

# Petal Tones



National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society Newsletter

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A fuchsia and white, chimera-type violet Sherry grew from a stub she found at an estate sale where she bought an attractive pot. Just shows you what a good grower can do saving a plant!

## President's Message

**Barb Stewart**

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a pleasant holiday. As we begin a new year with a new slate of officers and directors, I want to encourage everyone to get more involved in club activities. Jim Roberts, VP, has a great line-up of programs scheduled for this year, starting with a workshop on growing gesneriads in feather rock. Should be fun!

My goal as president is to keep business meetings as short as possible so we can focus more on learning about how to grow different gesneriads. One of my favorite parts of the meeting (besides the raffle table) is our "show and tell". This is a chance for members to show off something special or bring in a plant to ask questions.

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 the second Saturday of the month. \$10 yearly dues. Please pay now for 2017.

January 14<sup>th</sup> 2017: Growing in Feather Rock **presented by Jim Roberts**

February 11<sup>th</sup> 2017: Propagation Workshop

March 11<sup>th</sup> 2017: *Kohleria* - an interesting and easy to grow rhizomatous genus.

This will also include the "plant of the month" which is an opportunity to pool our knowledge about particular genera. The plant for January is *Alsobia*, and I have pulled together some basic information from the web to get a head start. Bring in one or two you are currently growing so we can share growing tips, and if possible add some cuttings or extras to the raffle table. "Show and Tell" is also an opportunity to get judging practice and advice. Bring in a plant or design to be judged and learn how to improve your point scores.

Speaking of designs, we haven't seen any in a while. I brought in a few early last year, but never had any competition. As an experienced designer, I can assure you that practice is everything. The more designs you do (and are judged), the better you will become. Now is the time to start practicing for our show in May. Designs are also a great opportunity to earn awards when you don't have the best show plants. I have hundreds of plants, but not enough time to take care of them and grow them into winning show plants; however, I can put together a container garden or artistic arrangement a few weeks before show and win some blues!

Speaking of show...now is the time to start looking at potential show plants and getting them ready. Feel free to bring in one for advice on how to make it into a good show plant. Also, start rooting some cuttings for the sale table. A great way to get people interested in coming to meetings is to sell them some plants so they will want to come back and learn more.

Increasing membership is still a top priority for us this year. Jim is now the Membership chair and is working hard to increase membership. This is a big job, however, and he will need all of us to become involved. One of the best ways to increase membership is to invite a friend. People we know who join the club tend to stay in the club. The show is also a great opportunity to publicize our club and attract new members. It is a big production, and we need as many members as possible to be involved. If you are not currently on a committee for the show, Jim is show chairman and would love to hear from you.

Besides the show, we still have an opening for one more director. We also need someone to chair the Hospitality committee and Ways and Means committee, so here is your chance to be more involved, if you are not currently holding an office or chairing a committee. These are not difficult or time-consuming jobs, but still very important to keep our club running smoothly. So, let's have a fun year, and I hope to see many of you at our first meeting this month.

### Plants of the Month for 2017

January	<i>Alsobia</i>
February	<i>Lysionotus</i>
March	<i>Kohleria</i>
April	<i>Saintpaulia</i>
May	Show plants
June	<i>Nematanthus</i>
July	<i>Achimenes</i>
August	<i>Petrocosmea</i>
September	<i>Gasteranthus</i>
October	N/A
November	<i>Mini Sinningia</i>
December	<i>Streptocarpus</i>



*Kohleria* blooming now for Donna. Thought it was 'Silver Feather' but leaves do not have the silvery pattern, but a solid color. *Kohleria bogotensis* is supposed to have a silver leaf pattern even though the flowers look the same... so the jury is out...



Barb's *Kohleria* 'Dark Velvet'



Barb's *Kohleria* 'Dark Velvet'

Barb's *Kohleria* 'Dark Velvet' which is growing in her kitchen bay window. It is almost 3 feet tall. She let it grow this tall because she was waiting for it to bloom. Now what? She shall continue to enjoy the blooms for a while; but, needless to say, it is very top heavy. Repotting in a heavy clay pot will help. It is currently being wicked. Watch for rhizomes and young sprouts to be available at the propagation workshop in February!

### Bloomin' Now



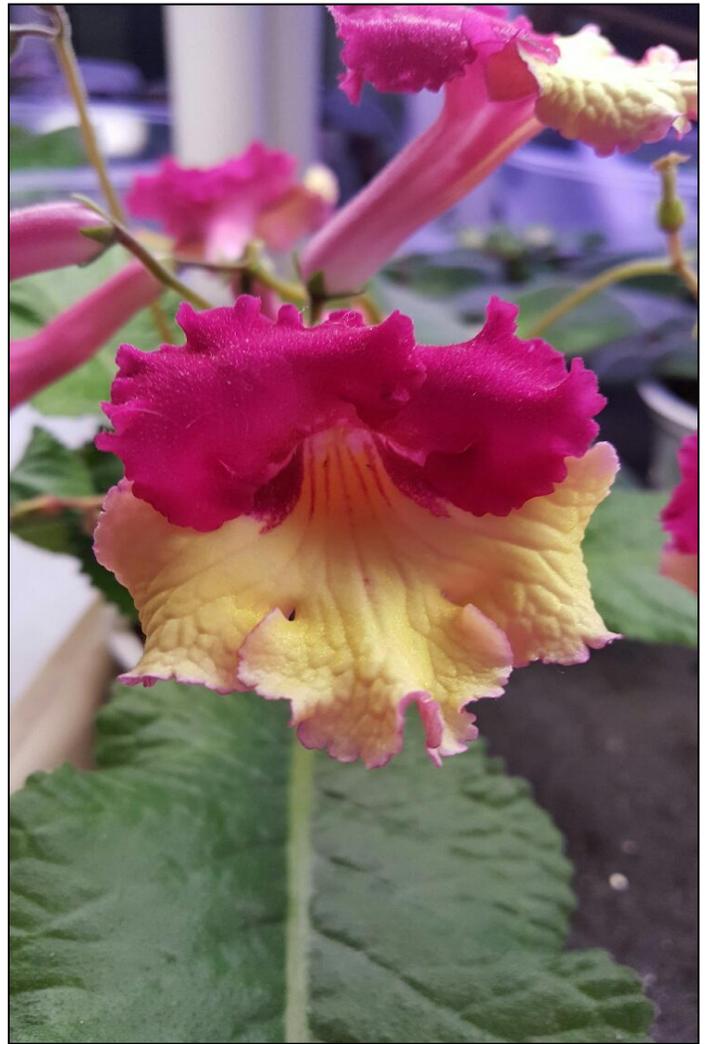
Barb's *Primulina* 'Aiko'



Barb's *Sinningia* 'Amazade'



Barb's *Sinningia* 'Owlsee Red Hot'



Kitty's *Streptocarpus* 'Wow' .... So beautiful!



Barb's *Kohleria* 'Red Ryder'



Kitty's *Primulina dryas sinensis*

## Plant of the Month: *Alsobia*

**Barb Stewart**

*Alsobia* is a New World Gesneriad found in Central and South America, from Mexico to Brazil. The two original and very different species, *A. dianthiflora* and *A. punctata*, were originally classified as *Episcia* but reclassified as *Alsobia* in 1979. They grow as groundcovers in tropical rainforests. Several popular hybrids include *A. Cygnet*, *A. Iris August*, and *A. San Miguel*. *Alsobia* are fibrous rooted plants which are very easy to grow. They do well in natural light



Jim Robert's *Alsobia Chiapas*

*A. dianthiflora* is a small, velvety-leaved plant that produces stolens which will spread and fill a pot. It tends to bloom in warm months only, and prefers high humidity and cooler temperatures than other *Alsobia*. *A. dianthiflora* is a great plant to use in container gardens because of its small size.

The other *Alsobia* are more upright growing with woodier stems. *Alsobia Cygnet* is a hybrid of *A. dianthiflora* and *A. punctata* which can bloom all year and needs less humidity than *A. dianthiflora*. As with *Episcias*, the removal of stolens encourages more bloom as well as new growth from the base of the stem. *A. San Miguel* is another hybrid with a more compact habit and larger flowers than *A. Cygnet*. With white fringed flowers and trailing habit, *Alsobia* are sometimes called "lace flower vine".

Here are some resources for more information:

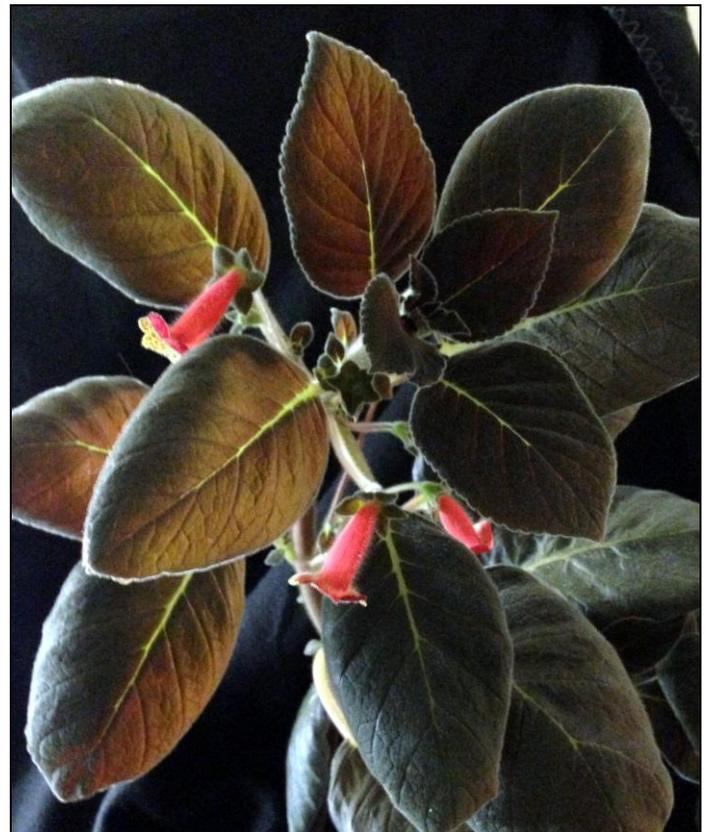
<http://www.gesneriads.ca/genepis.htm>

[http://www.greenculturesg.com/articles/aug06/aug06\\_alsobia.htm](http://www.greenculturesg.com/articles/aug06/aug06_alsobia.htm)

The Miracle Houseplants by Virginia F. and George A. Elbert

## Programs Planned for 2017

- January 14 - workshop on growing in feather rock.
- February 11 - Propagation Workshop
- March 11 - *Kohleria* - an interesting and easy to grow rhizomatous genus.
- April 8 - African Violets with unusual leaves or flowers (bustle leaves, spooned, girl, longifolia, chimera)
- May 13 - Show workshop - making sure everything is ready for the show on the 20<sup>th</sup>
- June 10 - Growing Gesneriads outdoors for the Summer
- July & August - TBD (picnic?)
- September 9 - Jim and Drew's Ecuador trip PowerPoint
- October 21 (third weekend - Orchid Show on second weekend) - Judges School for new judges and Student judges
- November 11 - Miniature *Sinningia* - growing these small wonders in Glass Containers - GREAT HOLIDAY GIFTS!
- December - Holiday Party at a member's home.
- **Show schedule: May 19 – 21, 2017**  
May 19 - Show entries and set-up  
May 20 - last minute entries. Judging. Sales and show open until Sunday, May 21 at 4.



Another view of Donna's *Kohleria*

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The National Gesneriad Society website:  
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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/174442276299173/?ref=bookmarks>