

# Petal Tones



National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society Newsletter

Volume 47 Number 4

April 2016



Drew's Best Sinningia in Show: *Sinningia speciosa*

## President's Message

"Where the heck is spring? New England snowstorms in April. Temperatures in the Baltimore/DC area at freezing or below at night. And the wind! I'm sick of it! I want to get out in the yard and clean up the flower beds. Plant some trees. Cut down some others. And plant out some gesneriads.

But that's just me whining and complaining. Instead I should be singing the praises to all of you for the wonderful show we put on at Behnkes on March 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. It was a huge amount of work, but we showed our best plants, displays, art work and sold a wide variety of gesneriad plants. There was a good turnout of visitors to the show with quite a few traveling quite a distance! Our show did not

NCAC meetings are held at BEHNKES NURSERIES  
11300 Baltimore Ave, Beltsville, MD 20705

Behnkes opens at 8:00am if you would like to browse and shop before the meeting. Gather at 10am to get set up, with the meeting beginning at 10:30am. Meet the second Saturday of the month. \$10 yearly dues.

April 9<sup>th</sup>: Gesneriad discussion various species:  
Sinningia tubiflora, Plant of the Month: Kohleria  
Raffle table: one ticket for attending & more 3/\$1.00

May 2016: Review of NCAG and Baltimore AV  
Spring Shows Plant of the Month: Lesser know  
gesneriads

June 2016: Hands on Hybridizing by Jim Roberts  
Plant of the Month: Columnea

generate a lot of income, per se, but I think we may have made some new plant friends and introduced more than just a few people to our wonderful world of Gesneriads!

The NCAC Board had a meeting on Sunday, April 3rd and we discussed everything good and everything that needed a little work before our next show, but I think the item of primary importance to come out of the meeting is our need to be at the NCAC meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup>. That's when some of the show visitors may attend their first meeting and it's our job to make sure they have a great experience!

The plant of the month is Kohleria. If you have any Kohleria plants in flower, bring them in. If you have any extra rhizomes or cuttings of Kohleria for the raffle table, bring them in. And if you have any

special growing tips or words of praise for one special Kohleria in your collection come prepared to share it. As usual, please bring lots of gesneriad plants, tubers, rhizomes, cuttings and other goodies to share on our raffle table! It will be great to have lots to share if we have some new members attend.

I want to encourage everyone to get involved in our meetings. That's what this month's meeting is going to be all about. Three of our members are going to give short programs that they've put together on some special plant or botanist associated with Gesneriads. Active members make the best members, feeling personally involved when he or she gets busy doing research on a plant or a historical person involved in gesneriads. Then, when you share that information with the group, you're becoming an involved chapter member, rather than just a chapter meeting attendee. We need more members! We need you to become involved. Let's all learn from one another. If you have questions or thoughts on how to make the meetings more engaging, have ideas for programs or are willing to present a program, please let me know!

Good growing. And hopefully spring is right around the corner." Jim

### **Titanotrichum oldhamii** by Johanna Zinn

*Titanotrichum oldhamii* is a rhizomatous gesneriad native to Taiwan, Japan, and Fujian, a province in southeast China. According to the book "Gesneriaceae of South China", it grows in shaded valleys at elevations of 100 meters to 1,200 meters in a few populations with few plants. The authors proposed an IUCN category of Critically Endangered. In the spring of 2013, I purchased two plants of *Titanotrichum oldhamii*. One I put in a pot in Pro-Mix, and placed it outside under the shade cloth of my growing area. Because *Titanotrichum oldhamii* grows from a rhizome, I thought that it would require good drainage to survive the winter in our soil and climate, so the second plant was placed in well amended soil at the edge of a raised bed in the shade.

Both plants grew quickly through the summer. The plant in the pot needed fairly frequent watering, but I managed to keep up with the watering after reading a post by John Boggan who suggested



keeping a saucer filled with water under the pot. The plant in the ground received an inch to an inch and a half of rain/watering weekly.

In September, the potted plant went into the plant room. The plant in the garden did not flower, but it produced three stems covered with clumps of fuzzy looking propagules. When the propagules looked dry, I cut the stems on which they grew, brought them into the house, and dried them for another two weeks. At that point I broke them off the stems and put the tiny propagules in the refrigerator until January when I planted them along with seeds.



I had good germination, gave away multiple seedlings, and planted several of the small plants in my garden. One or more squirrels promptly dug them up, and they dried out and died. Fortunately, my original plant in the ground survived a fairly cold

winter, and was twice the size as it had been when I planted it the prior summer. The plant that I had overwintered in the house did not survive, probably because I had let its soil, and saucer, dry out a few times.



The second year I had several flower stems with beautiful golden yellow blooms with burgundy markings in the throat of the bloom, and two stems with propagules. While planting something else near it in the spring, I inadvertently dug up a piece of rhizome, [see photo] because I had not expected the rhizomes to grow and spread more than an inch or two the first year. So far, it has survived three winters in my garden, and I'm hoping to see the plant again this spring.

### Tips and Musings by Andrew Norris

I have discovered several sensitive species of gesneriads and begonias that show leaf edge and leaf tip browning. Often, once placed under cover, the plant recovers and it was assumed that the plant wanted more humidity. Plants, with a few exceptions, wanting more than my ambient humidity, which is 80%, was perplexing. Often, other growers were growing the same plants in the open, as potted plants, with no problems.

It wasn't until inquiring about my trailing Saintpaulia varieties that the renowned grower of trailers, Sandra Skalski informed me that many trailers develop browning leaf tips, when using water soluble fertilizers. The nutrient precipitates and crystals accumulate and damage the thinner leaf tips, on trailers. Getting back to the other Gesneriads showing the browning leaf edges, I have decided that these plants are best wicked over plain water and having Osmocote placed in their potting mix or grown as potted plants, not wicked, and fertilized

with Osmocote or dilute liquid fertilizer. With my trailing violets, I followed Sandra's advice and now fertilize wicked plants with Dyna-gro Foliage Pro, which is a liquid fertilizer.

I'm often asked what light bulbs are best for growing gesneriads and begonias. The answer can depend on many factors, notably which genera we are discussing, but a generalized answer is as follows.

Plants grown primarily for foliage and are forest floor or epiphytes growing under the shade of the canopy are best grown under T8 or T12 tubes with a 5000k color temperature. The higher the K (K stands for Kelvin, which is the measure of temperature the bulbs burns at and this dictates its spectral output) the higher amounts of blue light reaching the plant. Blue light is a far penetrating wavelength and therefore more intense to plants, than lower Kelvin ratings. Often, 6500k bulbs are said to be closer to natural sunlight, in spectrum, but our shade growing varieties aren't experiencing unobstructed sun or the full intensity of all of its wavelengths, so the gentler 5000k is best for them. Now, when it comes to frequently blooming varieties or those plants that are typically shown in flower, using one 5000K tube and one 3000k tube (warm white) will be ideal. The red wave length are among the weakest wavelengths and its intensity is quickly diminished by distance away from the source. Deep sea creatures often appear bright red, once brought to the surface, since red wavelengths never reach them, at the depths they survive in, they appear dull and darkly colored, in their natural setting. The red wavelengths encourage optimal flowering in plants such as Saintpaulia. For most species a 10 hour on and off schedule is ideal and 10-12" away from the plants is a good place to start. Higher light plants, such as Sinningia speciosa and cardinalis are best grown under 12-14 hours of light and 6 tubes of T8 light. I would not use more than 2 of the lower 3000k bulbs, out of the 6, since they like the intensity of higher bulbs and using a 6500k or even up to an 8,000k tube will be much appreciated.

#### **Desperately Seeking**

Members looking for certain gesneriads. If you have plants, seeds, rhizomes or cuttings, please share!

Jim Roberts..... Mitraria coccinea  
Drew Norris.....Sinningia 'An's Nyx  
Donna Beverin..... Seemannia 'Little Red'

## Underwater Arrangements Made Simple

(Show lecture given by Barbara Stewart)

One of the most stunning designs in a show is often the underwater arrangement. Members of the public are often fascinated by these beautiful designs and wonder how they are created. Many exhibitors, though, are intimidated by the thought of attempting one, as they are very different from other designs in the show. However, underwater designs are quite easy if a few simple rules are followed.

The first rule is to keep it simple. Less is better in most arrangements, and this applies particularly to underwater designs. As with any flower arrangement, the principles and elements of design apply. It should have a distinct line or shape, good balance, a variety of textures and colors, and blossoms as the focal point. In addition, the design must reflect the theme and requirements stated in the show schedule. The design should appropriately fill the space of the container selected. While the Gesneriad Society has no rule against the design touching the sides of the container, it should be avoided unless there is a purpose, as this would be overfilling the container space.



The second rule is to test the design ahead of time to see how the various materials work under water. While the basics of design are the same for underwater arrangements as for other arrangements, the big difference is mechanics. Everything in an underwater design has to be anchored and not floating aimlessly in the water. The best tool for this is a good hot glue gun (hot, not low temp). In the event hot glue does fail, the best back-up is modeling or floral

clay. Also, it is important to find out how different plant materials hold up in water. Some things will last several days, while others will deteriorate quickly and cloud the water. Of course, fresh blossom and plant material will stay fresh longer.



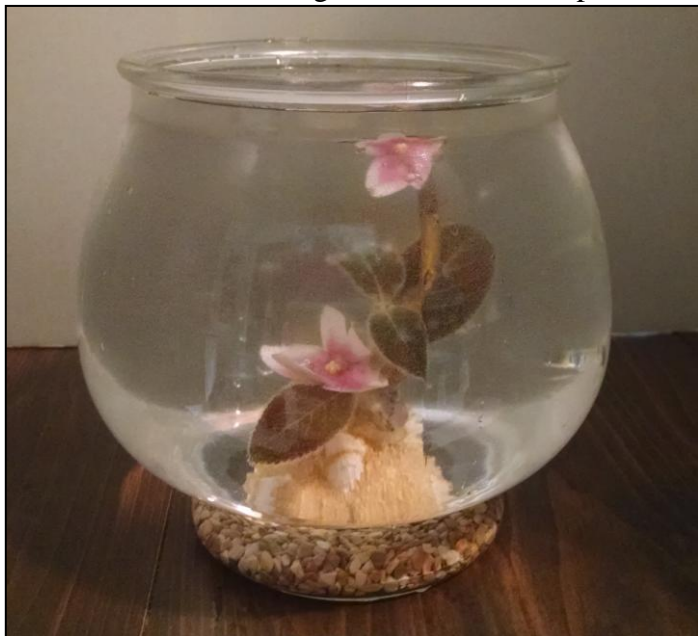
I start with a good solid base to hold the whole arrangement. Test it first to see if it sinks or floats. If it floats, then glue something to the bottom to weigh it down, such as a heavy metal washer or fishing weight. Another option is to glue the base to the bottom of the bowl or anchor it with modeling clay or floral clay.

Next, attach the line material. Again, testing is important. A stem of greenery may have the perfect curve to it, but totally lose its form when placed in water, or leaves will bend upward instead of lying flat. When in doubt, wrap some fine wire up the stem and form it into the desired shape. If there is other firm material in the design (in my demo there was a stick attached to the base), the line material or other plant material can be hot glued to the other items in the design where they would naturally fall if they were not in water.

Finally, attach the blossoms with the hot glue gun. I usually put glue under the blossom stem and also on the top for extra security. Then make sure all the glue “strings” are removed. Even with good secure gluing, sometimes a blossom will come loose once the design is placed in water. Unfortunately, hot glue is worthless on wet material. This is where clay comes to the rescue. Invest in a selection of natural colors that will coordinate with the plant material in the design. A small piece of modeling clay will stick to

anything and can be formed into any shape necessary to anchor the loose material.

While it is not a requirement, I like to finish my design with something covering the bottom of the bowl. Many designers make the mistake of overdoing this with material that is too large, too much, or a distracting color. My favorite material is fine crushed shells, coarse sand, or very small pebbles. It helps to wet the material before placing in the water, as sometimes air gets trapped between the fine pieces and cause some to float. (This is one reason I prefer coarse sand to fine sand.) The material should also be rinsed using a fine mesh strainer, as any dirt in it will also float (and have to be picked out). The material should be put in after the design is placed in the bowl so it does not get under the base and keep it from sitting level. Some designers use distilled water or tap water set out overnight to reduce the bubbles that will form on the design. Sometimes the bubbles enhance a design and sometimes they take over and become distracting, but a good designer wants to be in control of this. Also, it can be risky to use untested water from a show location, so exhibitors usually bring their own to be safe. I fill my container by slowly pouring the water down the sides of the container with a small watering can so the force of the water does not disturb the design or move it out of place.



One other consideration is the shape of the container used. Water in a curved container acts as a magnifying glass and greatly distorts parts of the design where the curve is greatest. The final view under water may be very different from the view of

the design outside the container, and it may not look like the design intended. A safe way to avoid this pitfall is to display the arrangement in a container with a flat face. Underwater designs are simple and fun to create as long as a few simple rules are followed. Remember to keep it simple, anchor everything well, test it ahead of time, and enjoy your beautiful creation.

### Business Cards



We shall soon receive an order of business cards for our members to share with others as we spread the word about our National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society.

### Bloomin' Now



Barb's *Streptocarpus* 'My Fancy'



Barb's *Niphaea oblonga* blooming

Bloomin' Now cont'



Barb's *Streptocarpus* 'Franken Prunella'

Bloomin' Now cont'



Barb's *Aeschynanthus* 'Black Pagoda'



Barb's *Primulina linearifolia*



Donna's *Streptocarpus* 'Ladyslipper yellow and purple'

Bloomin' Now cont'



Donna's *Sinningia* 'An's Nyx'

Bloomin' Now cont'



Donna's Mini *Sinningia* NOID hybrid



Donna's Mini *Sinningia* NOID hybrid



Donna's *Sinningia conspicua*



## *Sinningia helleri*



*Sinningia helleri* is a gesneriad that was thought to be extinct. In 2015 Mauro Peixoto in Brazil found it in the wild and he distributed seeds.



This plant was grown and photographed by Hung Nguyen. When Hung came to judge our show he gave me a packet of *S. helleri* seeds to grow for our NCAC group. I have planted the seeds on

March 22, 2016. I still have no germination as of April 4, 2016.

Thanks to Alan laVergne, Hung Nguyen and Alan's website <http://www.burwur.net/sinns/sinns.htm>



I shall research, add more information next month and keep everyone advised of germination and growth. Donna Beverin

## Plant of the Month for 2016



### **April Kohleria**

May	lesser known gesneriads
June	Columnea
July	Achimenes
Aug	Eucadonia
Sept	Episcia (program)
Oct	Chrysothemis
Nov	Aeschynanthus
Dec	Seemannia

Here is the list of our Plants of the Month. This list is not set in stone and members can request a particular plant be featured; however, the plants that go along with the program for the month will be more firm, such as Episcias in September for Drew's program on Episcias. Members can bring in featured plants for show-and-tell or to show and be judged. It would also be a good time to bring in extras of the plant in subject for the raffle table. Barb



**Note from the Editor:** To encourage members to contribute content to our Petal Tones newsletter the following incentives have been approved.

- 5 raffle tickets with 3 month expiration will be given to each member who submits an article with 3-5 paragraphs in length on a specific topic.
- 3 tickets with a 3 month expiration will be given to each member who submits 5 pictures
- \$25 gift certificate of the winner's choosing will be given for best article of the year
- \$10 gift certificate will be given for best photo of the year, to be voted on at the end of the year.

Also I would be glad to "clean up" any photographs before publishing in Petal Tones if you would like. Please share your experiences with your plants in a short article, or a visit to a green house or to another plant lover's collection. You'd be surprised how other folks will enjoy reading about your experiences! Thanks, Donna

### **NCAC Meeting Program Schedule for 2016**

April 2016: Plant Hunters:

This will be a group participation program. Three members speaking about 15 minutes on a botanist, growing technique, particular gesneriad, historical facts regarding horticulture, or a personal Gesneriad related trip to see Gesneriads in situ or large herbarium collections.

May 2016: Review of NCAC and Baltimore AV Spring Shows (labeled slide show) and there will be a presentation of cultural recommendations, from growers outside the club (mostly and hopefully), pertaining to the care of an exceptional species/variety, or a single Gesneriad genus.

June 2016: Hands on Hybridizing by Jim Roberts

July 2016: Summer picnic

July 5-9, 2016: National Convention Wilmington, DE

August 2016: Hands on Terrarium Workshop, with materials provided to set up and maintain a small terrarium Gesneriad. Johanna Zinn

September 2016: Episcias: Varieties, Culture, and botanical History, presented by Drew Norris

October 2016: Karyn Cichocki will discuss her Gesneriad Collecting Trip to Ecuador. Nominating panel for election of new officers will be determined.

November 2016: Meeting at the Mid-Atlantic African Violet Show with Jim Roberts and Drew Norris discussing setting up grow light stands.

December 2016: Holiday Party

New officers are elected

January 2017: MAAVS Slide Show and discussion, Presenter to be determined.

New Officer Installation

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