping water from contacting fixture. Note hole in upper left corner for cord exit.



Figure 6: Grow chamber assembled and test run for a few days to make sure lighting works and there are no leaks in bottom or sides.

Now that the grow chamber is built and in working order, I recommend operating it for a few days to make sure everything works properly. Then you can start adding your plants. I grow most of my gesneriads using a wick-watering method using heavy duty plant trays with a piece of eggcrate added to suspend the plants. With the door shut and the lights on, the chamber stays roughly 80 degrees inside my 70 degree basement. The humidity easily reaches almost 100 percent, depending on how

much I mist the plants. After running for the past two years, the chamber has held up well and needed only the occasional replacement light bulb. I hope anyone in need of a dedicated growing space attempts to build a system like this, and I encourage any design improvements or modifications. It can be made as more or less complex as you like, for purely functional purposes or as a home display. Happy growing!



Figure 7: Grow chamber full of sensitive gesneriads and companion plants!

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