

# PETAL TONES



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December 2018



Dave's prolific *Sinningia pusilla*

## President's Message

As our year comes to a close, I thought we would look back on the events that have brought us together as a chapter every month and kept us busy. In January, we met at Sally's house and had fun creating some simple designs with gesneriads. Sally hosted again in February with Alan LaVergne's webinar on growing sinningias. In March, we returned to Behnke's for a "dog show" of our worst plants and how to give them a new lease on life. In April, we tried out a new meeting location at the Emmanuel United Methodist Church. This was the year of the sinningia, and Donna gave an inspiration program on growing summer Sinningias. We skipped the May meeting in favor of participating in the Market Day plant sale at Cylburn Arboretum. In June, members met at the US Botanic Garden in D.C. to tour the conservatory and had lunch at the Native America Museum. In July, we joined the Begonia Society for our annual picnic at Johanna's house with a large plant raffle and lots of food. Everyone took a break in August and we met again in September to learn about growing streps from Brian. After several years of searching, we finally settled on a new meeting location at the Emmanuel Church, not a minute too soon, as Behnke's is now planning to close the business in the next year.

## MEETING LOCATION:

Emmanuel United Methodist Church  
10755 Scaggsville Road, Laurel, MD 20723

We gather at 10:00am to get set up, with the meeting beginning at 10:30am. Meet the second Saturday of the month. Calendar yearly dues of \$10 are due in January or whenever joining. Renew by March to keep your Petal Tones subscription.

Attention: The Church is a "NUT FREE ZONE" due to children with allergies so do not bring any food items that include nuts or peanuts. The area is a day care.

**December 8th:** 11:00 am Holiday Party at Sally's home.

\*Voluntary gift exchange. If you would like to participate bring a gift of no more than \$20.

\*Please bring a side dish, dessert or main dish. Chicken will be provided!

\*Please bring items for the raffle table.

**January 2019:** Webinar on hybridizing and genetics.

**February 2019:** Propagation workshop

Our October program was another Gesneriad Society webinar on Smithianthas & Eucodonias, and in November we had a panel discussion about Sinningias, growing from seed, and LED lighting. This month we will enjoy a pot luck luncheon and gift exchange as we close out the year. A lot of dedicated members worked hard to make things happen this year, and overall we had a lot of fun, obtained new plants, and learned more about successfully growing them.

## The State of Our Chapter

Our current membership is close to 40 members, with new members regularly joining. Our attendance at meetings has averaged 8-9, with attendance as high as 12. Our chapter offers informative programs and advice from experienced members, lots of plants from members, and seed from the Brazil Seed Fund which draw people to our meetings. Our current board has served 2 years, and now it is time to elect or re-elect new officers and directors for the next 2 years. With 2 regular members soon to become less active because they are moving out of the area, the nominating committee is struggling to find a full slate of officers and directors for the next 2 years.

National Bylaws require 4 officers in order for our club to remain a chapter. Without 4 officers, our charter will be suspended. The Society has given our club several months to reorganize and determine our future as a chapter. This last meeting of 2018 will be important making some critical decisions.

### Looking Forward

Earlier this year, members discussed different options for the chapter in 2019. It was agreed to continue monthly meetings with various program topics of interest. It was decided that a show would not be feasible, but a plant sale was considered. As we prepare for a new year, we have several options to consider.

1. We could elect a full slate officers and continue as a chapter of the Gesneriad Society, following our established bylaws and holding monthly meetings and programs. A chapter has the full benefits of the Gesneriad Society, such as liability insurance coverage

2. If we do not elect a full slate of officers, our next option is to become an affiliate of the Gesneriad Society. How is this different from a chapter? The biggest difference is structure. A chapter must have 4 officers and bylaws to guide the activities of the chapter. An affiliate does not. An affiliate also does not get the full benefits of the Gesneriad Society. To become an affiliate, 20% of our members must be members of the Gesneriad Society, a qualification we currently meet. We must also have regular meetings on gesneriad culture and related cultural methods, and maintain a yearly subscription to *Gesneriads*. If we pursue this option, we would need to decide as a group on the particulars of how we want to proceed as an affiliate.

3. Our last option is to dissolve the chapter. Members could connect with other Gesneriad Society chapters and affiliates located in Virginia and Delaware.

We have been talking about this moment in time throughout the year, and now we need to make some important decisions. I hope everyone will think about these options carefully so we can have a thorough discussion. If you are not able to attend the meeting, feel free to e-mail me your thoughts and comments.

Otherwise, hope to see you there for our holiday celebration. Barbara Stewart, Chapter President



Donna's *Sinningia helleri x guttata*



Donna's *Sinningia helleri x guttata* close-up

## Desperately Seeking

Donna Beverin..... African Violets: 'Tiger & 'Royal Child' leaves

Donna Beverin..... *Streptocarpus* 'DS Caramel' leaf

Donna Beverin.....*Eucodonia* 'Wooly Morron' rhizome or leaf



Donna's *Sinningia* 'Scarlet Sunset' plants



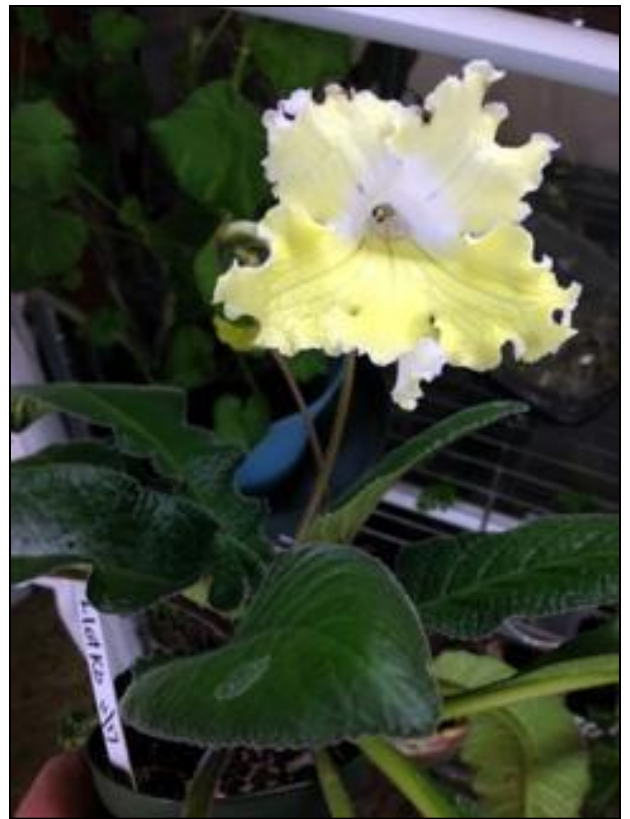
Donna's *Gloxinia* 'Dragonsong' (shiny leaves)



Dave's *Kohleria* 'Strawberry Fields'



Dave's *xSmithicodonia* 'Heartland's Joy'



Donna's *Streptocarpus* 'Zlotko' grown from little plant that Barb grew and brought to the raffle table in September 2018. Amazing how fast this Strep grew! Wish I took a picture of it when it was little! Just so elated about the success of this plant. It is grown about 12 inches from the lights in the soil mix Brian Connor recommended in our program in September. Lots of buds forming. The flowers last a long time!



Donna's *Achimenes* NOID. Looks like *Sauline*.



Donna's *Eucodonia* 'Adele'



Barb Stewart's photo of *Aeschynanthus* at Denver Botanical Garden. Donna's A. 'Fire' blooming

### **Aeschynanthus: Plant of the Month:**

*Aeschynanthus* was established as a genus by William Jack in 1823; Jack, a brilliant physician and botanist, died in Sumatra in 1822 at the age of 27, and almost all of his botanical work was published posthumously.

*Aeschynanthus* is a large genus comprising approximately 150 species of epiphyte, evergreen, subtropical vines native to southern Asia, from India in the west to the Solomon Islands in the east. All species are epiphytic, although some species may also be lithophytic or creep along the ground. Branches may be pendulous (e.g. *A. gracilis*), creeping (e.g. *A. pulcher*), arching and pendulous (e.g. *A. fulgens*), or erect (e.g. *A. andersonii*). Adventitious roots may form at the nodes. Leaves are typically opposite, but may be whorled as in *A. augustifolius*. Leaves in a pair are the same size and are often thick and leathery. This is due to large cells in the hypodermis that store water, helping to prevent desiccation, to which epiphytic plants are susceptible. The common name for some species is "lipstick plant", which comes from the appearance of the developing buds. A full list of the accepted species and their synonyms can be found in the Smithsonian Institution's World Checklist of Gesneriaceae.

Inflorescences are borne in clusters in axils along the vine, or near the end of the vine. The corolla has one plane of symmetry, is tubular, and always curved, typically longest on the upper surface. Flowers are five-lobed: two upper, two lateral, and one lower. Corolla color is generally red or orange, but yellow, pink, and green occur less commonly. Stripes of various contrasting colors often appear in the throat. The flowers are strongly protandrous (male portions mature first, wither, and then female portions mature) and bear two pairs of stamens. The large amount of low-sucrose content nectar that is produced indicates pollination by birds. Each calyx contains five sepals that are free to the base or may be nearly completely fused into a tube. The calyx matures well before the corolla and may fill with water in those species having a fused calyx, perhaps serving as a form of protection from insects.



*Aeschynanthus humilis* Photo: Kyoko Imai



*Aeschynanthus humilis* 'Topaz' Photo: Ron Myhr

*Aeschynanthus humilis* is an unusual *Aeschynanthus*, in that it is a fairly small and generally upright growing plant, with leaves that are not at all succulent. Well-grown, as in this example, it can be a spectacular specimen, with many bright orange flowers produced at the leaf tips. This species was formerly known as *A. hildebrandii*, but has a distinctly different flower-shape than that species. *A. humilis* is not a particularly easy plant to grow for many people, although some find it quite amenable. It does well under artificial lighting, but requires careful attention to watering (moist but not wet), and does best in fairly warm circumstances.

Seeds develop in a long, narrow capsule. All seeds have at least two appendages. One is near where the seed attaches to the capsule (the hilar end) and one at the opposite (apical) end. In some species, like *Aeschynanthus radicans*, a cluster of inflated cells called bubble cells occur at the hilar end of the seed. The apical appendage may be long or short and stout. Hilar appendage(s) is/are either one in number, which are then short and stout (e.g. *A. rhododendron*), intermediate (e.g. *A. acuminatus*) or long and thread-like. These appendages aid in wind dispersal and may also help attach seeds to wet bark upon landing.

*Aeschynanthus* has been divided into six sections based largely upon seed characters, although section *Xanthanthos* (Wang) is defined based on corolla characters and contains only two species. Both a SEM study of the seeds and an nrDNA study have concluded that *Aeschynanthus* consists of two clades, each containing three sections. The majority of species from section *Haplotrichium* belong to one clade, but a few species belong to the other; however, the genetic study looked at only one gene and more robust research is needed before any reorganization of the genus is completed. At this time, it is best to simply keep in mind that there are problems with the sectional arrangement, and that more work remains to be done.

*Aeschynanthus* are easy to grow in the home as they do well in typical household temperatures and humidity levels. They do well in a bright window without long periods of direct sun, which may burn them. Drying out for a few days between watering is not harmful. The wide array of species allows growers to choose plants that can be quite showy when they blossom, and many have foliage that has an architectural appeal as well. Some, like *A. longicaulis* have wonderfully mottled leaves, making them interesting even when not in bloom. Many plants are small growing, like *A. 'Coral Flame'* (approximately 0.5 meter vines) and *A. gracilis*. Larger growing plants include *A. 'Thai Pink'*, which rapidly grows to 2 meters, and *A. radicans*. Both of these plants have large flowers that contrast nicely with their fused calyx. Consider growing this beautiful gesneriad! This article is a compilation of information from the following two websites. Donna



Donna's *xSmithicodonia* 'Heartland's Joy'



Donna's *Sinningia* 'April Star 2' x self



Donna's *Sinningia nordestina* from seed



Donna's *Sinningia bullata* x *conspicua*

## Programs Planned for 2019

December 8<sup>th</sup>: Holiday Party

January 2019: Webinar on hybridizing and genetics.

February 2019: Propagation workshop

March 2019: Design workshop

## **Plant of the Month**

December : Aeschynanthus

Members please send me pictures of your blooming plants to share in our newsletter!  
Donnabeverin@gmail.com

## **DON'T FORGET THE RAFFLE TABLE!**

At every meeting our members bring extra plants, cuttings, growing supplies, magazines, books, seedlings and donate them to the raffle table. Tickets for the raffle are only 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, magazines, pamphlets, pots and gardening supplies and other plants we love to grow like begonias and houseplants.

## **The Richmond African Violet Society 2019 Annual Show and Sale**

"Violets Around the World"

April 6th (Plant Sales),

April 7th – 8th, 2019 (Show and Sale)

Sponsored by and held at:

**Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden**

1800 Lakeside Ave, Richmond, VA

804-262-9887

<http://www.lewisginter.org/plan/index.php>

Admission to the show and sale is free; however, there is an admission fee for visiting the garden. **Adults \$13 Seniors (55+) \$11**

### **Show Hours**

Saturday, April 6, 2019 **1:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

Sunday, April 7, 2019 **9:00 am to 3:00 pm**

### **Plant Sale Hours**

Friday, April 5, 2019 **1:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

Saturday, April 6, 2019 **9:00 am to 5:00 pm**

Sunday, April 7, 2019 **9:00 am to 4:00 pm**

Info: Barbara Greenawalt

Email: [barbgreenawalt@hotmail.com](mailto:barbgreenawalt@hotmail.com)

Editor note: This show features Gesneriads also.

President: Barb Stewart

[bstew771@verizon.net](mailto:bstew771@verizon.net)

Vice-President: Jim Roberts

[Jim.Robert2408@gmail.com](mailto:Jim.Robert2408@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Sharon Long

[slong15781@aol.com](mailto:slong15781@aol.com)

Secretary: Sally Leonhart

Newsletter Editor: Donna Beverin

[Petaltones@gmail.com](mailto:Petaltones@gmail.com) or

[Donnabeverin@gmail.com](mailto:Donnabeverin@gmail.com)

Committees:

Hospitality: Peggy MacDonald

Publications: Donna Beverin

Propagation: Barb Stewart/Donna Beverin

Membership:

Ways and Means: Brian Connor

Show: Jim Roberts

Directors:

Victor Nicholas

Brian Connor

Ki Imai

NCAC website: [www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org](http://www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org)

[web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org](http://web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org)

NCAC Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/174442276299173/?ref=bookmarks>

The National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society welcomes all interested Gesneriad growers. The most familiar Gesneriad is Saintpaulia, more commonly known as the African Violet.

Dues are \$10 per year (email copy of current year's newsletter).

Back issues from previous years available on website. Membership runs the calendar year and can be pro-rated.

The international Gesneriad Society is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to the study, growing and enjoyment of the gesneriaceae. Membership dues are \$25 /year for individuals and \$26 for a family. Benefits include seed fund of hard-to-find plants, reference materials, yearly convention & cultural webinars.

Membership requests should be sent to

Bob Clark, 1122 E Pike Street, PMB 637, Seattle, WA 98122-3916.

Membership includes a subscription to the society journal, Gesneriads.

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

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