

# PETAL TONES



Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society

Volume 56 Number 6

June 2025



Johanna's blooming Sinningia. She does not know the name. From raffle table most likely grown from Mauro's seeds by Barb Stewart. Photo to left is from Brazil Plants website:

<https://brazilplants.com/gesneriaceae/sinningia/sinningia-speciosa-cg.html>

*Sinningia speciosa* 'Carangola'

## National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society (NCAC)

Emmanuel United Methodist Church  
10755 Scaggsville Road, Laurel, MD 20723  
Meets second Saturday of each month at 10:30am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82968033274?pwd=K Vc68b7bbbKSLIN87rBKAzczmUGYW.1>

Meeting ID: 829 6803 3274

Passcode: 957283

June 14th – In person at church & Zoom  
Container Gardens program by Kitty  
July 12th – No meeting due to the Gesneriad Society Convention in Parsippany New Jersey  
Aug 9th – September NCAC Show preparation  
Sept 13th – NCAC Mini Show at the Church  
Oct. 11th – In person & Zoom: How Doug Bolt grows his stunning Streptocarpus  
Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> – Zoom business meeting  
Dec. 13th – Holiday luncheon and meeting

## President's Message

Looking forward to getting back to meeting in person. We have a guest speaker with a great program on creating different kinds of container gardens. Hopefully some of you will be inspired to try one for our mini-show in September. Jill will have a draft of the show schedule to hand out at the meeting.

The sale at Green Spring Gardens was a success. We set up on Friday but were worried about strong storms predicted for Friday night. Fortunately, everything survived and the tents were still standing Saturday morning. I will be bringing leftover gesneriads and other plants to the meeting, so the raffle table will be well stocked. Hope to see you there!

Barbara

June 14<sup>th</sup> NCAC will meet in the Youth Room on the second floor. Church personnel are not sure when the water damage repairs will be completed in Room 3, but will let us know. There will, of course, be no extra charge for using the different space! Reminder: The Church is a "NUT FREE ZONE" due to children with allergies, so do not bring any food items that include nuts or peanuts.

# Musings on Smithiantha, Eucodonia, and Achimenes

Barbara Stewart

Last month we watched a great webinar by Michael Riley on growing Smithianthas and Eucodonias. I was hoping to find some tips on how to grow nice looking show quality plants and what judges will be looking for when judging show plants. I also wanted to know how to handle these plants after they have reached their peak and started towards dormancy, as well as how to propagate them.

Smithianthas, eucodonias, and achimenes are all closely related rhizomatous gesneriads from Central and South America. I have grown all three with varying degrees of success. Here are some of my experiences growing these lovely plants.

## Smithianthas:

These are some of my favorite gesneriads with their masses of blooms and so many varied colors and patterns. I have had success growing smithianthas from seed and eventually getting some bloom. Nothing really unique, though. I have even had a few go dormant and return to life after a rest, which is always exciting; however, eventually they do not. I grow them on wicks and find they need a lot of light to keep from getting too leggy and needing to be staked.

## Eucodonias:

I have found Eucodonia to be the most dependable. The ones I have grown come back faithfully every year. I like Eucodonia because they tend to be late summer/fall bloomers when other things are winding down. They are small and don't take up a lot of space. The main drawback is a lack of variety. Most of them have varying degrees of purple and white blossoms. On the plus side, this keeps me from acquiring more varieties than I have room for.

## Achimenes:

I have the most difficulty with Achimenes. In my experience, they rarely return from dormancy. I have a few, such as misers, that have made a comeback, but I have eventually lost that as well. As with smithianthas, I grow these on wicking tubs and try to give as much light as possible. I currently have 'Purple King', an oldie but goodie, that has sprouted and I have pinched the tips while still small to get more branching. I have also potted up the tip cuttings.

Because these gesneriads are closely related, it has been possible to develop intergeneric hybrids. These include xAchimenanta (Achimenes x Smithiantha), xAchicodonia (Achimenes x Eucodonia) and xSmithicodonia (Smithiantha x Eucodonia). I have grown some of these as well, with similar rates of success. There is also a new trigeneric hybrid: xFriasia 'RF's Gift of Heaven' (Smithianthia x Eucodonia x Achimenes).

After listening to Michael's expert advice, I now have some tips on propagating these plants from rhizomes and leaves and how to collect seed before the pods spill all over the place. He also explained how to snip off lower leaves of seedlings and pot them down to get stronger plants. An important tip for treating plants after they go dormant is to take them off the wicking tub to keep rhizomes from rotting. Not doing this soon enough may be why I often lose rhizomes after dormancy. While Michael did not specifically discuss growing plants to show, there were beautiful pictures of what a good show plant would look like, given the proper lighting and care. This is one of the many great webinars available from the Gesneriad Society. I am hoping I will now have more success growing these lovely gesneriads.



Bill's *Eucodonia* 'Olivia'



Donna's *Achimenes* 'Tiny Red'



Barb's *Smithiantha* 'Sunset'



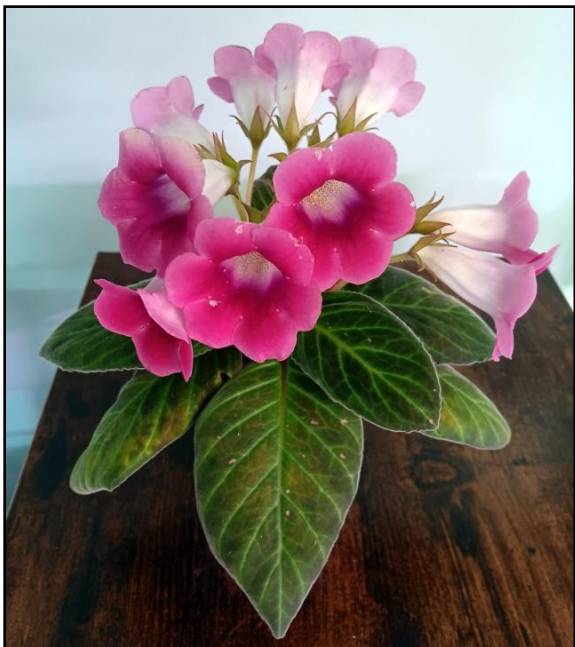


Elsbeth: "My office strep. I was told the name is *Streptocarpus* "Blueberry" and it's been a vigorous grower since it moved to the office with me in early March 2025.. I don't really know too much about this hybrid other than it's been super hardy and tolerant of me forgetting to water it! I didn't find it in the registry either so it may not be a registered hybrid. Sorry if that's confusing! "

Editor's note: White Flower Farms carries this *Streptocarpus*. The official name may be S. 'Ladyslipper Blueberry'

Gary Hunter: "The branding of *Streptocarpus* by GreenFuse as the Ladyslipper *Streptocarpus* may catch on. Most people have 'Ladyslipper' reserved for an Orchid and are happy with themselves if they know it is a *Paphiopedilum*. The Ladyslipper brand of *Streptocarpus* has good varieties. They were selected from existing named hybrids produced by Dibley's Greenhouses in the U. K. They are capable of getting many hang-on-tight bright flowers. With many durable smaller flowers, they are more likely to survive the commercial system of sleeving and shipping to retail stores.

It's hard to say which variety is the best. 'Blue Ice' flowered the most when I first trialed them, but 'White Ice' is very similar. You must have a red so 'Pinot' is showy 'Blue Halo' has flowers slightly larger than the others and has a crisp form. 'Pink Halo' apparently was meant to duplicate 'Blue Halo's style, but the flowers are smaller. All have been selling out quickly at the Longwood Garden Plant Shop. Since Ladyslipper is a nationally distributed *Streptocarpus*, you may find them at your local garden center."



Jill's *Sinningia speciosa* 'Clair Roberts'



Jill's *Sinningia speciosa* 'Issa's Gorgeous'



# Bloomin' Now



Jill's *Sinningia* 'Owlsee Red Hot'



Johanna's mini orange *Sinningia* NOID from Dave Anderson



Johanna: "We had two single digit nights this last winter of 2024-2025 and I was worried that my *Titanotrichum oldhamii* would not survive. Fortunately, there are multiple stems coming up on both plants this spring!"

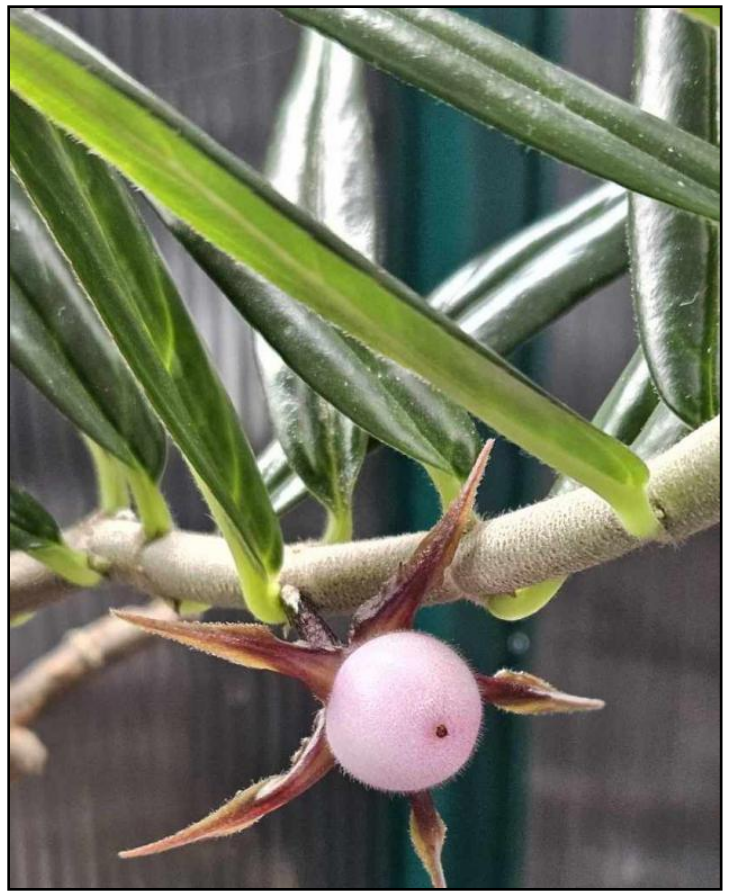


Johanna's plant will bloom in the autumn like this photo with her hardy Begonias in the background!

*Titanotrichum oldhamii* is an interesting, beautiful and unusual plant, native primarily to Taiwan, Japan and adjacent areas of mainland China. It is the only Gesneriad not native to the Americas which has rhizomatous root structures. Long thought to be sterile, it turns out that it is essentially self-sterile — almost all of the material in cultivation has been a single clone, hence no seed could be produced; however, additional clones have come into cultivation through a research project conducted in part at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh.

<https://gesneriads.info/genera/titanotrichum-oldhamii/>





Johanna: "I had hoped to cut the *Columnea crassifolia* back a few months ago with the hope that I could bring it to the convention or our show, but two of the blooms I hand pollinated started swelling so I didn't trim it. The seed capsule is not drying. Does anyone know how long it takes for the seed to mature? **Answer from Google: "When the fruit is soft and ripe, the seeds are collected and sown by sprinkling lightly on the surface of fine soil. It takes about two weeks for germination."**



<https://gesneriads.info/genera/columnea-crassifolia/>  
 "C. *crassifolia* can be extremely floriferous, as is clear from the featured image. It was exhibited in the 2021 virtual show of the Gesneriad Society. The fruit in *Columnea* is almost exclusively an indehiscent berry. The berry is generally white and spherical, about a centimeter in diameter. It can sometimes be more colorful, but generally only paler colors such as pink or lavender are present, rather than bright red or orange. It can also be somewhat conical rather than spherical. On very rare occasions there are species with fruits that dehisce (split open on maturity). This includes *C. dielsii* that has recently been transferred to *Columnea* based on the work of John L. Clark. This species is usually located as sister to the remainder of the species, implying that the transition from a dehiscent fruit in all of its closest relatives (*Glossoloma*, *Alloplectus*, *Crantzia*, and *Drymonia*) to an indehiscent fruit may have

occurred within the lineage, rather than prior to the majority of the diversification. *Columnea trollii* also has fruits that are nearly dehiscent (see discussion of section *Pentadenia*). Indehiscent fruits remain a principal morphological factor separating *Columnea* from its close relatives, despite these exceptions."

Editor's note: There is a vast amount of interesting information on what we generally call *Columnea*. So check out the Gesneriad Society's Reference web.



# Bloomin' Now



Donna: "In the last issue I published these pictures of one of my propagation boxes where I planted some *Sinningia* seedlings a while ago. Update: I wrote to Mauro he said it is most likely a seedling of *S. speciosa* x *helleri*." I checked all my back orders to Brazil Plants and I ordered the seeds 1601 *Sinningia speciosa* x *helleri* in October 2020. Below are pictures of my second prop' box with seedlings from the same packet of seeds. When the first bloom opened I was disappointed as the bloom was a muted, dull white.



Then, the day after I could see the bloom was white with ruffled edges and beautiful purple striations in the throat! I still have not disturbed the plants to see if there is a tuber like *speciosa*. The blooms from the first box have been pollinated with self and pollen of *Sinningia speciosa* 'Regina Serra Da Vista'. Looks like small seed pods are growing.







NCAC's tent set up for the Green Spring's Sale on May 17, 2025



Barb's *Primulina petrocossoides* in bloom



Barb's *Sinningia pusilla* 'Serra da Vista'



Barb's *Metapetrocosmea tamiana*



Donna's *Sinningia speciosa* 'Regina Serra da Vista'



Donna's *M. tamiana* grown from seed by Jill Fischer.



# Gesneriads Gather in the Garden State

The 2025 Convention Team is looking forward to our gathering at The Gesneriad Society's 68th Annual Convention to celebrate our favorite plants. Mark your calendars for **June 29 to July 5, 2025**, and join us at the Sheraton Parsippany Hotel in north-central New Jersey.

We will gather for our **third "recent" convention in New Jersey**: the first in 1988 in New Brunswick; the second in 2002 in Morristown; and now in 2025 in Parsippany. This part of New Jersey is familiar to many of our Gesneriad Society members who have gathered nearby at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum where the local gesneriad chapter members have held gesneriad shows and sales since the late 1970s. Who could forget the Flamingo-Fests?

The convention program will give us many opportunities to gather and share our passion for gesneriads. Exhibitors from across the continent will be entering a **large variety of plants and other entries in the flower show**. We shall also have a **large selection of plants for sale** from commercial and individual growers offering plants, tubers, rhizomes, and cuttings that cannot be found elsewhere. You're sure to find many new additions for your collection. Silent and live auctions also offer unique opportunities for acquiring rare treasures. We shall have **lectures, moderated discussions, and panels of gesneriad growers** to share their

experiences. There are programs to interest all. There will be a **judging school** for new and experienced judges to improve their knowledge of gesneriads. Numerous **volunteer opportunities** abound to help all contribute to our Society, and this is a great way to meet and make new friends!

**Register ASAP!** Early entry to plant sales on Wednesday night from 8-8:30pm is for convention registrants only and is based on your registration number. Plant sales will be open to the public on Friday and Saturday, but the best selection is available for convention registrants earlier.

If you have never been to a Gesneriad Society Convention before, we invite you to **join us in New Jersey!** Bring a wish list of plants, your plant questions, your auction donations, a show entry or several – and be prepared to come away with new friends, your questions answered, and new additions to your plant collection!

## Sheraton Parsippany Hotel

199 Smith Road, Parsippany, New Jersey 07054

Our castle-themed hotel is in a park-like setting with a walking path around a lake. The smoke-free hotel has an indoor and an outdoor seasonal pool, business center, fitness center, and spa. Our contracted guest rooms have mini-refrigerators and complimentary WiFi. Parking at the hotel is complimentary for guests and visitors.

Our convention hotel is located about 24 miles from Newark Liberty Airport. The hotel currently has no airport shuttle service, but other transportation options will be pursued and information posted on our website as convention nears.

For the most direct hotel reservations at convention rates, go to <https://book.passkey.com/e/50845833>. You may also call 1-888-627-8148 and inform Reservations you will be attending The Gesneriad Society Convention 2025.

Our convention rate at the Sheraton Parsippany for traditional rooms (1 king or 2 double beds) is **\$149 including a hot and cold buffet breakfast** (for 2 per room). Add \$10 for triple and \$20 for quad occupancies. For other room options (larger or superior rooms or suites) visit the hotel website or contact <jkatzenste@aol.com>.

To guarantee convention rates, reservations must be received by June 23, 2025 (or earlier if our contracted room block has been filled by that date). Rooms are subject to applicable taxes (currently 14.625%). Check-in time is 4pm and check-out time is 11am. Rates are in effect three days before and three days after our convention week so plan to come early and stay late to enjoy all that the area has to offer.

Amuse Restaurant serves breakfast Monday to Friday from 6:30-10:30am and on Saturday and Sunday from 7-11am. Amuse Bar is open for dinner from 4-11pm.

## Important Changes for Hotel Meals in 2025

**Breakfast** – Note that a complete buffet breakfast is included in the \$149 Sheraton Hotel room rate. Hotel hours for breakfast currently are 6:30-10:30am weekdays and 7:00 to 11:00am weekends.

**Lunch** – Note that the Sheraton Hotel restaurant does not currently provide any lunch service so all convention attendees will need to provide their own lunches. Options include many local eateries (short car or Uber distances); order-in for delivery to the hotel; earlier purchased lunch items can be kept in the mini-refrigerators in all hotel rooms; lunch can be skipped after eating a large breakfast, etc.

<https://gesneriadsociety.org/conventions/2025-convention-parsippany-nj/>



## Wishfully Seeking:

Members can ask for gesneriads they would like to grow. Members who have gesneriads to share as cuttings, rhizomes, seeds, young plants and tubers please list those here. So please email [Donnabeverin@gmail.com](mailto:Donnabeverin@gmail.com) with your requests.

### **Barb Stewart seeking:**

*Chrysothemis pulchella* 'Black Flamingo'

*Primulina brassicoides* 'Marble Leaf'

### **Andy Meier seeking:**

*Sinningia speciosa* (Florist Gloxinia) 'Periodots Darth Vader'

*Streptocarpus* 'Samantha'

Variegated *Streptocarpus* leaf.

### **Jill Fischer seeking:**

*Columnea crassifolia*

*Gesneria pedicellaris*.

**Bill Schmidt is seeking** *Achimenes* 'Glory'

### **David Turley seeking:**

*Paradrymonia*

*Christopheria xantha* (was *Episcia*)

*Primulina lutea* (was *Chirita eburnea*, yellow form)

### **Maria Walueff seeking:**

*Columnea* midget (She lost hers during vacation)

**From Church personnel: Please use the Youth Room on our upper level for your meetings until further notice. I'm not sure when the water damage repairs will be completed in Room 3, but will let you know. There will, of course, be no extra charge for using the different space!**

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

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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 \$15 per year. You can send your payment to NCAC 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/>