

# Petal Tones

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

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## PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Today is Labor Day. The "last day of summer" and the time for picnics and family get-togethers. This is also the day I will always remember as the day that my wife Barbara passed away. Somewhere between her 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. medications she passed quietly in her sleep.

Most of the new members of the club didn't know Barb. However, back in the 1980's and early 1990's she was the Sinningia lady. Barb and I ran a home business with close to 1300 different varieties of Gesneriads that we sold through mail order. Barb's specialty was the miniature Sinningia, and she had hundreds of varieties that she propagated vegetatively. She also did quite a bit of hybridizing with the little ones and I was recently lucky enough to obtain back Sinningia 'Piglet' which was one of her hybrids.

The business burned her out and she never regained an interest in plants. She always encouraged me to continue with the plants as a hobby. About 5 years ago I rejoined the Chapter and here I am today as your President.

I won't be at the meeting next weekend. However, it will be a very special meeting so I hope that most of you can attend. The Jim Steuerlein plants have done well outside for the summer and will be there for you all to pick through. I've taken my pick of both the *S. conspicua* x polyantha F2 plants and one of the other miscellaneous hybrids that Jim sent. Everyone should take one of the F2 plants. There is quite a variety of size, leaf color and leaf shape in the seedlings. If nothing else they will make quite an interesting educational exhibit at the show next Fall.

The tour of John's garden and his talk on *Seemannia* should not be missed. John doesn't make it to many of our meetings, but is a local expert on our favorite family.

I want to apologize for the quality of the photos from John's Flickr site. He offered higher quality images but

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. Meet us there at 10:30.

\*\* Redacted. Email [dcesneriads@gmail.com](mailto:dcesneriads@gmail.com) for location, which is near Columbia Heights metro station and the zoo.

**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

until I compiled everything today I didn't realize how grainy they would appear. I don't want to post the link without his approval, so maybe next month.

## 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.

### *Seemannia*

By John Boggan

*Seemannia* is a South American genus of Gesneriaceae consisting of only four species of scaly rhizomatous herbs with brightly colored red, purple, pink, orange, or rarely yellow flowers. The genus was established in 1855 and was recognized by botanists until the 1970's, when Hans Wiehler lumped all of the *Seemannia* species into the genus *Gloxinia* after producing fertile hybrids between *Gloxinia perennis* and some of the *Seemannia* species. Subsequent research has confirmed a close relationship between *Gloxinia* and *Seemannia*, but also revealed that

*Koellikeria erinoides* and *Anodiscus xanthophyllus* were even more closely related to *Gloxinia perennis* than were the former *Seemannia* species. In part because of these newly discovered relationships, and in part because the *Seemannia* group is so distinctive, the genus has been resurrected and is now considered distinct from *Gloxinia*. However, in the horticultural trade the species are often still listed under *Gloxinia*.

All of the *Seemannia* species are worth growing, and in addition to indoor culture they make excellent container and bedding plants outdoors. Cultural requirements are similar for all the species: bright or dappled shade and a rich, well-drained soil that is neither too wet nor too dry. They overwinter as dormant scaly rhizomes, which are best kept dry to prevent molding and premature sprouting. In the right conditions some may be hardy to zone 7b, or perhaps even colder regions in a sheltered location and with some protection.

One interesting characteristic of this genus is that the plants produce multitudes of long, skinny “stringy rhizomes”. During the growing season these produce new plants at the tips, and towards the end of the growing season they produce tiny scaly rhizomes in addition to much larger scaly rhizomes underground.

All of the species are interfertile, and will also form partially fertile hybrids with *Gloxinia perennis* to form the hybrid genus *xGloximannia*. With our new understanding of the relationships between the species of these two genera, crosses with the former *Koellikeria* (now *Gloxinia*) *erinoides* and (now *Gloxinia*) *xanthophyllus* should be attempted.

*Seemannia sylvatica* is the most commonly cultivated species. It is a wide-ranging and variable species and has



been described under a variety of different names. One of the more persistent is *Seemannia latifolia*, a name still sometimes found in the horticultural literature and trade. The species is primarily Andean and ranges from southern Ecuador through Peru to Bolivia, with outlying populations in Paraguay and southern Brazil. The flowers are red or orange, rarely yellow. The plants tend to bloom

in late fall and winter, making them a good outdoor plant in frost-free parts of Florida (where they grow and bloom spectacularly in full sun) but mostly unsuitable for outdoor growing in colder climates. The meaning of the name is unclear; it could mean “wild” or “of the forest” but the original description provides no hints.

*Seemannia nematanthodes* comes from Bolivia and northern Argentina and is superficially similar to *S. sylvatica* in having bright orange-red flowers but the plants are more sprawling and begin to bloom in early to mid summer and into the fall. This makes them excellent container and bedding plants, and they are popular with hummingbirds. The flowers are produced on long thin pedicels, possibly accounting for the name, which means “*Nematanthus*-like”. This species does best when given direct sun for part of the day, preferably in the morning or



very late afternoon; direct midday sun will scorch the leaves. A recent collection from Argentina has been given the cultivar name ‘Evita’ by Plant Delights Nursery, and is described as being hardy to zone 7b.

*Seemannia gymnostoma* comes from northern Argentina, southern Peru, and Bolivia. The purple flowers are very



unlike those of the other species; in fact at one time this species was included in the genus *Achimenes*. Also unlike the other species the flowers have a relatively large limb with distinct purple spots. The leaves are softly hairy with distinctly scalloped edges. The name means “naked mouth” although the origin of this name is unclear; the mouth has distinct trichomes much like those of the other species.

*Seemannia purpurascens* is another variable species. The plants are tall-growing and somewhat weedy in appearance, with lavender, pink or magenta flowers that have a contrasting bright green limb. The leaves are



usually bright green but occasional individuals have very dark leaves with reddish-purple undersides; the species name was based on one such individual, hence the name. The species is common in Bolivia, less so in southern Peru. There are also widely separated populations in northern South America (Guyana, French Guiana and northern Brazil) that some botanists believe represent a closely related but still-unnamed species. The dark-leaved selections are the most attractive, and develop their best color in relatively deep shade. A plant distributed as this species but with brilliant orange-red flowers with a contrasting dark purple limb, collected on a Gesneriad Research Foundation expedition to Bolivia in 1996 (GRF 9670), is probably a natural hybrid, possibly between *S. purpurascens* and *S. gymnostoma*. My own hybrid, *S. purpurascens* ‘Purple Prince’, is a selected seedling from a cross between two wild collections of the species; the

leaves are very dark and contrast nicely with the pink flowers, which are produced from late summer until frost.

## BRAZIL SEED CLUB

The new list from Brazil Plants will be out soon. If you are interested in growing new and exciting species out of Brazil please get in touch with Brian Connor. He’ll make sure that you get a copy of the list when he gets it.

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

The list of plants on this list has been stagnant for some time now. I’ve deleted the entire list and would like everyone to re-submit a short list of plants that you would like to obtain but haven’t been able to find anywhere. The list will get published here and if you have a plant that someone else on the list wants you can contact the requestor yourself to arrange for a trade or just to bring it to a meeting.

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 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.

## 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](mailto:wgrc2010@gmail.com) or

[gesneriadresearch@gmail.com](mailto: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.

## The Baltimore African Violet Club's Annual Fall Sale

The Shops at Kenilworth  
800 Kenilworth Drive, Towson, MD 21204

Saturday, October 02, 2010

Hours: 9 am to 5 pm

Hundreds of beautiful sale plants including violets, other gesneriads, and unusual houseplants, supplies, leaves, cuttings, soil mix, plant rings, self-watering pots and much more. Experienced growers will be there to answer your growing questions.

Any questions, you can contact Shirley Huffman  
[bshuffman2@aol.com](mailto:bshuffman2@aol.com) 301-854-2021

## Vacation in Vancouver

Barbara Stewart



Ronnie and I spent a grand week exploring Vancouver and enjoying the Gesneriad Society convention. Our first day (Saturday) was quite long, partly because of the time zone changes and leaving Richmond, VA before dawn. We arrived in Richmond, BC the middle of the afternoon, and after exchanging our currency, hunting for our rental car, and locating the bed and breakfast where we stayed, we still had a good part of the day to explore the area.

Richmond has a large Asian population and many places to eat great Asian food, so we started out with an early dinner in a neighborhood Asian restaurant.

After we located the convention hotel, we drove through Vancouver and ended up on Stanley Island, a popular spot for all kinds of outdoor activities and great views of the city. Time seemed to move in slow motion, and I had to keep checking my watch to see if it was working right, because we had daylight until about 10:30 which made the day seem even longer.

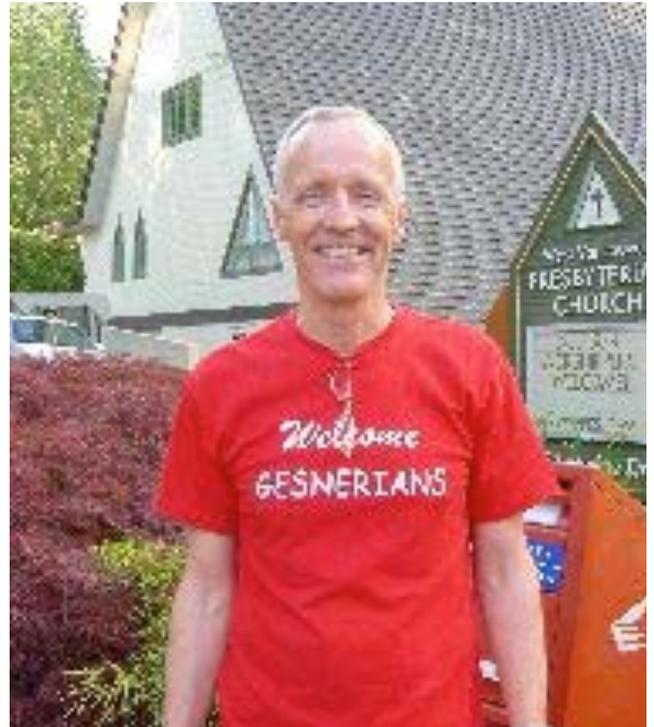


On Sunday we set out early to the Lynn Canyon Falls where we crossed a suspension bridge over the falls and hiked the lush rainforest trails. Then we drove up the coast to Lighthouse Park where we hiked through some of the largest Douglas fir trees in the area. From the historic lighthouse, we had a spectacular view across the water to the city of Vancouver. A few miles further up the highway led us to a quaint village on a lake nestled in the snow capped mountains. There is an amazing variety of things to do and see in the Vancouver area. We visited several beautiful botanical gardens, spent a day cycling around Stanley Island, and shopped and dined in the lovely fishing village of Steveston.

Our final excursion was to Grouse Mountain, a ski resort north of Vancouver with lifts that take you to fabulous views of the city below. There was plenty of entertainment there as well, including a pair of playful grizzly bears in a natural habitat setting. We were there on July 1<sup>st</sup>, Canada Day, and joined the celebration with some temporary tattoos of the Canadian flag which were given to us by teenagers at the park. Although it is a national (and shopping) holiday, many Canadians celebrate by going to the US to shop where prices and taxes are much lower than in Canada.

We generally prefer to do our own tours, but we signed up for the special dinner tour to Bill Price's house on

Tuesday. Although I registered fairly early, I was disappointed to learn that the trip to Bill's was filled and we were put on a waiting list. Then I received an e-mail that said, because of the demand, the dinner would be served in two shifts, so more people could go. We opted for the second shift.



After sightseeing all day, and rushing back to our room to get ready, we pulled into the hotel parking lot just as one bus was leaving. We had a few moments of panic until we discovered the second bus hidden behind the hotel. It was nice to have someone else do the driving on this trip. Unfortunately, it was a very long ride because of a rush hour accident on one of the bridges. But we finally made it, and were welcomed by Bill who directed us up a short hill to his house.

We enjoyed a delicious bbq dinner and wine and the opportunity to stroll around the grounds and through the house to see the many different kinds of plants Bill grows. Ronnie talked with Bill about the fruit trees and vegetables growing in his yard while I checked out the house with plants in every room and the greenhouse outside. However, this did not truly prepare us for the amazing show plants that he entered and won so many awards for.

At the convention I took the judges school where Paul Kroll enlightened us on judging photography. I was fortunate to get the opportunity to judge the show with some very knowledgeable judges. We not only judged Bill's show winning collections, but also some entries in

design and the arts. Although the show was a little smaller this year, there were still many amazing plants to see and learn about.



One of the best things about visiting Vancouver was the weather. Although we didn't have a lot of sunshine, the temperatures were in the 60's every day, a pleasant relief from the miserably hot summer back in Virginia. We returned home on July 4<sup>th</sup>, spending the whole day traveling. After a short flight to Seattle, we flew straight to Dulles airport where we changed planes and took off in time to see fireworks going off everywhere on the ground below. It was a great welcome back from our wonderful trip to Canada.

## 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.

The Gesneriad Society website: [www.gesneriadsociety.org](http://www.gesneriadsociety.org)  
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