

Petal Tones



National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society Newsletter

Volume 47 Number 2

February 2016



Barb's *Kohleria* 'dark velvet'

President's Message

Happy February,

I trust no one lost any plants with the January blizzard. Record snow amounts for many regions, but luckily very few power outages which could have decimated some collections. We have a generator which keeps the heat going if the power goes out, but the furnace only heats the basement and first floor. The second floor where I keep a good part of my collection would get pretty darn chilly. The snow was stopped before I got up on Sunday morning, and I was out grocery shopping Sunday afternoon. Huge grocery store near us only had one checkout line open. However, there was no one in line in front of me when I got there, and even after paying there was still no one in line behind me. What a treat!! I was scheduled to fly to Texas that evening but all flights out were canceled and I couldn't get there until Tuesday. I missed two days of important meetings

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. We gather at 10am to get set up, with the meeting beginning at 10:30am. Meet usually the second Saturday of the month. \$10 yearly dues

February 13th: Primulina, Petrocosmea, African Violet & Streptocarpus Panel with 4 growers

March 12th: Show discussion and Plant Preparation for Show

March 18 – 20, 2016 NCAC Show at Behnkes

but got to spend some nice down time in San Antonio. Getting excited about our meeting this month. Saints' and Streps', Prims' and Pets'. Four old world genera that are all favorites with the African Violet crowd. Why? What makes them so easy compared to the South American Gesneriads? Is it their general adaptability to home conditions or something else? Let's all find out together this month. The program was originally supposed to contain Sinningia as one of the four genera, and that's how it was presented to Donna. But the January issue listed Petrocosmea, and Donna is again promoting Petrocosmea. So she must really, really want to hear about Petrocosmea! I've seen them in the wild, so I'll give my 15 minutes of expert advice on that genus.

Brian Connor in an expert on growing Streptocarpus. He can grows winning show plants and will be entering a lot of his plants at the Convention in Delaware this coming July. You may have seen some of his plants on our raffle table.

He's going to share his advice with us on growing more than propagation. Barbara Stewart has exhibited some nice Primulina at meetings and in shows and she'll offer her advice on keeping those Chinese and Vietnamese plants happy. And lastly, Drew Norris has had some wonderful plants at MAAVS and in the Baltimore African Violet Show in recent years. Let's learn more about his secrets. Please spread the word to your African Violet and other plant buddies. We hope to have a good crowd. There will be lots of answers to your questions at the end of the program.

Also, please remember to bring plants for the raffle table. Plants related to the talk would be especially welcome, but you know this group – we'll take anything home to grow!

The show is coming, about 6 more weeks! There is still time to put down cuttings of fast rooting material such as Columnea, or split some pots of plants that aren't going to be in the show. We need to sell – both to help the club's treasury and to get our plants out there to the public so that they'll have to join us at a meeting to learn how to care for them.

Finally, Barb Stewart is reviving the plant of the month program. This month we've got four special genera that we're going to hear about. Let's not leave all the fancy plant material up to the speakers. Bring in some examples of Primulina, Petrocosmea, Saintpaulia and Streptocarpus. Maybe some stuff that is blooming too early for the show or something that won't quite be a show plant but is still quite showy. Jim

Bloomin' Now



Donna's *Sinningia guttata* seedling. Never thought it would bloom at such a young and short age!



Donna's *Episcia viridifolia* from Barb Stewart's cutting



Donna's cutting of *Kohleria* 'Jester' from Drew & Jim



Barb's *Smithiantha* 'Pat's Pet Donkey'



Barb put down 2 leaves of *Smithiantha* 'Big Dots' and one had a tiny bloom, one had a baby plant and the other created rhizomes. Surely a productive pair of leaves!!!



Barb's *Primulina* 'Souvenir'



Barb's *Sinningia cardinalis*



Brian's *Streptocarpus* 'Lolita'



Brian's *Streptocarpus* 'DS Waterfall'



Brian's *Streptocarpus* 'Telma' (Piotr K)



Brian's *Streptocarpus* 'Rondo' (Piotr K)



Johanna's *Seemannia* 'Chic' and rhizomes below





While putting Seemannia 'Chic' into a new terrarium, Johanna noticed rhizomes forming on the roots. She had torn some of the roots while removing old sphagnum moss and thought that the roots might form rhizomes if she placed them on the surface of the media in a propagation box. Instead, new leaves/plantlets are forming. It's the easiest propagation ever!



Ask Mr. Gesneriad

Mr. Gesneriad,
I have been repotting tubers and rhizomes of plants that have gone dormant. One of them is XAchimenantha "Golden Jubilee". Since it is an intergeneric, should I keep it dry all winter like achimenes, or give it a little water periodically? Barb

Mr. G's answer: The XAchimenantha will generally behave more like its Achimenes' parent and should be okay on the dry side.

Mr. Gesneriad,
With capillary matting watering does it help to put a wick in anyhow or just be sure the potting soil is firmly in the bottom of the pot with holes? Donna

Mr. G's answer:
Many people use wicks in matted plants. It helps ensure good contact to the matting. This is especially true with small plants that don't put a lot of weight on the mat.

Plant of the Month for 2016

- Feb Streps, Pets, Primulinas & Saintpaulias
- Mar Nautilocalyx
- Apr Kohleria
- May lesser known gesneriads (suggested list to follow)
- 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

NCAC Meeting on January 9th

I don't think anyone thought that very many members were going to show up for our NCAC meeting on Saturday, January 9th. Our President, Jim Roberts was giving a talk on Sinningias to the AV Club in Virginia and some of our members belong to that group and would be absent.

However, I arrived at Behnkes around 10am which is a first for me since I drive about 2 hours, but I left a bit early in hopes of getting there early to set up my seedling containers I was bringing along with a show and tell plant, *Sinningia reitzii*.

I was pleasantly surprised that folks began rolling in and we ended up with quite a large group of members! And a new member joined, Sally Leonhard!

I knew Brian was giving the presentation on propagation, but did not know Drew was attending. I was very happy to see him as I had assumed he would be helping Jim at the Sinningia talk. Had I know he was coming I told him, I would have brought my Nepenthes plant to show him.

So we were all chatting and putting food on the serving table until Brian said we were going to start the official meeting. We had one row of tables set up but at the last minute decided we needed to add another row so we would have room to sit around the table and have room to put our plant boxes and other propagation supplies in the center.

Well, I shall tell you, we all could not shut up! We were all so excited and stimulated by our discussions

that we bordered rudeness as we interrupted each other with dynamic conversation! I cannot even tell you about all the convoluted conversations that ensued! It was fun!

Brian had, at the last minute delegated the propagation by rhizomes to Corey, the prop of various forms of stem cuttings to Drew, seed propagation to me, while doing the Strep prop himself. Brian started off demonstrating how he uses a long plant tray to set up his Strep props. He puts Streps in soilless mix of 70% perlite and 30% vermiculite. He puts in six smaller containers with each holding different varieties



of Strep cuttings so he is sure what variety is in that container. Those babies can pop up and easily be confused for another neighbor variety if they are not in separate containers! Cut out center stem of strep leaf.



Be sure to plant the correct side down with the veins going up and the fresh cut in the soil. It may help to soak cuttings in water with a few drops of Super Thrive and make the cuts under the water with the Super Thrive in it. Had a brief discussion about ST and it is made up of a lot of diluted fish emulsion and

vitamin B.

Stem cuttings with Drew: Use stem cuttings with two nodes. Nodes are where the new growth will come from. Drew demonstrated how he takes a rather large

cutting and cuts off most of the larger leaves and pulls off bottom leaves being sure to have at least 2 nodes.



If the plant has hairy stems shave off some of the hairs to expose the stem before planting. Label, label, label! Drew recommends using freezer

tape on the side of his pots. Brian uses stand up plastic labels. Just be sure to label! Softwood cuttings do not need rooting hormone but hardwood cuttings do benefit from rooting hormone.

Corey did a great job explaining about rhizomes and how those tiny powerhouse capsules can be planted whole to grow into a whole plant, or you can break off the rhizome in several pieces, or you can take off all the tiny segments of each rhizome like peeling corn off the cob and plant each segment. Using a container that will be covered, spread out all the segments over the top of the soil. They can be lightly covered or just left on the surface of the soil. In a few weeks you will have lots of babies of that particular variety to grow on. And the larger the rhizome, the larger the plant you can expect to grow. Some rhizomous gesneriads are Achimenes, Kohleria, Amalophyllon, Smithiantha, Eucodonia, Diastema, and Gloxinia perennis. Drew shared bazillion varieties of Achimenes rhizomes with us all!

I spoke about how I grow seeds. I used to put many varieties of seeds into one larger container and mark the soil off with labels that also are used to segment the growing areas.



However, I have changed to using one container per variety of seed as those little guys can jump and land in places you would never expect. You can use your favorite potting mix or use soil and sterilize the soil in the microwave. I am using part perlite, part vermiculite and peat moss and on the top I put a layer of milled sphagnum moss to prevent damping off. I moisten the mix in the container and let it rest for awhile so the water is absorbed.

When sowing I use a piece of white paper folder twice to create a crease in the center. Then I open up the seed packet over the white paper so I can see all those little guys!

Then holding the paper you can carefully broadcast the seeds over the surface of the medium trying to spread them out. I do not cover gesneriads seeds and I put a clear lid or plastic wrap on the container as most need light to germinate. I place the containers on a plant shelf close to light. Then wait for the fun of opening that container's lid and see those green babies! Once they are born you can move them around with a tooth pick or any such utensil, as it has been shown that they grow faster with movement. You can also transplant them at a young age and they will grow faster that way too.



We enjoyed seeing some Show and Tell Plants, as well. Johanna brought *Achimenes* 'Tiny Red' that



Is so cute in its little container! And *Sinningia muscicola* was giving a fabulous display for the winter months! After the meeting Johanna went home and potted up all the baby plants and cuttings from the meeting! See the following three pictures.

We had a controversial discussion about how to sterilize cutting utensils. We did not really agree on a consensus as it is more complicated than it appears. One person using Chlorine, one using heat from candle and some discussed heating potting soil in the oven. Barry share that it takes much longer under these conditions to actually kill all the germs especially in regards to orchids. In discussing viruses, Barry and Drew chatted about the probability of a virus usually occurs with thrips (Drew), so it downplays the concern for a lengthy sterilization procedure. So the jury is out. I am still using Chlorine, a flame and sterilizing potting soil in the microwave on high for 6 minutes. I think I shall start taking pictures during our presentations so I can share all the fun!



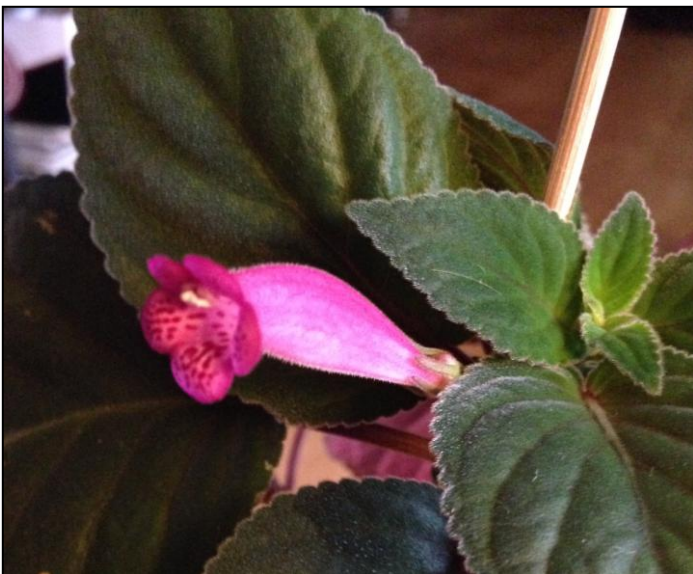
Happy Valentine's Day to All!



Baby *Begonia alchemilloides* potted up



An unknown *Columnnea* cutting from Barry. Johanna planted the naked stem after scraping off a bit of the thickened outer layer of the stem around the nodes, and putting the scraped side down as Drew had instructed to do with “hairy” stems.



Donna’s show & tell: *Sinningia reitzii*

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 you 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 so much! Donna

NCAC Meeting Program Schedule for 2016

February 2016: Panel Discussion:

- Drew Norris: Saintpaulia
 Barbara Stewart: Primulina
 Jim Roberts: Sinningia
 Karen Allen: Streptocarpus.

March 2016: Show Discussion and Preparing plants for show and sale

March 18, 19, 20th: Spring Show

April 2016: Plant Hunters:

This will be a group participation program. In March, 5 ransom people will be selected (more to come on how, in March) and asked to submit a few paragraphs or 15 minutes worth of information, on a botanist, growing technique, historical facts regarding horticulture, or a personal Gesneriad related trip to see Gesneriads in situ or large herbarium collections. If chosen, club member(s) chosen does not wish to present before the group, Drew will take the information and present on the member's behalf.

May 2016: Review of NCAG 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. The Presenter is to be determined.

June 2016: Hands on Hybridizing by Jim Roberts

July 2016: Summer picnic

July 2016: National Convention Wilmington, DE

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

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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The Gesneriad Society website
www.gesneriadsociety.org

Gesneriad Society Webinar Information

Each webinar (live or anytime) will cost \$9.95 and may be ordered at <http://shop.gesneriadsociety.org/>

Information for live webinars

All live webinars will begin at 9 p.m. EST (or, 8 p.m. CST, 7 p.m. MST and 6 p.m. PST). Orders received within 24 hours of the event may not be able to be accommodated and the person will be advised as to options. The viewing link will be sent within 24 hours of the order, and a reminder email will be sent one hour before the presentation. Please note that, while you can have as many people as you want in the room listening, you cannot share your link with others. You will be able to ask questions.

Information for anytime webinars

"Anytime webinars" will be available the day after the live webinar. The viewing link will be sent within 48 hours of placement of the order. Please note that while you can have as many people as you want in the room listening, you cannot share your link with others. You will not be able to ask questions. The anytime webinar will be available for one month following the live webinar.

February 9, 2016

Growing and Showing Miniature Sinningias: Listen to a Pro from the Comfort of Your Home

Miniature sinningias are not nearly as difficult to grow as you might imagine. These delicate looking plants can be quite accommodating. Would you like to know how to grow them better? Are you not quite certain where to start? The "any time" viewing period will be February 10- March 10. Dale Martens, 2014 winner of Best Streptocarpus and Best in Show at The Gesneriad Society's annual convention, discusses growing and showing miniature sinningias. Perhaps you've seen Dale Martens postings on several discussion groups or read her articles in *Gesneriads* journal. Now, you'll have the opportunity to listen to her discuss how she grows show-stopping specimens of this genus.

March 1, 2016

Growing and Showing Primulinas: Listen to a Pro from the Comfort of Your Home

Primulinas, formerly known as Chiritas, are a great plant for any gesneriad grower to have in his or her collection. If the foliage is ornamental enough you don't have to worry if it isn't in bloom come show time. Would you like to know how to grow them better? Are you not quite certain where to start? The Gesneriad Society is now offering you a unique opportunity to listen to one of its own members share his considerable expertise on this subject. The "any time" viewing period will be March 2- April 2. If you enjoy the *Gleanings* publication, you are in for a real treat. Its editor, Mel Grice is our expert this month. He participates in shows across the country and regularly walks away with a basketful of ribbons. A generous man with both his time and his knowledge, he has agreed to share his considerable growing expertise with our webinar attendees. Now, you'll have the opportunity to listen to him discuss how he grows his award-winning show specimens.

April 5, 2016

Meet the Gesneriad Family: Learn about the African Violet Sister Plants

While the names of some gesneriads might be difficult to pronounce, growing them is just a matter of knowing what to do. Many are quite accommodating and grow in the same conditions as African violets. In fact, most violet growers have at least one or two other gesneriads in their collection. Are you not quite certain where to start? The Gesneriad Society is now offering you a unique opportunity to listen to one of its own members share her considerable expertise on this subject. The "any time" viewing period will be April 6-May 6. The Society launched this modestly priced venture with one of its best growers, hybridizers and educators, Dale Martens, the Back to Basics columnist for the *Gesneriads* journal. She is the 2014 winner of Best in Show at The Gesneriad Society's annual convention, and she discusses growing and showing a variety of gesneriads. Perhaps you've seen Dale Martens postings on several discussion groups. Now, you'll have the opportunity to listen to her discuss how you can grow all sorts of gesneriads. This promises to be an information-packed hour that will open your eyes to the beauty of the "other gesneriads."