

# PETAL TONES



Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society

Volume 54 Number 10

October 2023



Sharon Long: "Red double is *Saintpaulia* 'Amadeus', a Russian violet from AVSA convention.

## President's Message:

At last, another in person meeting! This will be a good opportunity to pick up some new plants and learn how to grow them.

While the program and plant sharing are fun, the business of the chapter is very important. This has been a strange year with fewer meetings and a mix of in person and virtual meetings. We will not meet in November, as many of us will be attending the MAAVS convention. Our last meeting of the year will be a holiday pot-luck at Johanna's home. We need to make some decisions now about how we want to proceed next year and how often we want to meet, as Minh will need to start planning programs and I need to reserve the church space. Speaking of programs, Minh is looking for suggestions for programs next year. Please share your ideas and preferences with him.

It is important to get feedback from as many members as possible; however, the reality is that the members who attend the meeting will be the ones who make the decisions. We really hope to see your smiling face in person, but if you can't come, at least try to join via Zoom and give your opinion on the important business we need to conduct. As I have said before, this is your chapter, so we want to make sure it is serving its members. Hope to see you there! Barbara

National Capital Area Chapter Of the Gesneriad Society

October 14th: **In person meeting** at Emmanuel United Methodist Church at 10:30am  
Program: **Meet a New Gesneriad**

Also this meeting will be Zoomed: Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85267311563?pwd=bFFaYtICMTJ0eHJCMnd2eTBUSG5WQT09>

Meeting ID: 852 6731 1563

Passcode: 878601

November: No meeting

November 2 - 4 MAAVS show in Baltimore. See page 9

December 9th Holiday Party at Johanna's, membership renewal & plant exchange

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

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.

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

**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.**

# Bloomin' Now



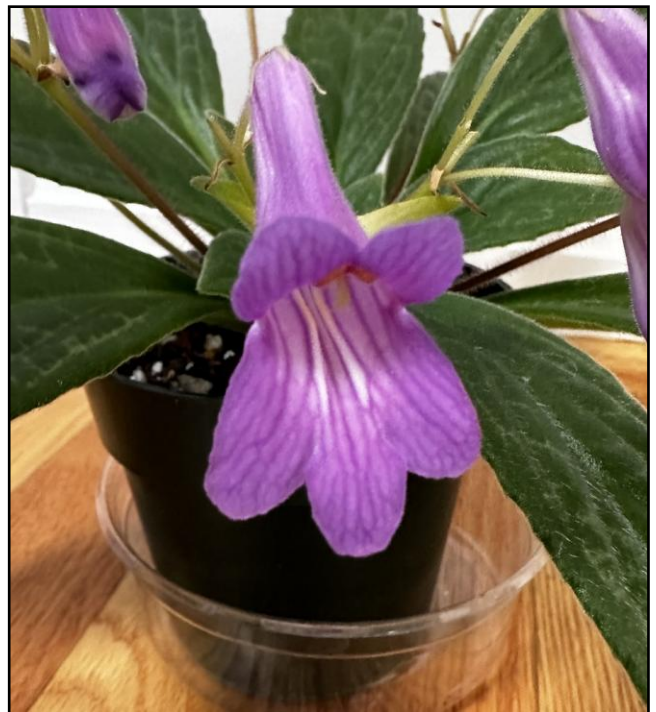
Sharon Long's : *Streptocarpus* ' Hara No Mitsu'.  
"First bloom since she purchased at the Convention on this tiny Streptocarpus. Don't know what the name means."



Sharon's *Saintpaulia* '8E Phnom Penh' with a white and purple violet from AVSA.



Dena's *Primulina* 'Silver Surfer'



Close up of Dena's *Primulina* 'Silver Surfer'

## Announcement:

Baltimore African Violet Club is pleased to invite you to our two-day Autumn 2023 Plant Sale on Thursday, October 13th from 9 am to 5 pm & Friday, October 14th from 8 am to 1 pm. at the Joppa Grand Market, 1000 Joppa Farm Road, Joppa, MD 21085.

# Bloomin' Now

## Bill's Plants



Bill Schmidt's *Columnea* 'Jeanne Katzenstein'



Bill's '*Episcia* 'My Precious'



Bill's *Primulina* 'Moonbeams'



Bill's *Saintpaulia* 'Skagit's Lil' Filly'



Bill's *Achimenes* 'Teresa'



Close up of Bill's *Achimenes* 'Teresa'

# Bloomin' Now



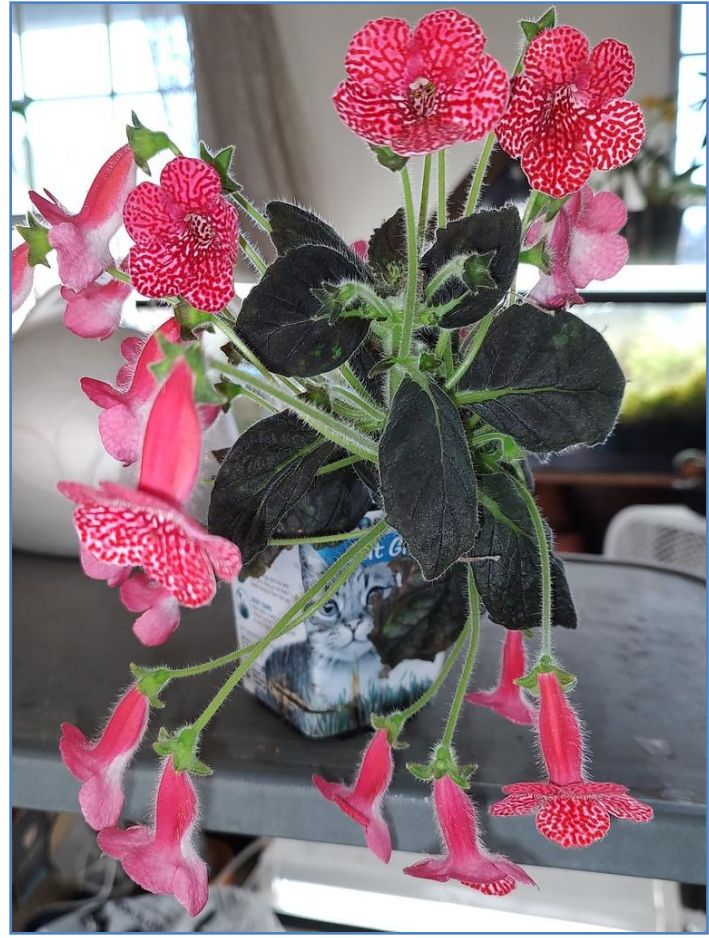
Barb Borleske's Dale Marten's hybrid *Gloximannia* 'She's Dancing'. "It's rhizomatous and a late summer/fall bloomer. It's easy to grow but gets very large and requires bright natural light (I grow it on my deck) to reach its full potential."



Barb Borleske: "Another of my plants that summered on the deck. This is *Nematanthus* 'Cheerio', full of buds that will put on a big show inside now that cooler weather is arriving and the Gesneriads are moving to the enclosed porch."



Barb Borleske: "*Eucodonia* Hybrid #3. Also grown outside for most of the summer. As the season ends it's getting mildew and looking pretty ragged. Time to put it to bed in the basement!"

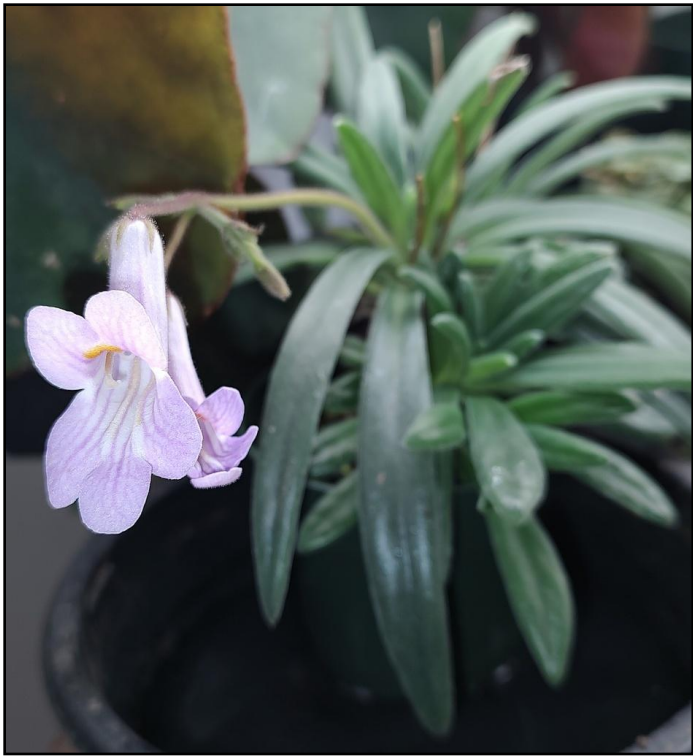


Dave's *Kohleria* 'Strawberry Fields'



Dave's *Streptocarpella* NOID

# Bloomin' Now



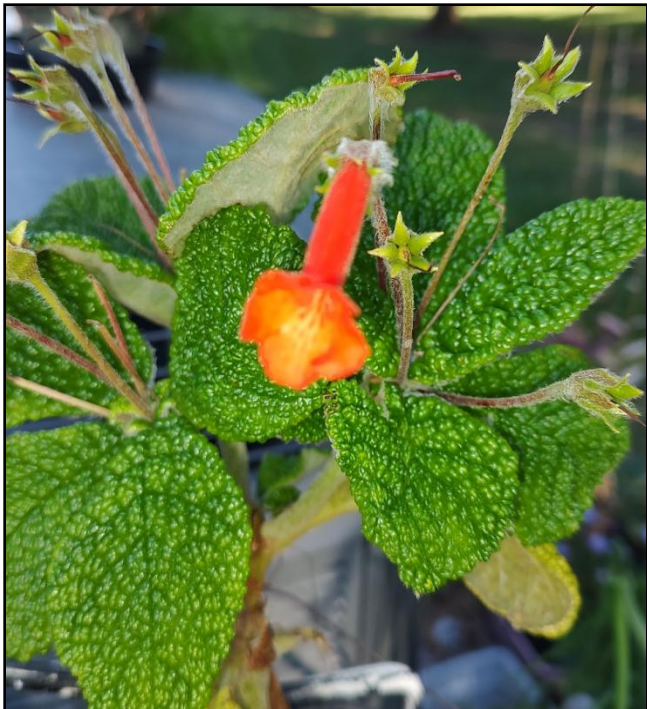
Dave's *Primulina maxtimer*



Dave's *Sinningia* 'Doll Baby' x self seedling



Dave's *Sinningia* 'Cindy Ella' x self seedling



Dave's *Sinningia bullata*



Dave's *Gloxinia perennis* 'Insignis'

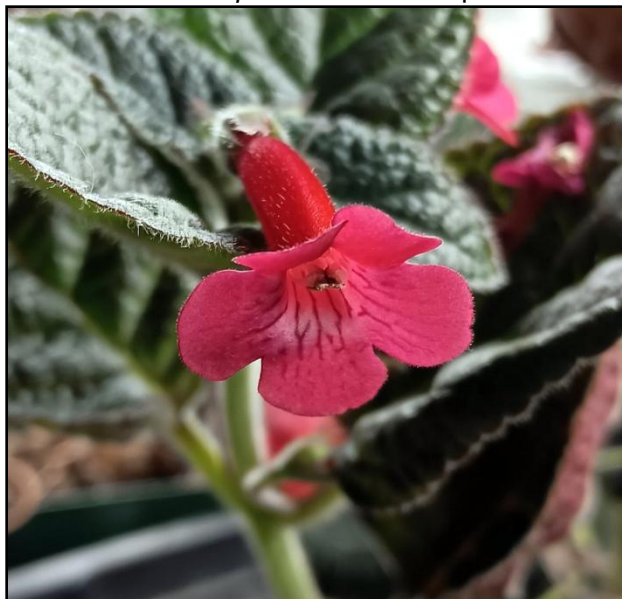
# Bloomin' Now



Barb Stewart's *Episcia* 'Alfred Sharpe'



Barb's *Sinningia* 'Clara Louise x bullata'



Barb's *Sinningia conspicua* x *bullata*



Donna's plant blooming at the same time!



Barb's *Eucodonia* 'Adele'



Donna's *Kohleria* 'Cheerleader'

During the early years, African violets were predominantly a greenhouse plant, rather than a houseplant. From 1893 until 1930, various writings in horticultural and botanical publications indicate that African violets were mainly grown under glass structures. A favorite place to exhibit these plants was near the edge of staging in public and private greenhouses and at flower shows. The failure to grow in homes appears to be due in part to the type of heating system used at that time, as most homes did not have central heating. This allowed temperatures in the homes to fluctuate greatly. In most cases, homes were too cold during the winter for the successful growth of African violets. The plants soon developed a reputation for being difficult and finicky.

A New York florist, George Stump first brought African violets to the United States in 1893 or 1894. Philadelphia florist, William Harris bought two plants from Stump in 1894. Possible descendants of these plants were seen by Roger Peterson in Philadelphia in 1910. Peterson purchased 100 plants and brought them to Cincinnati, Ohio where he continued their production and hybridization. The Peterson Greenhouses eventually became an important early commercial grower of African violets and was one of the first to grow plants of the African violet species.

No history of the African violet would be complete without a discussion of the "Ten Original Crosses" or the "Original Ten". These plants were the first truly successful commercial cultivars and were developed by the firm of Armacost & Royston. One story suggests that Walter Armacost became interested in African violets after seeing the plants in the greenhouse of a friend. He obtained three leaves from the plants and experimented with propagating them. Intrigued by the plant's potential, the firm ordered seeds from Benary's of Germany and Sutton's of England in 1927. Approximately 1,000 plants were grown to blooming size. After several years of selection, ten outstanding plants were chosen and named. They were introduced to the public in 1936 as: 'Admiral', 'Amethyst', 'Blue Boy', 'Commodore', 'Mermaid', 'Neptune', 'No. 32', 'Norseman', 'Sailor Boy', and 'Viking'. All of these cultivars had blue to purple flowers and varied slightly in growth form and leaf characteristics. These cultivars are still grown in plant collections today.

After several years of propagating violets and shipping them wholesale all over the world, Armacost & Royston discontinued this part of their business because the plants were going to growers who did not understand the needs of African violets and consequently found their performance disappointing. Fortunately, increases in knowledge about the plants, improvements in home heating systems, and the development of many new colors and plant types rescued the African Violet from obscurity and elevated it to today's popularity.

In 1945 there appeared in a national magazine, The Ladies Home Journal, an article on the care and culture of African violets. It also featured a full-page color picture of some of the popular cultivars. This article by Helen Van Pelt Wilson was a turning point in the growth of African violets because it showed how attractive the plants could be and gave information on how to grow them successfully. Enough interest was shown that the author later published the article in pamphlet form, making the information readily available to the public.

Information about growing African violets was also available through "Round Robin" groups. The Flower Grower Magazine, a popular garden publication of the time had 37 Round Robin groups pertaining to the culture of African violets. The estimated 350 individuals of the "Robins" corresponded with each other exchanging ideas, cultural information, and experiences. These individuals formed the nucleus for an explosion of interest in African violets.

In 1946, The Flower Grower Magazine had an announcement by the H.G. Hastings Co. of Atlanta, Georgia that they would sponsor an African violet show on November 8th and 9th. More than 200 exhibitors from 11 states showed plants of 31 cultivars. An estimated 8,000-10,000 people viewed the show over the two days. Visitors came from 103 cities and towns in 14 states.

A result of this enormous interest in African violets was that a society, The African Violet Society of America, Inc. (AVSA) was founded on November 8th, 1946. The AVSA was incorporated on June 30, 1947 with 250 charter members. The first annual convention and show was held in Atlanta on October 9 and 10, 1947. Seventy-seven exhibitors from 20 states showed 286 plants of 62 cultivars. Today, the AVSA is an international society with over 12,000 members in 48 countries.

Continued on page 8

## African Violets in Cultivation continued

The purpose of the society is to provide a center through which African violet enthusiasts can obtain and exchange growing information. The AVSA is also the International Registration Authority for cultivated hybrids of African violets and offers a Master Variety List of all recorded species and cultivars. Its publication, The African Violet Magazine offers interesting articles on how to grow African violets, where to purchase them, and continuous information on the latest developments in the African violet world. The AVSA continues to hold annual meetings and plant shows that feature African violets and other members of the Gesneriaceae.

(PS: Editor's note; The evolution of the African Violet continues when "in late 2015, Kanae Nishii and others published an article redefining *Streptocarpus* to include all Afro-Malagasy Gesneriaceae. Under this merger, which was based on geographical distribution, basic chromosome numbers (N = 15), morphological traits and DNA evidence, a single large genus *Streptocarpus* emerged." Please read more on The Gesneriad Web Reference.)

<https://gesneriads.info/articles/saintpaulia/saintpaulia/>



Dave's *Sinningia macropoda*

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Publications: Donna Beverin

Propagation: Barb Stewart/Donna Beverin

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Ways and Means:

Show Chairman:

Directors:

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Peggy MacDonald

Bill Schmidt

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





2004: Tomahawk



2005: Miss Lily



2008: Ness' Satin Rose



2011: Rockin' Robin



2012: Buckeye Cranberry Sparkler



2018: Jersey Snowflakes

## Mid-Atlantic African Violet Society 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Convention

**Violets in the Animal Kingdom**  
November 2-4, 2023

**Gateway Wyndham Gettysburg**  
95 Presidential Circle  
Gettysburg, PA 17325



MAAVS



Convention



### Open to the Public

Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

-Sales from 9 AM – 5 PM

-Showroom from 1 PM – 5 PM

Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023

-Sales & Showroom from 9 AM – 4 PM

\*AV photos of past Best In Show winners



Facebook



AVSA