

# PETAL TONES



Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society

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September 2023



*Sphaerorrhiza rosulata* "A not-often-seen and challenging gesneriad to grow. But so lovely!"  
JJ Wu's Facebook posting on the Gesneriad Society page.

Reminder: October program: **"Meet a New Gesneriad"** by Barbara Stewart

Our next in-person meeting will be in October when we have another hands-on workshop.

One of the purposes of our society and chapter is to learn about gesneriads and their culture. With such a large and diverse family of plants, this will be an opportunity to teach and learn about a few more gesneriads.

The plan of this workshop is to share growing information about a gesneriad each of us is growing. Select a less common gesneriad or two you are growing or something new you picked up at the convention. Then share information about it, such as its natural habitat and growing habits, cultural requirements, show potential (maybe a photo of a show plant from the GS website or Gesneriad Reference Web), and what you have learned about growing it in your conditions.

As an added bonus, you may want to consider writing up a few tips to publish in a future issue of PT.

Also, feel free to bring extra cuttings or seedlings to share with others on the raffle table. I bought a lot of different seeds from the seed fund at the convention and hope to have babies to share, so everyone can pick up some new gesneriads.

## National Capital Area Chapter Of the Gesneriad Society

Topic: NCAC September meeting  
Time: Sep 9, 2023 10:30 AM Eastern  
Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88075346214?pwd=RGxJeGUrWkdGMXo5ajFBRytyckM3Zz09>  
Meeting ID: 880 7534 6214  
Passcode: 118925

September 9<sup>th</sup> : Zoom Meeting: Jim Roberts 'Ecuador Trip  
September 23<sup>rd</sup>: Green Spring Garden sale 9am – 3pm  
October 14<sup>th</sup>: Meet a New Gesneriad  
November 2 - 4 MAAVS show in Baltimore  
December 9<sup>th</sup> Holiday Party at Johanna's, membership renewal & plant exchange

### President's Message:

Welcome back from our summer break. It is time to get back together again for a membership meeting and entertaining program by Jim Roberts.

I have been busy potting up plants for Green Spring and seedlings for our program in October, although the heat from this seemingly "endless summer" is limiting my time in the yard.

It still feels like July around here (Richmond). I am also updating my violet and gesneriad inventories to add all the new plants I got at the convention.

The Zoom meeting will open around 10 so we can socialize and share some of the plants we are growing. Hope to see you there.

Barbara

# Bloomin' Now



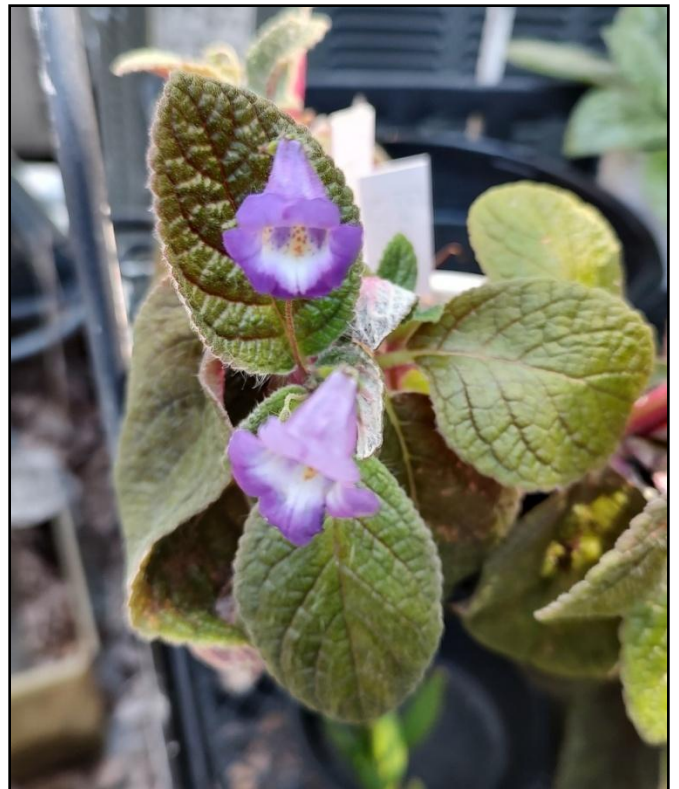
Sharon Long's *Sinningia* Empress seedling



Bill Schmidt's *Achimenes* 'Coral Beauty'



Dave Anderson's *Achimenes* 'Tiny Red'



Dave's *Eucodonia* seeding (Adele)



# Bloomin' Now



Bill's *Sinningia* 'Party Dress' outdoors



Dave's *Seemannia sylvatica* outdoors



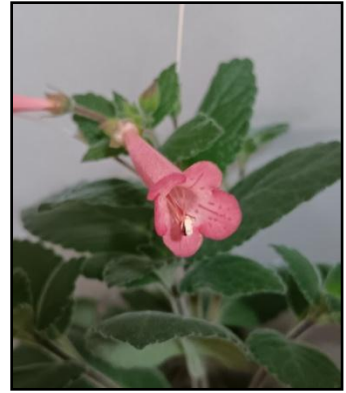
# Bloomin' Now



Dave's *Sinningia bullata*



Dave's *Gloxinia perennis insignis*



Barb's S. Apricot Bouquet bloom



Barb's mini *Sinningia* noid



Barb's *Saintpaulia* 'Blue Girl'



Barb's *Saintpaulia* 'Cajun Coujin



Barb's *Sinningia* 'Mark Twain'



Barb's S. 'Snow Edelweiss'



Barb's *Saintpaulia* 'Snow Edelweiss'



Barb's *Saintpaulia* 'K's Sage Wand'



Barb's *Sinningia* 'Apricot Bouquet'



# Bloomin' Now



Johanna: "Another plant of *Titanotrichum oldhamii* in deeper shade that is just beginning to have open blooms."



Johanna: "A bee coming out of *Titanotrichum oldhamii* this afternoon."



Johanna: "Small plant of the same showing propagules on a few of the plants. I shall have a few for sale at Green Spring Garden's sale in September."



*Primulina rubella*, a newly discovered *Primulina* in China. More information on next 2 pages, including updates on *Primulina tabacum*.



"Hello

I came across this article in Chinese and translated it via Google. It relates the discovery of *Primulina tabacum* in 1881, its subsequent disappearance, and rediscovery in the wild in the 1990's. Recently it has been cultivated ex situ and re-introduced into the wild around Guangzhou, a huge city in the extreme south of China by South China National Botanical Garden."

Cantonese Biodiversity: The return of a primula plant to the wild October 27, 2022, 10:04 Zheng Wei, Southern Finance and Economics All Media, Zheng Wei, an all-media reporter from Southern Finance and Economics, reported in Guangzhou

Tobacco-smelling plants, lanceolate purple petals, and irregular lobes at the edge of the leaves... This is a unique and endangered plant in China - *Primula tabacum*.

In 1881, *Primula* was discovered by American Henry in Lianzhou, northern Guangdong. Since then, it has been almost extinct in the wild due to environmental changes. In 2007, the South China National Botanical Garden successfully returned to the wild through ex situ protection. After more than ten years of rooting and growth, the *Primula tabacum* will be adjusted from the national first-level key protection to the national second-level key protection in 2021.

The Gesneriaceae, to which *Primula* belongs is a representative plant group of karst landform habitats in southern China, and Guangdong, where *Primula* was discovered, is also one of the provinces with the richest biodiversity in the country.

According to the latest statistics, there are 1,018 species of terrestrial vertebrate wild animals and 6,658 species of higher plants recorded in Guangdong, including 188 species of wild animals under national key protection under the supervision of the forestry department and 110 species of wild plants under national key protection.

Behind the "resurrection" of *Primula tabacum* in the wild is a battle to defend biodiversity that has lasted for many years. The wild "resurrection" of *Primula tabacum* From first discovery, endangered to return to the wild, *Primula*'s "growth story" is quite twists and turns.

According to Ning Zulin, deputy director and senior engineer of the Horticulture Center of the South China National Botanical Garden, in 1881, Henry, an American, first discovered the figure of *Primula tabacum* on the stone wall of the Lianjiang River Basin in Lianzhou, northern Guangdong. In 1883, the *Primula tabacum* was published by the British Hance, and then disappeared mysteriously for 120 years, and was once hard to find.

It was not until the 1990s that this *Primula* was rediscovered in Lianzhou, Guangdong, but the population growth status was not optimistic. In 1999, the *Primula* was included in the list of "China's National Key Protected Wild Plants (First Batch)", and the protection level was the national first-level key protection.

As one of the oldest botanical research and plant protection institutions in China, the South China Botanical Garden began to conduct ex situ conservation research on *Primula* in 2002.

It is reported that *Primula* is a perennial herb of the Gesneriaceae, *Primula* genus, and it is also a unique single-species plant. It is only produced in Lianzhou, Yangshan, Guangdong, and Ningyuan, Hunan. The limestone mountain secondary shrubs at an altitude of about 300 meters, the habitat range is relatively narrow, and the requirements for the growth environment are strict. Slight changes in temperature, humidity, carbon dioxide concentration and other factors will affect the survival and reproduction of *Primula* spp.

After exploration, the South China Botanical Garden abandoned the traditional seed cultivation method, and turned to biologically cutting the leaves of *Primula tabacum*, and then using biotechnology to induce germination and rooting. After more than 5,000 experiments, scientists at the South China Botanical Garden finally used biotechnology to successfully propagate *Primula tabacum* in 2003, and successfully returned *Primula* to the wild in 2007.



"Researchers carefully brought back three seedlings, which bloomed stunning red flowers after careful cultivation and care, which are obviously different from other *Primulus* plants." Ning Zulin said, "Later, I thought about going to the wild again to witness its natural habitat. The fragrance of the old place, but when I revisited the old place, I couldn't find any trace of it."

Ning Zulin said that during many field surveys in recent years, researchers have not found any traces of *Primula rubella*, which may have become extinct in the wild. Fortunately, at present, the researchers of the South China National Botanical Garden have realized the ex situ protection of *Primula rubella* through leaf cutting propagation, and the next step is to carry out the work of returning to the wild.

The South China National Botanical Garden is undoubtedly the "main force" in this battle to defend Lingnan's biodiversity.

After nearly a hundred years of development, the number of rare and endangered plants under ex situ conservation in the South China National Botanical Garden has reached 643, of which 174 are rare and endangered plants in Guangdong Province, accounting for 43.1% of the total in the province. The wild return of 36 species of rare and endangered plants in South China.

In 2021, *Primula* species will also be adjusted from the national first-level key protection to the national second-level key protection. The lowering of the protection level means that *Primula* species have been effectively protected in the past 20 years, and the degree of endangerment has eased.

Another *Primula*, *Primula rubella*, has also found new life in the South China National Botanical Garden. "This is a plant full of legends and mysteries. It was discovered by accident and disappeared miraculously," Ning Zulin said.

"In 2012, *Primula rubella* was discovered in Shitan Town, Qingxin County, Qingyuan City, Guangdong Province. It grew on the upper part of a small limestone cave where local people stored ashes. It didn't bloom at that time, and it was a very inconspicuous 'little one'. Recalling the first "meeting" with *Primula rubella*, Ning Zulin still vividly remembers it.

It is reported that in 2012, there were only more than 10 plants of *Primula rubella* when it was discovered, and it was listed as critically endangered according to IUCN standards. In the history of the development of the world's botanical gardens, economic crops once became the dominant species. The earliest introduction and scientific research of many plants that affect the development of the world economy were completed in the botanical gardens.

The South China National Botanical Garden also clearly stated in its comprehensive protection and utilization plan that in the next 3-5 years, rare and endangered plants (Endangered plants), economic plants (Economic plants), The number of ex situ conservation species of endemic plants (Endemic plants) and other three types of plants must reach 20,000.

In addition, the South China National Botanical Garden will screen 2,000 species with economic value and recommend them to local governments, select 200 species for systematic research based on living plant collections, and select 20 unique, rare and endangered plants or characteristic species for wild return and development and utilization. At the same time, two species have been developed for large-scale economic utilization, exploring the protection and sustainable utilization of wild plant resources in China, and providing effective demonstrations for plant protection and economic development in poor areas of China.

Ning Zulin said that in the future, in the process of ex situ conservation of plants in the South China National Botanical Garden, while strengthening the protection of species diversity, attention will be paid to precise introduction based on genetic integrity, so as to improve the efficiency of ex situ conservation and the exploration and utilization of resources, leading Ex situ conservation of plants in botanical gardens.

Editor's Note: Translation may lack the term *Primulina* for this article: *Primulina tabacum*



Johnna's picture of her *Titanotrichum* in 2021 where we can see clearly the maroon, burgundy inside of the bloom. She has been growing it for many years as a perennial. She collects propagules that she generously shares and begins new plants with.

<https://www.plantdelights.com/products/titanotrichum-oldhamii>  
Plants Delights Nursery has this to say:

"Don't bother to look *Titanotrichum oldhamii* up, 'cause you won't find it...except in the tropical books where it's listed as a Zone 9 plant.

Our friend Ozzie Johnson originally shared this remarkable hardy Chinese gesneriad (African violet cousin) in 2002. It was great to finally see it growing wild in Taiwan in 2008, where it clung to nearly vertical rock cliffs. The fuzzy basal leaves make a nice small clump to 12" wide which, in September and October, is topped with 1' spikes of dramatic, golden yellow bells with vivid, cinnamon-red centers.

One look at a flowering *Titanotrichum oldhamii* will bring you to your knees faster than a passing pope...we promise!

*Titanotrichum oldhamii* has survived 0 degrees F in our garden with good winter drainage. Hardy in zones 6b to 10b.

Another website with more information:

<https://nurcar.com/products/titanotrichum-oldhamii>

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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 You can send your payment to NCAC into our Assistant Treasurer, Andy Meier via PayPal using the email address: [ncacotgs-gesneriads@yahoo.com](mailto:ncacotgs-gesneriads@yahoo.com). Please include a note with your Name, Address, Phone number & email address.

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. National 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. You can subscribe on line also.

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