



Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

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June 2009

Message from the President

I hope all your plants are growing well and getting ready to put on a good showing in July. For those of you who grow in natural light, the increased day length should be making a big difference by now. And those of us who grow under lights generally see a difference at this time of year too. Maybe it's the increased humidity that the spring rains bring to the home. Or maybe it's just part of the plant's genetics. Whatever the reason, I know I'll be seeing a lot of great plants on July 3 when the show opens to the public.

This month's meeting won't be nearly as much fun as we've had at other recent meetings. It's going to be a real WORKING meeting. We have approximately 200 convention packets to put together. I think the Denver group put everything together the week of Convention. I want our group to be able to concentrate on grooming their plants and boxing them up that week.

We also have some last minute details to work out with lining up volunteers to help with setting up the show. We've been offered some help by the Liberty Bell Chapter who will be doing this same thing in 2011. But we want to get as many names lined up as we can. We also have a party to host at the Convention. I guess Lee and Nell are taking care of that, but we all should plan on being there. We're welcoming guests from all over the US, Canada, South America, Europe and even Japan. Yes, we're a small group, but we're a strong group.

Any ideas on a special hat or accessory that will identify us as the hosting chapter? Has anyone seen a hat shaped like the Capitol Dome? How about something covered in Gems? We'll likely have a ribbon or different colored badge to show that we're the hosting Chapter but I want us to really be obvious. Bring your ideas to the meeting in June.

There will be many first time conventioners, both within our group and coming to this convention from elsewhere. Let me tell you this: Your going to have the time of your life! Sure, it's a lot of work. But the payoff... WOW!

BTW - My *Titanotrichum oldhamii* is showing above the soil now. I know it wasn't buried very deep, and we had temperatures here that hit 3 degrees (with no protective snow cover). This guy is a lot hardier than I thought! That's the way to grow gesneriads. Throw down a little fertilizer, hit them with the hose a few times and watch them flower their heads off.

Jim

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Upcoming Events and 2009 Meetings:

Next Meeting: Saturday June 13, 2009
10:30 – pre-Convention preparations!

Meetings are at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. New members are welcome – please introduce yourself for a free plant.

Meetings in 2009:
6/30-7/4/09 – The Gesneriad Society Convention
(location: Silver Spring, MD)
9/12/09, 10/10/09, 12/12/09

Hyogo Prefectural Flower Center
<http://www.flower-center.pref.hyogo.jp/>
by Kenji Hirose

Hyogo Prefectural Flower Center (HFC) is located in West Japan, in Kasai City, which is about 60 km (37 miles) north of Kobe City, or about 570 km (350 miles) west of Tokyo).

HFC possesses a wealth of natural beauty that is unmatched by any other flower garden in Japan. This 46-hectare garden extends around the vast Kamenokura Pond, in which numerous water birds swim and wade. The Center is set against the beautifully etched backdrop of Mt. Iimori, which retains natural pine forests that nurture numerous wild birds.

Within the Center, paths around the Pond lead visitors to various spots where they can appreciate diverse natural beauty: flower gardens where colorful seasonal flowers bloom, the Green House Complex with a tropical atmosphere, paths that wind past beautiful flowers and sculptures, and magnolia forest where the birds sing delightfully. Visitors can enjoy the clean and refreshing air in this relaxing environment, amidst some 4,500 species of plants which bloom throughout the four seasons.



HFC in Winter

Flower Gardens

The Center contains several flower gardens, the total area of which covers roughly 12,000 square meters (129,166 sq ft). The Main Flower Garden and Floral Plaza are European-style gardens where about

600,000 flowers of 50 species including Icelandic poppy, dianthus, begonia, impatiens, and zinnia are planted according to an annual schedule that maintains the flowers all through the four seasons. In the spring, all flower gardens are swept over by colorful stretches of as many as 300,000 tulips of 350 varieties. These tulips create a kaleidoscopic view attracting numerous visitors every spring.



The tulip garden in spring. In the background is the exhibition greenhouse.

The Japanese Iris Garden has over 50,000 flowers of 150 varieties and is in full bloom in June, and in the Rose Garden, 4,000 flowers of 150 varieties are effectively arranged three dimensionally, using arches, columns, flower beds, and hanging baskets.

Green House Complex

The Green House Complex is composed of seven houses, including a special room exhibiting gesneriads, a very rare collection in Japan. In addition, the Complex displays a variety of tuberous begonias – the extensive collection of which Center also takes pride in – as well as diverse tropical and subtropical vegetation, including orchids, carnivorous plants, hibiscus, bougainvillea, and passiflora. All the exhibited flowers bloom one after another, colorfully decorating the entire complex all through the four seasons.

Gesneriad Room

As noted above, HFC is unique in Japan in that it has a dedicated gesneriad room. Through the four seasons, some 700 plants are exhibited. In April and

May: *Saintpaulia*, *Streptocarpus*, *Sinningia*, *Columnnea* and others. In June: some species endemic to Japan such as *Conandron ramondioides* and *Opithandra primuloides*, as well as *Streptocarpus*. From summer to fall, *Achimenes* is central to the exhibit, and in October to November, *Streptocarpus* is in peak bloom. November through December is the season for *Smithiantha*, and in the winter are hanging baskets of *Aeschynanthus*, *Columnnea*, *Nematanthus* etc. In addition, *Chirita*, *Petrocosmea*, *Nautilocalyx*, *Cyrtandra*, *Codonanthe*, *Episcia*, unifoliate *Streptocarpus* are also regularly on display.



Achimenes display in the Gesneriad Room



Streptocarpus display in the Gesneriad Room

"Backyard"

The gesneriad "backyard" has two greenhouses, in which are grown some 50 genera and 1100 species of gesneriads. Although these greenhouses are not open to the public, please let me know if you would be interested in a tour. One greenhouse is dedicated to the lower-light gesneriads such as *Streptocarpus*, *Saintpaulia*, *Chirita*, and *Columnnea*. In the other are the more light-loving rhizomatous and tuberous gesneriads such as *Achimenes*, *Sinningia*, *Kohleria*, and *Smithiantha*. Flowering plants are placed on display in the Gesneriad Room, and returned to the backyard afterwards: this is usually done on Wednesdays when HFC is closed.

Streptocarpus Show and Plant Sale

Each year in October, some 400 plants comprising 200 species and hybrids are displayed in a special exhibit. Most of these hybrids and species are also offered for sale to enthusiasts who visit from all over the country.

If you have an opportunity to come to Japan, please come for a visit!

LECA Update. . .

Jim Roberts brought a couple of pots to the last meeting, both containing a propagated *Petrocosmea* leaf. One was in LECA and here's a photo to show that you can, indeed, propagate a leaf in LECA:



I am tried starting some *Achimenes* and *Titanotrichum* rhizomes in LECA. I generally have difficulty keeping these well-watered, so I thought they would be good candidates. (And yes, I had rhizomes handy from an NCAC meeting.) I've been pinching the *Achimenes* as recommended by Serge Saliba in his article last year. So far so good.

Achimenes pinched recently:



Achimenes pinched previously:



They're looking cramped now, so I'll have to spread them out a bit to give them space to grow properly.

As with the orchids and hoyas I've grown in LECA, I am using a fertilizer with trace minerals. I've only just started fertilizing these, as I was waiting for roots to develop.

-Kyoko

The Baltimore African Violet Society Show

As announced here as well, the Baltimore African Violet Society had their show in May. Here are some photographs courtesy of Brian Connor – growers' names in parentheses.



Best in Show - *Siantpaulia* 'Sizzlin' Romance' (Marie Burns)



Brian Connor's Semi-Minis



Saintpaulia 'Optimara Hopi II' (Marie Burns)



Saintpaulia 'Rob's Outer Orbit' (Brian Connor)



Streptocarpus 'Spin Art' (Karen Foster)



Best Semi-Mini, Second Best in Show, *Saintpaulia* 'Emerald Pink' (Brian Connor)



Sinningia 'Miriam G' (Carol Hamelink)



Saintpaulia 'Princess K Rei' (Marie Burns)



Sinningia speciosa (Carol Hamelink)



Best Tuberous - *Sinningia* 'Gabriel's Horn' (Carol Hamelink)



Best Rhizomatous - *Kohleria* 'Manchu' (Carol Hamelink)



Best Gesneriad - *Chirita* 'Hisako' (Carol Hamelink)



Chirita 'Keiko' (Carol Hamelink)



Kohleria 'Gunsmoke' (Carol Hamelink)

A Visit to Al's Orchid Greenhouse
<http://orchidexchange.com>
by Kyoko Imai

Al's greenhouse in Leesburg, Virginia (approximately 15-20 mins from Dulles Airport), is primarily an orchid greenhouse, but... recently there's been an increase in carnivorous plants, begonias, gesneriads and various other non-orchids.

On a recent visit, I saw this *Chirita* 'Dream Time', which I could never grow beyond a few inches in height:



The plant has leaves about 16.5 inches from stem to tip, with 5 flower spikes about 2 ft long. The spikes branch and develop, branching out into a heavy mass of blooms. The pot in this photograph is raised so that the leaves don't rest on the bench. Reportedly the foliage is perky in the morning, but droops during the day.

The flowers have a lovely dusty pink blush:



Chirita 'Dream Time'

Here's a view of part of the greenhouse on a rather cloudy day:



Other gesneriads include *Sinningia pusilla*:



which are now planted at the base of various bonsai and in mossy trays:



Kohleria 'Sunshine'



Gloxinia perennis

I should perhaps note that *Phalaenopsis* is Al's specialty:



Phalaenopsis wilsonii 'Millie'

A few more currently at Al's greenhouse:



Titanotrichum oldhamii



Alsobia 'San Miguel'



Kohleria 'Silver Feather'



Columnea 'Lava Flow'

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

A chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.
www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

"The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars." (NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981.)

NCAC meets several times a year on the second Saturday of the month in the Administration Building of the U.S. National Arboretum. For details, please refer to the latest issue of *Petal Tones*, the website, or contact one of the people below. All are welcome and new attendees are invited to a free item from the raffle table.

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