



Petal Tones

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

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PRESIDENT/EDITOR'S MESSAGE



Strep Concord Blue found at a local nursery

One of the great joys of my job is being able to travel at the company's expense and visit other Gesneriad growers around the US and the world during free periods. I've met with many over dinner or the day before or after a meeting. A few years back I met with Michael Khein in Vienna for an hour while the rest of the group was on a break at a coffee shop. Got a real quick tour of the greenhouses in at the University and then met up with the group just as they were boarding the buses for dinner.

A few weeks back I learned that I would be traveling to Hong Kong on business at the end of February. Friends in gesneriphiles got me connected up with a couple of growers there, so I've got my weekend before the meeting all booked up visiting with them.

Then I heard, out of the blue, from a person in China that traded with me over a year ago. He wanted to make another trade. A box should be getting here in a few days. No idea what will be inside it. But his making contact initiated a trip to visit with him. He is going to hire a guide for us and we'll have 4 days to tour around Kunming, China and see "10-20 different gesneriads" growing in the wild. I'm looking into how to bring them

Meeting Schedule:

December at the National Arboretum; 2011 Meeting Locations to be Determined due to Renovations at the Arboretum.

December 11, 2010 – HOLIDAY PARTY – See all the details below. There will be a business meeting after the party, and an important vote to determine your officers for 2011-12.

February 12

January 8, 2011 – Growing from Seed. Location yet to be determined. Brian Connor heads up the seed fund, offering up free seed packets from Mauro's seed fund out of Brazil. Members are reluctant to try because of past failures. Learn how to collect, plant and germinate seed and divide up Gesneriad plants once they're growing.

March 12, 2011 – Growing Saintpaulia for show. The only Gesneriad to have it's own society and its own specific rules for growing and showing. Learn from an expert (to be determined) the secrets to growing large perfect standard violets as well as miniatures and trailing types. Rules for judging violets in a Gesneriad show defer to the general rules as determined by AVSA except that the plants are judged competitively and not on their own merit (only one Blue Ribbon per Class).

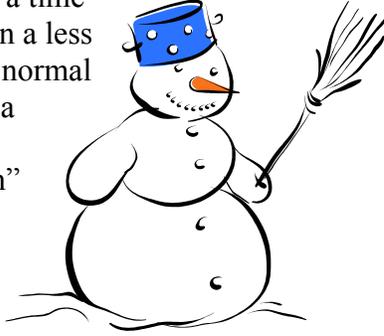
home with me, but even if I can't I will be taking lots of photos to share.

I know nothing at all about this person (age, gender, business he/she is in) but I've scheduled a trip into the heart of China based on a quick e-mail and an invitation. I don't know if he/she is a 14 year old student who's parents don't know anything about this invite, or a retired doctor who spends all his time growing and enjoying plants. Kind of scary and exciting at the same time. What bothers me most is that he/she hasn't responded when I've asked for more details about who he/she is. I just hope it's not some 30 year old Chinese temptress trying to hook a rich American husband!

Wish me luck!

HOLIDAY PARTY

The annual Holiday Party is a time for sharing plants and gifts in a less formal atmosphere than our normal meeting. There will still be a business meeting after the “Program” but the “Program” consists of a brown bag gift exchange and a larger than normal raffle table. Bring friends and family;



anyone interested in growing plants that might be interested in joining the Chapter.

Here are a few details of the events:

- **Brown Bag Gift Exchange:** Bring a gift valued at under \$10 in a plain brown paper bag. Anyone who brings a gift will be given a special raffle ticket for the exchange. As tickets are called you will get to choose from any of the brown bags on the table. Suggested gifts: plant supplies, special plants, books, trays, pots, terrariums, etc.
- **Holiday Feast:** Everyone is asked to bring a main course dish or dessert to share. Because the Arboretum is in an unknown state of demolition we don't know if there will be a microwave to heat up any of the food, so plan on bringing food that can be served cold or at room temperature.
- **Plant Raffle:** The Holiday Raffle is generally the largest of the year. Use this opportunity to clear off all the duplicate plants you have on your shelves and let someone else grow them on. Seedlings? Sure! Cuttings? You Bet! Extra rhizomes or tubers? Why Not! Non-Gesneriads? Someone will want them! At three tickets for a dollar everyone should go home with a box full! **HINT: Bring an extra box for all the goodies going home with you!**

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

The new list from Brazil Plants was just sent out to interested members of the Chapter. 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.

Here are the rules: You have to be a paid member of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society. Each request should be limited to 3-4 seed selections so that everyone has an opportunity. That's it. 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

I deleted the list of plants in September and no one has added anything back onto it. So I guess I'll start the ball rolling with a few wishes.

Streptocarpus holstii	Jim Roberts
Streptocarpus thompsonii	Jim Roberts
Chirita angustifolia	Jim Roberts
Gesneria 'Yellow Bird'	Jim Roberts
Streptocarpus starter plants/for China	Jim Roberts

If you are looking for a plant and can't find it listed with any of the Commercial Growers, list it here. Petal Tones has a wide distribution and chances are good that someone will be able to get you what you want.

Note: my contact in China wants to get started with Streptocarpus. He has no local sources and is looking for a variety of plants. Small plants and / or leaves are easiest to ship.

Jim

World Gesneriad Conference

Report by Larry Skog

Two NCAC members, Christian Feuillet and Larry Skog, attended the conference held at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, FL 13-15 October. About 100 attendees included about half professional botanists, horticulturists, students and research scientists who work on Gesneriaceae. The other half of the audience included many growers and officers of The Gesneriad Society. There were attendees from many parts of the world, Canada, UK, China and Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, Switzerland, Austria, as well as all over the U.S. The program included illustrated lectures and posters dealing with many topics in Gesneriaceae, including molecular

phylogeny, taxonomy, growing, tissue culture, geography and surveys of gesneriads in various countries (China, Brazil, Mexico, Mesoamerica), using gesneriads as teaching tools, conservation, morphology, and splash-cup seed dispersal. Christian gave a presentation on the Gesneriaceae of the Guiana Shield and their distribution, and John L. Clark and his students gave several lectures/posters on *Phinaea*, *Drymonia*, *Paradrymonia*, and *Nautilocalyx*. A presenter from China gave a fascinating picture presentation of *Chirita* and relatives in South China, including many species not yet in cultivation. Other genera discussed in separate presentations include *Shuarua* (a new genus of trees in the family from South America), *Sinningia*, *Columnea*, *Saintpaulia*, *Lysionotus*, *Titanotrichum*, as well as a whole session on *Cyrtandra*. Many other genera were also mentioned briefly in the lectures. Prof. Anton Weber from University of Vienna, Austria was the keynote speaker, and gave a series of talks beginning with an overview of research in Gesneriaceae, then a lecture on a new formal classification of Gesneriaceae, and a final lecture on etymology of generic names in Gesneriaceae. Several students were included among those who gave talks. Of them, some was able to attend due to travel grants which included funds donated by NCAC. There were other benefits for the attendees, including tours of the public and research greenhouses at Selby (www.selby.org), the gesneriad collections of Nancy Kast, a trip to Mote Marine Laboratory, and the gesneriad show and sale by the Suncoast and Tampa Bay Chapters of The Gesneriad Society, held Saturday and Sunday, October 16 & 17. The plant sale was huge, rivaling that at convention. For those with an interest in *Saintpaulia* there were lectures on *in vitro* methods of *Saintpaulia* conservation, and understanding the *Saintpaulia* registration numbers. The final talk was a presentation on the iPlant Collaborative and my-plant.org (a social networking website for gesneriad specialists).

December Elections

Your Nominating Committee has returned the following slate of officers to be voted upon at the December meeting. Elected Officers and Board Members will serve effective the January 2011 meeting through December of 2012. The slate, as always, is also open to nominations from the floor at the time of the election.

President ----- Jim Roberts
 Vice President ----- Brian Connor
 Secretary ----- Denise Whitman
 Treasurer ----- Larry Skog
 Board of Directors ----- Kyoko Imai
 Board of Directors ----- Aarti Shaw
 Board of Directors ----- Donna Beverin

Visit with Jon Lindstrom – U of Arkansas

A few days after our meeting in October I was asked by my company to attend a meeting at the offices of one of our biggest customers in Bentonville, Arkansas. I know that Bentonville is right next to Fayetteville, home of the University and Dr. Jon Lindstrom. For those of you not familiar with Jon, he's the hybridizer of XSinvana 'Mount Magazine' which has been grown and shown in our local shows and at the National GS Conventions. XSinvana is a cross between a *Sinningia* and *Paliavana*, two different closely related genera native to Brazil.

Jon teaches several courses at the University. His main research project is developing sterile *Buddleia* hybrids, but uses Gesneriads in his courses and with his graduate



Carol Hamelink's plant of XSinvana 'Mount Magazine' at our last show

students too. He has a lot of his research material growing in a heated but cool-in-the-winter greenhouse. *Sinningia* and other plants growing in here are forced into dormancy for the winter months. Or are forced to withstand the cool temperatures.

Some of his graduate students are involved in a project that should be very close to all of our hearts. They are culturing new hybrid *Sinningia* for distribution at the Philadelphia Convention in 2011. One of the plants is *Sinningia* 'Prudence Riskey', a heavy flowering medium sized *Sinningia*. The other is *Sinningia* 'Minnesota Nice' which is also a medium sized *Sinningia* that has *Sinningia*



Sinningia 'Prudence Risley' in tissue culture container



Sinningia 'Prudence Risley'



Sinningia 'Minnesota Nice' grown by Dale Martens - Photo courtesy of The Gesneriad Society

guttata in its background and has the spotted flowers to prove it.

Gary Hunter, Plant Sales Chair for the Philadelphia Convention in 2011, has made an arrangement with Jon to sell "shares" to help fund this project. Each \$20 share entitles the purchaser to a plant of S. 'Prudence Risley' or S. 'Minnesota Nice.' The money collected goes towards supplies and providing some compensation to the graduate students doing the work. Plants which are produced beyond the need of the funded numbers will be made available for sale in the Convention Sales Room.

Jon has also produced some nice winter-hardy Sinningia which I will have on the raffle table in December. The first is called S. 'Arkansas Bells' and has returned for 6



Sinningia 'Arkansas Bells' on campus – flowers Spring through Fall

years in a row in its garden on the U. of Arkansas campus. Fayetteville, Arkansas is in zone 6b so anything that overwinters there should do fine in our region which is somewhere between 6b (my neck of the woods) and 7b (downtown DC). The second in this series has just been named. S. 'Arkansas Empress' has a much larger flower.



Sin. 'Arkansas Empress'

Another interesting new hybrid that Jon has just named and released is XVanvana 'Harlequinade' (a cross between Vanhouttea lanata and Paliavana tenuiflora). One of these will be on the raffle table. The plant in Jon's greenhouse was much too large to try to grow under lights, so this might be a "greenhouse only" hybrid. But it would be interesting

to see what might happen under lights.



X Vanvana 'Harlequinade'

To see more of Jon's hybrids, go to his flicker page:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jonsplants/>

In addition to his Gesneriads you will see many of the other plants that he works with.

Making A Seasonal Terrarium Ken Moore

I probably should have checked out the January and February 2010 issues of *Petal Tones* before making my first-ever terrarium, because they have excellent information about what types of containers are good to use (basically anything!) and the media used and design of a terrarium. But, I didn't--I was at CVS after the chapter meeting in October and saw a \$6 pumpkin-shaped glass cookie jar and thought it would be perfect in which to grow the *Nautilocalyx pemphidius* cutting I picked up from the raffle table.

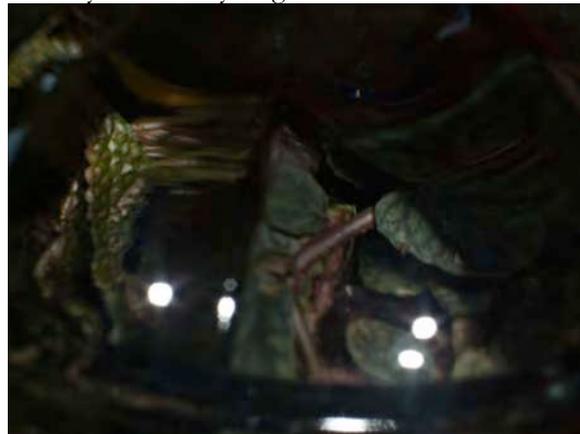


Going for convenience, not appearance, I used what I had available already at home to make the terrarium: I poured a layer of perlite, topped it with a layer of pre-moistened

sphagnum moss, and covered the whole bit with pre-moistened African violet potting mix. I placed *N. pemphidius* in there with some ailing *Fittonia* (which, as you can see, is doing much better than it had been for the eight months prior), offsets of *Cryptanthus*, and *Pellionia pulchra*. There are probably too many plants in here already, but I have even more that would do well in a more humid environment, so I'm on the lookout for interesting, cheap containers to grow them in. Although this one is not completely closed off, it seems to hold moisture exceedingly well (perhaps too well for the plants I put in it), so I removed the lid for a while to help equilibrate the moisture level (until I could at least see through the condensation).



The ridges of the container's pumpkin shape cause interesting optical effects when looking at the plants within. Maybe it isn't great for displaying at a show, but I find the plants fun to look at and photograph in different ways through the pumpkin glass. With and without flash offer new views of the plants--I prefer taking photos with the flash. The curvature of the container diffracts the light away from the camera's lens, making the photograph shadowy, like one serial killer plant is stalking an innocent hard-working-late-at-night plant in the shadows of an alley with a few beams of light peaking out of curtained apartment windows or from the street light at the end of the alley. It's perfect for this time of year, and reveals the deadly spook within your friendly neighborhood Gesneriad!



Constructing a Tropical Grow Chamber

By Josh Heath

For the last decade or so I've been collecting rare and unusual plants, mainly from the rainforest of tropical America. Most of these plants, especially aroids and gesneriads; require more humidity and warmth than can be provided in a cold basement. While my collection was small, I grew most of my plants in small terrariums. However, the size limitations of standard tanks severely limited the variety of species I could grow.

After looking at several commercial orchid grow chambers, I decided to build my own tropical grow chamber on as low a budget as possible. My criteria were an enclosure that would hold humidity and warmth, use standard and readily available T5 48" shop lights, and have a total cost of not more than several hundred dollars. It would also need to be waterproof as I spray my aroids and other epiphytes with water on a daily basis. Here is my step by step guide on how I built this grow chamber. I wanted the chamber to be lightweight but sturdy, so I decided on making the frame and side panels out of wood. For the frame, I used standard 1x2x8 pine strips. The basic frame for my enclosure is 50 inches wide and six feet tall. It is imperative to make sure that the inside width is wide enough to accommodate whatever type of 48" lighting you intend to use without difficulty. I chose to have three shelves, the top shelf being 24" high, and the bottom two are 18" high. On the very bottom is an external shelf to store potting supplies and to raise the growing space up off the floor. You can build this chamber to any size you need, and it is better to go bigger the first time than to run out of room later!



Figure 1: Here is the frame with shelf supports assembled. The very bottom is a tiny shelf made of 1/4" luan plywood that will be outside of the watertight enclosure.

The frame was assembled using course thread drywall screws and Gorilla Glue. Since the frame strips are

screwed on the ends, make sure you pre-drill your holes to prevent splitting. Any shelves will need to have bracing in the middle to support the eggcrate; the more bracing you use the better.

Once I assembled the frame, the next step is to paint it with several coats of 2-part epoxy paint to waterproof the wood. There are many choices of epoxy available; I used a product called Sweetwater which is made for painting ponds. Another good product is any of the Polygem brand epoxies which are both nontoxic and waterproof. After much consideration on what material to use for the sides of the enclosure, I opted to use 1/4" moisture resistant luan plywood. The plywood was cut to fit the sides, back, top, and bottom of the chamber. Only the bottom shelf is made with plywood, as the middle interior shelves are made of eggcrate. I also used luan for the very bottom external shelf. Paint at least 3 coats of epoxy on the plywood to ensure integrity.



Figure 2: Frame coated with gray epoxy paint.



Figure 3: Side panels painted and drying outside.

Now that the frame and panels are dry, attach the side panels to the frame using 1/2" screws. Once the "box" is assembled, seal all inside seams with a bead of clear silicone caulk. The next step is to make a front door. I used the same 1x2 pine strips as I used for the frame; and built a simple rectangular doorframe with at least two lateral braces. This was painted and attached to the enclosure using three stainless door hinges. I then trimmed and attached a heavy duty clear vinyl shower curtain and stapled it to the inside of the door using stainless staples or pins. The result is a large clear door that provides easy viewing of the plants and allows full access to the inside. As a final touch, I painted the entire outside with white latex paint.



Figure 4: Assembled enclosure with wood and vinyl door attached.

With the enclosure completed, you can now put in the two middle plastic eggcrate shelves. These help with ventilation and make the tank brighter. The final step is to install your light fixtures by screwing them into the bottom of each wood shelf support. As an extra precaution, I installed a 48" long by 12" wide strip of aluminum flashing on between the light fixture and the above shelf to prevent any water from dripping onto it. The type of 48" light you use is important; since this is a high humidity environment you will need to use water/weather resistant shop lights. These cost more initially, but should prevent possible problems with moisture. Drill a hole somewhere in the back corner of the chamber for the light cords to exit.



Figure 5: Lighting installed on bottom of shelves and top of chamber.



Figure 6: Aluminum flashing above light prevents dripping water from contacting fixture. Note hole in upper left corner for cord exit.



Figure 6: Grow chamber assembled and test run for a few days to make sure lighting works and there are no leaks in bottom or sides.

Now that the grow chamber is built and in working order, I recommend operating it for a few days to make sure everything works properly. Then you can start adding your plants. I grow most of my gesneriads using a wick-watering method using heavy duty plant trays with a piece of eggcrate added to suspend the plants. With the door shut and the lights on, the chamber stays roughly 80 degrees inside my 70 degree basement. The humidity easily reaches almost 100 percent, depending on how

much I mist the plants. After running for the past two years, the chamber has held up well and needed only the occasional replacement light bulb. I hope anyone in need of a dedicated growing space attempts to build a system like this, and I encourage any design improvements or modifications. It can be made as more or less complex as you like, for purely functional purposes or as a home display. Happy growing!



Figure 7: Grow chamber full of sensitive gesneriads and companion plants!

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
NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President: Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Vice President: Brian Connor
3003 E. Monument St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
(443) 845-3423
Brian_Connor@bd.com

Treasurer: Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 615-2299
SKOGL@si.edu

Secretary: Denise Whitman
7607 Riverdale Road, Apt. 333
New Carrollton, MD 20784
(301) 306-0417
ddw4@hotmail.com

Directors:
John Boggan
Jim Christ
Carol Hamelink

Committees:
Hospitality: Lee Linett
Membership: John Boggan
Programs: Brian Connor
Newsletter Editor: Jim Roberts
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
or
Petaltones@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Website and Blog: Kyoko Imai
web@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Membership: John Boggan
jkb25@cornell.edu
(202) 328-8145