

Petal Tones

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

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PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Here it is July 24. Convention photos are showing up on websites and on-line photo-galleries. Judging from the quality of the plants in the photos, it must have been another really fantastic event. I wish I could have been there, not just for the plants, but to see the people that I only get to see once a year.

There's no way the company is going to keep me away from the Philadelphia Convention in 2011. This year they scheduled a mandatory meeting for Tuesday through Thursday of Convention Week. Vancouver is a long way to travel if you can't get to enjoy all the other events that go along with Convention: the Judge's Workshop and The Gesneriad Hybridizer's meeting on Wednesday, the outings on Thursday. Sure I could have arrived on Friday afternoon and seen the show and heard some of the lectures, but it didn't happen this year.

Instead I took the time to look over my own collection. I haven't started to clean it up yet (as Brian can attest), but I took notice of what is doing well at this time of year. Plants that do well at this time of year are the plants I should concentrate on separating from the rest of the collection and giving them special attention.

And for those plants who don't quite get ready for Convention, there is always our show next September...

SEPTEMBER MEETING

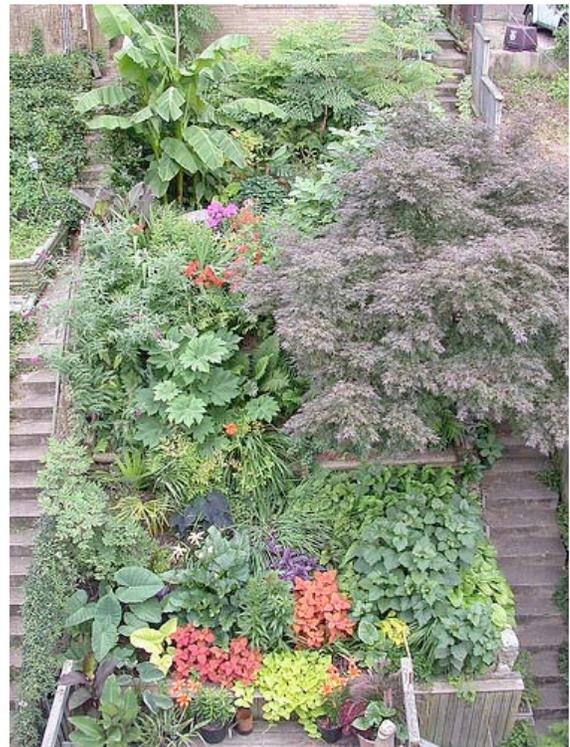
John Boggan is a long time member of the Chapter and has created many of the hybrids that we see in our Chapter and Convention shows. He has worked with Sinningia, Chirita, Kohleria and most recently has been working with creating Seemannia hybrids. We'll tour John's "Tropical" garden and see how he uses Gesneriads as annual bright spots in amongst the banana and canna and palms. We'll also hear about his Seemannia hybrids.

Meeting Schedule: (Most meetings at National Arboretum)

September 11, 2010 – FIELD TRIP!! Our own John Boggan is hosting the meeting at his home in DC. Address and directions in the September Petal Tones.

October 9, 2010 – Smithiantha. Quentin Schlieder will present a talk on Smithiantha, a very ornamental genus of rhizomatous gesneriads. National Arboretum

December 11, 2010 – Holiday Party – National Arboretum



Part of John's garden summer 2009

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Brian has informed me that he still needs a few more requests for seed before he can send in the next order to Mauro. If you have already requested 4 packs and would

like a pack or two more, or if you've been thinking about ordering and just haven't done so yet, please get in touch with Brian.

Here are the rules: You have to be a paid member of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society. That's it. The one and only rule. Brian has a list of the current available seed which he'll forward to you upon request. Brian is able to order 24 packets of seed 3 times a year. Once he gets the seed from Mauro he'll either bring it to a meeting or mail it to you. If two people order the same seed, he'll split the packet in half. If more than two order he'll order two packets.

Mauro uses the funds we pay him to get supplies for his greenhouse and pay for repairs and help. We help in his conservation efforts by allowing him to collect and maintain many rare and new gesneriads, and also get those same rare plants into cultivation where they are less likely to be lost forever.

DESPERATELY SEEKING

Following is a list of plants being sought by members. If you are a member of the Chapter and want to add something to the list, simply send your request to me and I'll add it to the list. If you have a plant that someone is seeking please get in touch with that person and arrange to bring it to a meeting when you'll both be there, or arrange to mail it.

Streptocarpus 'Maasen's White' Marlene Finch
 Streptocarpus 'Falling Stars' Marlene Finch
 Streptocarpus 'Captain Blood' Barbara Stewart
 Chirita 'Betty' Lee Linett
 Chirita balansae Lee Linett
 Chirita 'Louisa' Lee Linett
 Drymonia variegata Lee Linett
 Drymonia variegata Josh Heath
 Petrocosmea "Tim's Keystone series"-any! Lee Linett
 Saintpaulia nitida Lee Linett
 Saintpaulia velutina Lee Linett
 Saintpaulia sp. 'Cha Simba' Lee Linett
 Episcia 'Malay Ebony' Lee Linett
 Episcia 'Tricolor' Lee Linett
 Episcia 'Ronny' Lee Linett
 Streptocarpus 'Summer Parfait' Brian Connor
 Streptocarpus 'Blueberry Butterfly' Brian Connor
 Streptocarpus 'HL Snowbaby' Brian Connor
 Streptocarpus 'HL Boyish Grin' Brian Connor
 Streptocarpus 'HL Purple Martin' Brian Connor
 Sinningia 'Gone Salmon Fishing' Brian Connor
 Smithiantha 'Sassy Redhead' Brian Connor
 XNiphimenes 'Lemonade' Brian Connor
 Columnea pulchra 'Orange Crush' Quentin Schlieder

Sinningia pusilla Quentin Schlieder
 Columnea eburnea Josh Heath
 Columnea purpurimarginata Josh Heath
 Kohleria villosa Josh Heath

Note: The list is getting long. If you get one of your requests, please notify me so that I can remove it from the want list.

Jim

DON'T FORGET THE RAFFLE TABLE!

At every meeting members with extra plants, cuttings, supplies donate them to the raffle table. Tickets for the raffle are only 50 cents each (3 for a dollar) and everyone who attends the meeting gets one ticket just for showing up (including guests). Here's what you'll see on the table at a meeting:

Gesneriad plants, rhizomes, tubers, cuttings, seeds

Companion and/or garden plants, cuttings

Growing supplies (pots, labels, soil, leca, sphagnum)

JIM STEUERLEIN SINNINGIA GIVEAWAY

Jim Steuerlein is a very special Sinningia hybridizer. At his home in Florida he officiates the cross-pollinations of many very different and diverse Sinningia species and hybrids to produce some really spectacular plants. Over



S. conspicua x polyantha - the parent

the past year or so, since joining gesneriphiles, he has shown a number of these strange but beautiful hybrids to the world.

Now we're going to have a chance to grow them. Jim sent a care package for the Chapter. Everyone will get a plant of *Sinningia* (*conspicua* x *polyantha*) selfed. The parent is beautiful but there is just no telling what we might get out of the selfing. Jim picked a selection of tubers that hadn't flowered yet but have produced some distinctly different leaf types and growth habits. Everyone who attends the September meeting will get one. The idea is to grow these many plants on to exhibit either at Convention in Philly or at our show next September. We can even name them if we feel the one we have is worthy of a name.

Oh, I almost forgot. Jim also sent a couple dozen other assorted tubers and cuttings which will be distributed. Everything from his very interesting *Sinningia* 'Yma' (*S. sp.* 'Rios das Pedras' x *S. sp.* 'Florianopolis') to the beautiful hybrids with *Sinningia guttata* that have spikes of spotted flowers that look like they've got some *Smithiantha* in them.

These plants will all be in a special raffle. Remember, if you take one please propagate it to share with the group and PLEASE grow it for next year's show.

Jim also sent a few named hybrids such as his *S. 'Venus Featherwinkle'*, *S. 'Li'l Georgie'*, and *S. 'Croc Party'*. I'm going to save a few pictures for the September issue of *Petal Tones* to keep the interest high.



***Sinningia* 'Yma'**



Sin. *guttata* hybrid and Sin. 'Prudence Risley'



Sinningia macrostachya* x *guttata



***Sinningia eumorpha* x *perisiana* F2**



Sinningia guttata x (sellovii x 'Apricot Bouquet')
Another of Jim's hybrids

World Gesneriad Conference

The World Gesneriaceae Research Conference 2010 will be held at Marie Selby Gardens in Sarasota, FL on 13-15 October, 2010, sponsored by the Gesneriad Research Center at Selby. WGRC will be followed by gesneriad show sponsored by the Suncoast Chapter of The Gesneriad Society on 15-17 October also at Selby Gardens.

The World Gesneriaceae Research Conference 2010 will bring together several researchers, students, enthusiasts, and growers to discuss recent developments in research in the plant family through a series of lectures, posters, tours, and social events. The keynote address will be given by Dr. Anton Weber of the University of Vienna, Austria who has devoted his research career to the study of Old World Gesneriaceae.

Everyone interested in Gesneriaceae is invited to attend both the Conference and show. Registration for the Conference is now open and information about either the Conference or show can email wgrc2010@gmail.com or gesneriadresearch@gmail.com. Dr. John R. Clark, Director of the Gesneriad Research Center at Selby Gardens, is chair of the WGRC Steering committee. Also, check out the Gesneriad Research Center's Blog: <http://gesneriadresearchcenter.blogspot.com>.

At the April meeting of NCAC, members agreed to support student research in Gesneriaceae, and the funds agreed upon will be used to support a student to attend the WGRC.

Pepper's Greenhouses

Donna Beverin

While searching Google for begonias I came across a website "www.accentsforhomeandgarden.com". In reading the homepage I saw the business started in 1985 was located in Delaware and was called Pepper Greenhouses.



Being a native of Delaware I was so surprised that I had never heard of Pepper's. Located in Milton Delaware, I set about doing a map quest for the physical address is 13034 Cedar Creek Road, Milton, DE 19968. My sister, Mary lives in Greenwood, De which is close to Milton and I had actually gone house hunting in Milton with her years ago before she moved to Greenwood with her family. As it turns out the greenhouses are just around the corner from the Milton Restaurant where we stop occasionally for a dinner on the way home from the beach.

Well, the next day my sister and her oldest daughter had a First Communion retreat so I was spending time with my other niece and nephew, so we took a ride to Pepper's and enjoyed a quick visit. The kids are nature lovers and had fun looking around.



Walking in the front door and heading left is the large greenhouse with cacti, houseplants, tropicals and unusuals: Bougainville, jasmines, begonias, gesneriads, vines and tropicals, while to the right leads to a hallway with greenhouses to the left and right. Each greenhouse is well labeled at the entrance: annuals, perennials, herbs, geraniums and water plants with hibiscus. At the end of the hallway leads to the trees and shrubs. I really enjoyed the herb room where I found a huge variety of salvias, which I collect in my outdoor garden. Also, the varieties of scented geraniums was extensive as well.



The next day I went back solo and spent about 3 – 4 hours looking at everything! There were so many

unusual plants to look at and learn about. Plus the plants in 4 inch pots were so economical averaging around 3.95 per plant. I have returned several times since. Still, I have not taken much time to check out all the rooms of statuary, flower pots and home accents. Various fountains punctuate your walk and bring delightful sounds of falling water as you meander the corridor to the greenhouses.



In stock are *Columnnea*, *Aeschynanthus*, *Episcia*, *Kohleria*, *Nematanthus*, *Streptocarpus*, *Streptocarpella*, *Sinningia sellovii*, and *Saintpaulias*. I bought 2 beautiful *Columnneas*, one variegated w/o a name and the other Fujiyama. Of course, for the latest gesneriads and expert nomenclature I would depend on our meetings, but for the variety of all types of plants, visiting Pepper's is a treat.



During a conversation with Mrs. Pepper, she said they were dairy farmers when one of her sons decided to grow pumpkins and corn for the local fair and built a rudimentary greenhouse. That summer was a drought so the produce did not fare well in the fair but the experience was enough for her son to realize he really enjoyed gardening and things just grew from there and in 1985 they went into business. Recently her son began the website offering their plants through the mail and ever since their business has greatly expanded. Sounds like a lot of folks did not know they existed. I would compare Pepper's with Logee's and if you get a chance to make a day trip, you surely will enjoy your trip and the prices!

ORNATE COLUMNNEAS

Lee Linnet

When you see the flower show section "Gesneriads Grown for Ornamental Qualities..." which ones immediately come to mind? *Episcias*, of course. Also *Chiritas* and *Petrocosmeas*. Do you ever imagine the others, either species or hybrids?

How do you see the plants as ornamental? Most growers would say by looking down at the plant and seeing the tops of their leaves.

However, there are others that are best viewed from below, i.e., looking up at a hanging basket specimen or seeing the "back" of the plant or the reverse of the leaves. *Columnneas* of the group formerly called *Dalbergaria* compose "the others" and some such as *Col. fimbriallyx* have a single red spot a short distance from the leaf tip, on the back, while others such as *purpurimarginata* have leaves edged in red, again on the leaf reverse. I should have said compose **some of** "the others"; that's another article.



Columnnea sanguinea 'Gigantea'

Then the leaves begin to get fancier, from *Col. cruenta* which has a dark green leaf surface covered in red hairs and a reverse sporting splotches leading up to a red edge; to *sanguinea* and its varieties with their random red splotches - again on the leaf reverse; to the almost feather-like (reverse side) leaves of *eburnea* and the outrageous *medicinalis* where almost half the leaf, starting at the tip, looks as if someone dipped it in red paint and some ran down the edges. *Polyantha*, *ornata*, and *picta* to name a few others have various degrees of splotches and splatters in a Jackson Pollock kind of way.

As if the coloring wasn't enough, almost an entire

leaf reverse in red to the next one up the stem "normally" splotted, to another one with just a few splatters. Col. sanguinea 'Gigantea' is a good example of anisophylly, a leaf arrangement of one large leaf and one small leaf. In Gigantea's case, a very large (6" or more long) leaf and a tiny, tiny one (hardly more than an after thought).

Now what about flowers, you might be thinking --- well, I suggest you concentrate on the foliage because the flowers are not as colorful or outstanding as the columneas we usually grow for their flowers. They're small, well hidden, yellow and sometimes fuzzy like a caterpillar.



Columnea 'Gigantea' flower

"Goldfish Plant" sounds a lot better than "Caterpillar Plant"! But, don't be dismayed; the fruit/berries that are produced after pollination are decorative and ornate in a Halloweenish way. They're white and resemble eyeballs or even small lychees. They're squishy when ripe. Imagine a centerpiece, a sanguinea 'Gigantea' with blood red markings on the back of the leaves and clusters of eyeballs peeking out from the axils.

I grow these Columneas in clay pots because they can get top heavy; the weight of the pot and mix help to stabilize them. If I had the space or a greenhouse, the ideal way to grow them would be in hanging baskets.

In the wild, Columneas often are found growing in what has been called a "debris mix" which consists of pieces of tree bark, twigs, decayed or dried leaves and other plant parts, bones, insect parts, broken eggshells, bits of soil, reptile scales, feathers, animal/bird droppings, and whatever else filters down from the above tree canopy. In time, the hodgepodge of these materials eventually becomes a humusy home for a stray seed or two or perhaps a stem that has broken off and had a soft

landing. There are no saucers or trays to catch excess water; it just quickly drains away.

The mix I use consists of 2 parts Pro-Mix, 1 part perlite, 1 part vermiculite, 1/4 equal amounts (half & half) charcoal and non-scented cat litter. The roots have to anchor themselves well to keep the top growth from wobbling and some weight at the bottom also is needed. Although the mix drains quickly, some moisture is retained and this is OK.

If you've ever seen one of these Columneas, especially the hairy leafed and stemmed ones, in severe need of water, you'll understand. It's like nature's Velcro at work: the leaves droop down, touching those underneath as well as the stem. Even when the plant plumps up after watering, you'll still have to separate some of the stickers from the stickies. You might have to water a couple of times a week to keep the leaves from drooping.



Columnea sanguinea

Moderate light (east window) just past the ends of the fluorescents, about 9 or 10" (top of plant to tube) away works for me. When actively growing (producing new leaves, flower buds), I move the plant(s) a bit closer to the center of the tubes and increase fertilizer by a little more than 1/4 strength every watering but not as much as 1/2 and flush with plain water every fourth watering. Three or four times a year my plants get a shot of Epsom salt at the rate of 1 Tbs. per gallon of water.

Propagation is easy and my favorite method is by cuttings rooted in water, then transplanted. I don't have the space to put them in large plastic bags and they seem to do just fine. You'll see that some of these Columneas develop woody stems starting at

the base as they get older and they will lose their bottom leaves. This would be the time to take cuttings.

Grooming really is important in keeping the Columneas looking good. The hairy ones seem to attract whatever mote, be it dust or a speck of perlite that floats by. Cat and dog hairs and the lone fungus gnat aren't far behind. Use a soft bristled toothbrush, makeup brush, or a fuzzy-leafed African Violet leaf to brush away any particles and only brush in one direction.



Columnea orientandina

There are other ornate Columneas such as orientandina (which used to be a Pentadenia) which has red tips on both sides of the leaf and almost starts out with woody stems, thus giving it a tree-like look very suitable for dish gardens. The leaves are much smaller than the ones previously mentioned. And there are others that have pebbled leaves, ones that have leaves that look like patent leather, ones with variegated leaf color, and others with very small leaves. They're all ornate but I like the big, bold, in-your-face, red spotted ones best. They're easy to grow and when grown specifically for exhibition, usually elicit an, "Oh, my!"

Local Display Greenhouse Needs our Help!

Jim Roberts

The Druid Hill Conservatory, officially known as the Howard Peter Rawlings Conservatory and Botanic Gardens of Baltimore, wants to be able to display more Gesneriads than it has in its current collection.

Doris Hill, one of our Baltimore Members has been in contact with them and has asked that I approach the club for donations. I would think that they would much rather have full grown specimens that could be put on display right away, but they also have space to grow plants on. The Tropical house has room on the floor area for ground covers such as Episcia and

uprights such as Nautilocalyx, as well as plenty of room for hanging plants. We can discuss this at the September meeting.

I will work with Doris to get any donated plants to the appropriate person at Druid Hill. For those of you who haven't been there, this is one of the oldest public conservatories in the US. The Palm House and Orchid rooms were built in 1888. The Conservatory went through a major renovation in 2004. Both Brian and I have visited within this past year with Mark Zukaitis.



Where's the Gessies?? Aint None!!



Nematanthus ground cover

National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC)

A Chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc.

"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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