

# PETAL TONES



Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society

Volume 56 Number 1

January 2025



Peggy MacDonald's *Saintpaulia* "Frosty Denim"

## 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/83667560325?pwd=koQ8d2tp5FyQPD9CvekmeV0olaN8E5.1>

Jan. 11th – In person meeting with a webinar on Sinningias by Andy Meier

Feb. 8th – In person meeting with program on Kohlerias.

Mar. 8th – In person Propagation workshop led by Donna Beverin and Barbara Stewart

Apr. 12th – no meeting due to conflicts with other violet shows

May 10th – In person or Zoom meeting, depending on Green Spring Gardens Plant Sale

June 14th – In person meeting, program TBD (dog (ugly plants) show or AV species program by Kitty

July 12th – No meeting due to the Gesneriad Society Convention in NJ

Aug 9th – September NCAC Show preparation

Sept 13th – NCAC Mini Show at the Church

Oct. 11th – In person with program on

Streptocarpus by Andy Meier

Nov. 8th – Zoom business meeting, depending on dates of MAAVS convention

Dec. 13th – Holiday luncheon and meeting

## President's Message:

Happy New Year, everyone! At the December meeting, members in attendance decided that in-person meetings were popular and helped bring the club together. We have tentatively planned for 10 meetings this year, mostly in-person where we can chat and share plants at the raffle table. We will continue to use Zoom for every meeting so more people can participate. Zoom will also provide a back up option if weather becomes an issue. The church has welcomed us again this year; however, we would still like to search for another location with more space. Just a reminder, this is our first meeting of the new year and time to send in your dues, if you have not done so already. We have welcomed several new members this past year and hope to continue to grow the chapter.

Feel free to invite any friends or acquaintances that might be interested in growing gesneriads. It is a good time of the year to plant gesneriad seeds so check out Donna's methods of growing from seed on pages 9 and 10. Hope to see you at our meeting at the Church or at least join us on Zoom. In hopes that the weather clears for Saturday!

Barbara Stewart

**From Church personnel: Please use the Youth Room on our upper level for your meeting on January 11 and 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.

# Caterpillars by Barb Stewart

Another pest!

After noticing holes in my Streptocarpus leaves, I looked more closely and found the culprit – a small green caterpillar. After taking a picture and flushing it down the sewer, I calmed down and decided to find out more about caterpillars and why I am finding one just before winter.

In particular, I was curious which one was munching on my strep. This is not an easy thing to do, and in hindsight I wish I had taken a better picture and gotten more detail, as there were several on the web that looked like mine.

As everyone knows, caterpillars are the larva stage of moths and butterflies after the eggs hatch. It is the most dangerous stage when it eats the most and damages plants. They can consume 3 times their weight in plant material daily. Female adults can lay 200-300 eggs and produce 1-3 generations in a growing season.

What do caterpillars do in winter? Winter is elusive around here (Richmond, VA). We did not get a good hard freeze this year until Thanksgiving and snow is a pretty rare occurrence; however, caterpillars are not commonly found this time of year.

While some moths can migrate to warmer climates, caterpillars enter a dormant stage called “diapause” and rest for the winter. Outside, they hide in leaf litter, soil, or bark crevices and hibernate until the weather warms up. Some species will pupate and spend the winter in their cocoon while others will overwinter in the egg stage. Most will rest as caterpillars.

Some species can freeze solid and thaw when the weather warms (called “cryopreservation”). They produce glycerol, a natural anti-freeze, which prevents their inner cells from freezing.

So, what was eating my Streptocarpus and what was it doing there so late in the season? My best guess it is some type of looper, perhaps a cabbage looper or winter moth. These are caterpillars that do not have legs in the middle of their bodies and move by “inching” along. How did it get in my house? Best guess is it came in as an egg with one of my houseplants that spent the summer outdoors. I just hope there aren't a couple hundred more eggs waiting to hatch!





# Bloomin' Now



Johanna's *Gloxinella lindeniana*



Barb S. *Saintpaulia* 'Heritage Frolic'



Jill's *Saintpaulia* 'Morgan's Junior Mint.'

Jill: "A single, purple and white bell shaped flower, which I purchased for using in a dish garden awhile ago. Once it got going, I discovered it is a prolific bloomer, and some of the flowers are 'chimera' like."



Dena's *Michaelmoelleria vietnamensis*



Barb S. *Primulina* 'Dale's Periwinkle Blush'



## ***Primulina dryas* 'NaineArgente'**

By Peggy MacDonald

This lovely *Primulina* cultivar has a rosette form with variegated, fuzzy textured leaves which stands out on any plant stand. Purple flowers on long stems are secondary to the beauty of the leaves. Sold by Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses, Inc., the name origin is unknown, though it was labeled with this name at an African Violet Society convention in Montreal years ago.

The translated name from French means 'silvery dwarf'. This plant can get wider than most violets, though. *Primulina dryas* are native to southeast China.

This *Primulina* is very sensitive to direct sunlight. I found this out at the NCAC show in late 2021. In only a couple of hours, the plant turned brown on one side when exposed to bright light in a glasshouse. Bringing this plant back to its original beauty was a challenge I was willing to take.

It took about two and a half years for the new growth to replace the damaged foliage. Lovely purple flowers appeared again, under artificial light, this past summer. It is now eleven inches wide and still expanding! I want to thank the unknown person in NCAC that shared this plant with me!

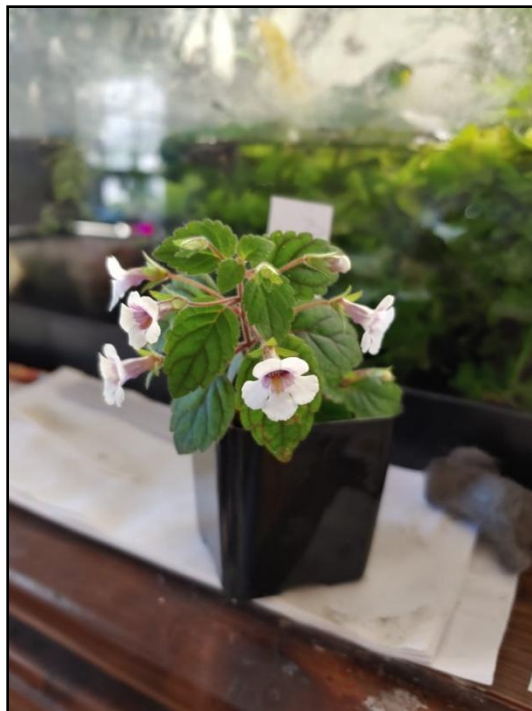
Reference: Gesneriad Reference Web, Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses Inc. Wikipedia



## **Bloomin' Now**



Jill: "*Primulina linearcalyx* which had been blooming on all 5 crowns! There is one flower left and produced a few seed pods, which I will harvest when ripe. It seems to be a winter bloomer in my conditions."



Dave Anderson's *Achimenes misera*



# Bloomin' Now



Barb S. *Streptocarpus* 'Sun City'



Andy Meier: *Saintpaulia* 'Allegro Nocturn'



Dena's *Streptocarpus* 'DEM Tokyo'



*Streptocarpus* 'SYB Neon Joy'



*Primulina petrocosomeoides*



*Episcia fimbriata* 'Blue Heaven'



*Metapetrocosmea tamiana*

Dena's 5 pictures. "I put all my plants in plastic boxes while I was away over the holidays. Some of the baby plants rewarded me with first blooms. The streps were grown from cuttings purchased from Terri Vicenzi through eBay. The others were from the NCAC raffle table."

Dena's *Metapetrocosmea tamiana*. Previous names: *Chirita eberhardtii*, *Chirita tamiana*, *Primulina tamiana*, *Deinostigma tamiana*



# Bloomin' Now



Dave A. mini *Sinningia* 'Maiden's Blush x self'



Dave A. mini *Sinningia* 'Cindy Ella x self'



Dave's *Primulina* 'Maxtimer'



Dave A.'s Tray of mini sinningias under lights.



Donna's *Sinningia speciosa* 'Serra da Vista Regina' above in bloom from 2024 and now growing beautiful foliage and buds forming in picture to the left. Donna, keep this fast growing *Sinningia* watered!



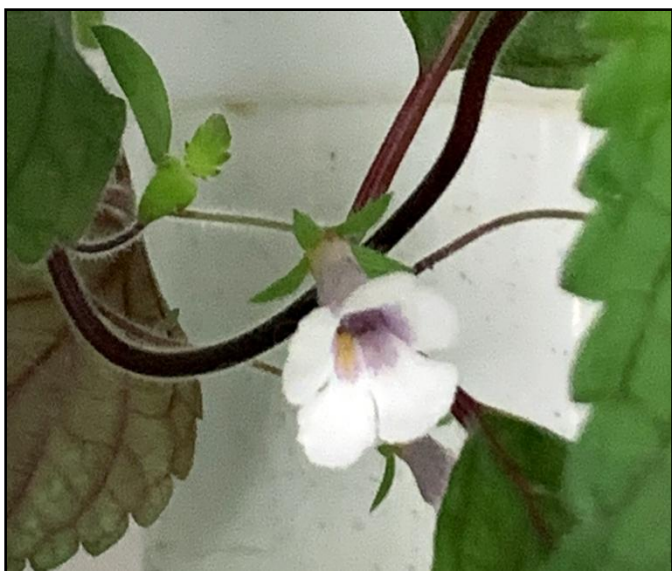
# Bloomin' Now



Donna's mini *Sinningia* NOIDs from seeds. "First picture is the plant when it first started blooming the end of November. Now in the second photo there are a lot of seed pods that selfed. The third photo is a close up of the first *Sinningia*. The last bloom is a seedling from the first plant I grew from its seeds last time it bloomed. It has an overall smaller growth habit with very similar bloom. They are both growing under several LED Barrina 12 inch lights on my kitchen counter. Update: Just noticed 2 ripe seed pods. I save the seeds and have 4 packets of seeds to share."



Donna: "Streptocarpus seedlings from a Purple Strep Andy gave me at the 2024 Show. I lost the Strep but the plant gave me a lot of seed pods. I planted the seeds November 13<sup>th</sup> and finally saw germination about 2 weeks ago. A lone *Oxalis* germinated and is keeping the Strep seedlings company! So I let it stay for now."

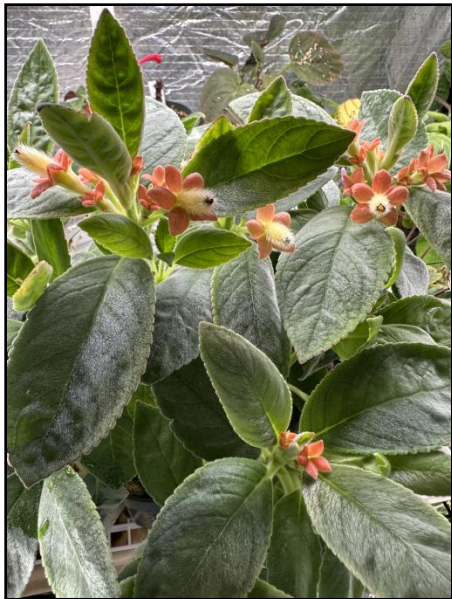
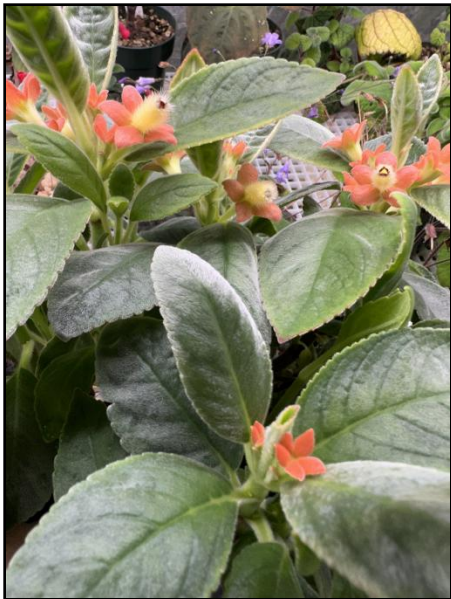


Donna's: "My dependable *Achimenes misera* that blooms every year at this time. Last year it bloomed and grew way into March and was in the Philadelphia Flower Show for the DAVGS display of gesneriads.

This year the plant is leggier because when it sprouted I did not catch it right away to put the pot closer to the lights to keep it compact. Now it is under lights in the living room plant stand."



# Bloomin' Now



David Turley: *Cobananthus calochlamys* "This was always a favorite plant of mine. I remember growing it in our greenhouse years ago and it was an attention grabber. I planted seed from the TGS seed fund in August 2023. The orange calyxes started developing a couple months ago. Finally in the past few weeks the fuzzy yellow corollas with purple lobes started their display. The whole plant has a velvety appearance."



David Turley's *Coreyplectus cutucuensis*

Flowers

Berries



David T. "I picked up a cutting of *Columnnea glicensteinii* at an NCAC meeting last spring." Dave's *Smithiantha* 'Sunset'



# Sowing Gesneriad and Begonia Seeds

Donna Beverin 1/2025

Gesneriad and Begonia Seeds are super small and dust like.

- Use any soil mix you prefer. I use combination of potting soil and fine vermiculite and if I have some, milled sphagnum moss lightly dusted on top of the soil mix. Milled sphagnum moss will help prevent damping off.

- Dampen the soil with hot water and I let the container sit for at least 1/2 hour to be sure all the soil is moist & cooled.

- Many growers sterilize their soil in the microwave for 5 minutes. (I usually do not and have better results when I do not) Some growers sterilize the soil mix in the oven for 3 hours at 175 degrees. If you do sterilize be sure to let the container cool totally before planting seeds.

- Take a piece of plain white paper and I divide in 1/2 twice to make a crease in the center of the paper.

- Open the seed container very carefully over the white paper and let the seeds fall into the center crease. I like to use part of the seeds and not plant them all at the same time.

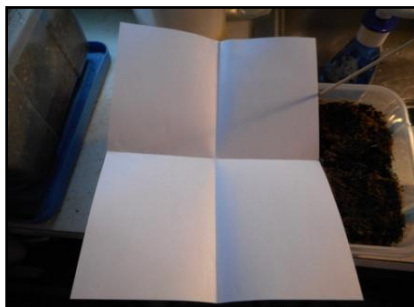
- Holding the white paper over the seed container I gently let the seeds roll into the soil mix as I move the paper around to spread the seeds. (Supposedly begonia seeds that roll easier are more viable)

- Do not cover the seeds as they need light to germinate.**

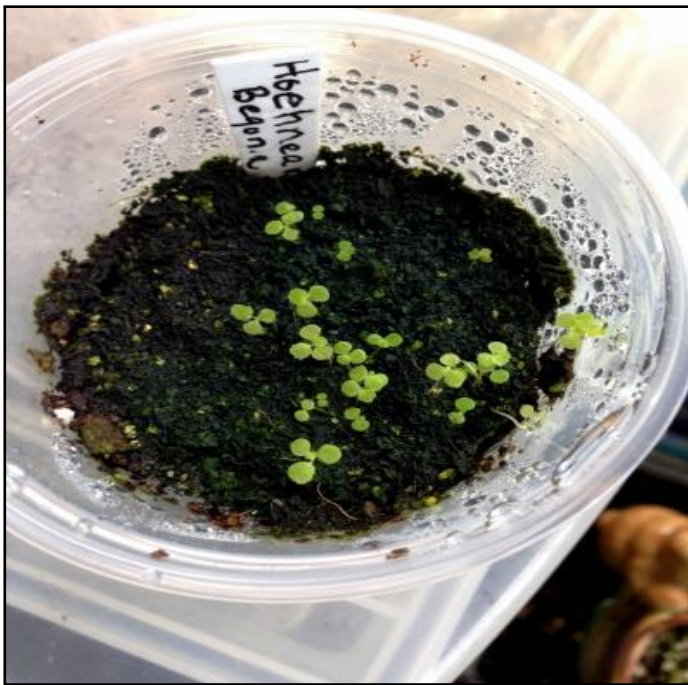
- Cover the container with a clear lid or plastic wrap. Do not allow a lid or plastic wrap to touch the soil. Label the container in any manner you prefer so you remember what variety of seed you planted.

- Place container on your light stand or in a bright place. A warm area will aid germination. I am now using heating mats which speed up germination. In the old days I use to place my containers on the warm ballasts of the florescent lights!!!

- Many of the seeds germinate within two weeks but some may take longer. Begonia seeds usually take at least 3 weeks or more and I keep my seed containers for a long time. I have had seedlings emerge months after planting. Some seeds like most Sinningias grow tubers which takes awhile. Once the babies are large enough to handle you can move them around or transplant them with a tooth pick. Moving around when tiny is supposed to stimulate growth as recommended by veteran grower & Gesneriad Society educator, Dale Martens. I have began to move my seedlings as soon as I see germination. I put them in another container I call Propagation box 2 with fresh soil mix. They really do grow very much faster and I do not lose as many due to algae that can grow in the original seed container. Continue keeping them in a high humidity area using plastic lid or clear covering. Once they grow repot to appropriate sized container. I like to use 1, 2, & 3 ounce clear plastic containers I buy at party stores and put holes in the bottom with a wood burning tool. Don't forget to monitor your propagation containers for moisture. Do not overwater or let them dry out!







*Begonia hoehneana* seedlings



*Begonia hoehneana* blooming



*Sinningia bullata* babies with young tubers



*Sinningia bullata* full grown plant blooming



*S. Helleri*, *S. eumorpha* and misc gesneriad seedlings in Prop Box #2



*Begonia alchemilloides* from seed. I really love this little begonia. Reminds me of *B. hoehneana*!



## 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'  
*Petrocosmea* (any)

### **Andy Meier seeking:**

*Sinningia speciosa* (Florist Gloxinia) 'Periodots Darth Vader'  
*Streptocarpus* 'Samantha'  
Variegated *Streptocarpus* leaf.

### **Jill Fischer seeking:**

*Columnnea crassifolia*  
*Gesneria pedicellaris*.

### **David Turley seeking:**

*Paradrymonia*  
*Christopheria xantha* (was *Episcia*)  
*Primulina lutea* (was *Chirita eburnea*, yellow form)

### **Maria Walueff seeking:**

*Columnnea* midget (She lost hers during vacation)

### **Donna Beverin has to share:**

- 1) *Sinningia* sp 'Piraju' (*conspicua* x *eumorpha*?)  
Mauro's seeds I grew. He is not sure of parentage.
- 2) *Sinningia* seedlings I think are *S. eumorpha*

For March propagation meeting I should have many other babies to share from all my prop boxes, many needing repotting.



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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/>