

Petal Tones

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

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**February 2011 Show & Tell:
Johanna's beautiful *Episcia***

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well, here I am an hour away from landing in Hong Kong and can't see the ground below me with all the clouds. I can't wait for this trip to end and my plant adventures to begin. As luck would have it, my copy of the book "[Gesneriaceae of South China](#)" arrived on Wednesday, a bit too late for me to really get a taste of what I might end up seeing here. But I did take a good half hour turning the pages and looking in amazement at the assortment of plant material we've never seen (or even heard of) in the U.S. Fifteen and a half hours sitting in a small airplane seat is way too much for anyone to have to endure. Give me back my legs!!

Luke Leong will be waiting for me at the gate when I clear customs. Luke grows *Saintpaulia* and hybridizes *Kohleria*. He describes his growing area as very limited, but he still manages to do quite nicely. I'll bring back photos and WILL find a way to get his hybrids back home with me.

On Thursday I catch a plane right after our meeting ends and head to Kunming, which is the capital city of Yunnan Province and sits in close proximity to the famous stone forests. The weather is near perfect here for Gesneriads and people - never down to freezing with a summer maximum in the mid 80's; kind of like Seattle without the rain. Again, there will be plenty of photos taken of plants in their natural habitat. Yang, my contact there, has hired a guide to bring us to the Gesneriads. And yes, Joyce, I've been told that we'll be seeing lots of Begonias growing along with the *Petrocosmea* and *Chirita*. Our April meeting will be a photography workshop, which Ki will be telling us more about. For those of you who haven't been to a Gesneriad show, there are five classes devoted to 'Gesneriad Photography'. These classes are: color photo of an entire Gesneriad plant, color photo of part of a Gesneriad, monochrome photo, digital photo, and a photo of a

NCAC meetings held at the National Arboretum trailer.

Members start arriving around 10:30am to set up refreshments and coffee. Show and Tell plants welcome! Bring cuttings, plants, pots, & items to share for raffle. Meeting starts 11am.

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). Please bring plant for Druid Hill.

April 9, 2011 – Photographing Your Plants for Gesneriad Shows by Kyoko:

read more information in this issue following the President's message

Meeting dates for 2011 :

April 9th, May 14th, June 11th picnic, July 5 - July 9 in Philadelphia, PA - The Gesneriad Society's convention, hosted by the Liberty Bell Chapter
September 17: NCAC show & sale at Behnke's
October 15 (note this is the THIRD Saturday of the month)
December 10: holiday party

plant growing in its natural environment. Hopefully I'll come home with lots of those!

Remember to bring something for Druid Hill this month. Getting pretty plants in public places does more for getting new membership than any other thing the Chapter can do. Druid Hill has asked and we shall deliver. The photos I took at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens demonstrate how effective these plants can be in "natural plantings." I don't expect Druid Hill to match Atlanta, but there's no reason why they can't have a really nice display.

Wish me luck in my adventures, and pray with me that the food doesn't destroy my digestive system and get in the way of good times. I return to the US on the 8th and will see you all on the 12th.

Good Growing! Jim



April Meeting Plan: Photographing Gesneriads

-Kyoko

Our April meeting will be about photographing gesneriads. There will be two themes to our session:

- improving our photography
- shooting for submission to our shows.

Hope to have plenty of time for Q&A and actual shooting. (The latter is not a sure bet, however.)

A good chunk of the meeting will be interactive, so there is homework! Two assignments:

(1) Shoot some plants between now and April 9. Especially if you haven't used your camera in a while, pick it up again and shoot something every week. If you don't have Gesneriads in bloom, shoot some out-of-bloom Gesneriads or some other plants. Jot down what went well, what was challenging, questions about technique, etc.

(2) Bring some photos to the meeting. Look through your plant photos and select a few to discuss or show. They don't have to be your best work - in fact, it might be even better to bring the photographs that could use some help so we can talk about how they might be improved. If you can, print them at a size appropriate for entering into a Show - larger than 4" x 6" will be easier for us to see, but 8 x 10" is as large as you need to go. You can email them to me if you prefer - we will try to get them up on the projector - but I encourage you to print because viewing photographs in print vs. on screen (and especially via projector) is very different. Also, if

you're shy, you can sneak your photo in anonymously - just attach your comments/questions.

I have a head start on the homework: a few prints are being made and I am shooting more. Most of my *Sinningia* are only just sending out new growth and all of my plants were disbudded recently, so mostly I've been shooting tubers, seeds and other plants.

What have I learned so far about my shooting habits? That I'm a sloppy and lazy photographer. I tend to go with the motto: "The best photograph is the one I took, not the one I would have taken if only I had x."

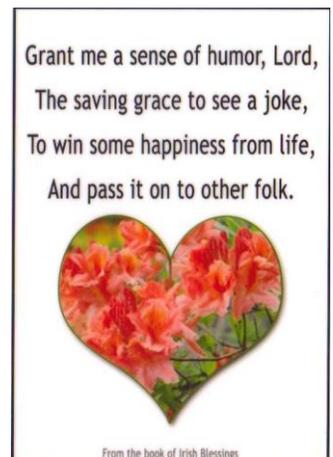
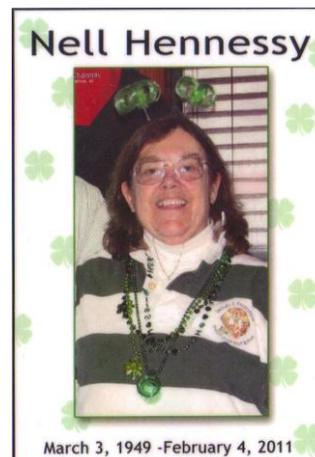
But when it comes to shooting houseplants, what is this "x" that would have given me a better photograph? It's usually "patience" - if only I'd spent a bit more time, I could have done any number of things better. Photography improvement is an *incremental* business - here's a short list of things that can affect the resulting photo - maybe you can think about them while you do your homework ☺

- the subject (the plant, including grooming)
- scene setup - background, "props"
- composition and framing
- lighting
- shutter-pushing technique
- tripod or equivalent
- camera settings
- appropriate lens (especially if shooting very small things)
- post-processing of digital files
- printing/display

We will have a better shot at making the April meeting useful to you if you come with examples and questions: I hope you will participate. If you have any questions in the meantime, feel free to send me an email and I'll do my best to answer them.

-Kyoko

IN MEMORY:



Update: US National Arboretum
Harold Belcher

This article is a follow-up to the article entitled “US National Arboretum Decision to De-accession Selected Collections” that was published in the February issue of *Petal Tones*.



Photo of the National Boxwood Collection courtesy of the USNA web site

When the U.S. National Arboretum (USNA) announced its intention to de-accession the Glenn Dale Hillside of its Azalea Collection on Mt. Hamilton and its National Boxwood Collection and its Perennial Collection both of which are on the Bladensburg road side of the Arboretum there was a tremendous outpouring of support to retain those collections. The plant societies that had been involved in the support and maintenance of those collections over the years, other plant societies and local garden clubs that have an interest in, and an established relationship with, the USNA and the Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA) reached out to their members, elected representatives, senior management at the Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Service, and members of the business and local community to enlist their support for maintaining the affected collections and to secure funding for those collections into the future.

As a direct result of the efforts of those dedicated groups and individuals, FONA has been able to secure a private donation which will be used exclusively to fund the maintenance of those collections and the USNA has suspended its plans to de-accession the three collections.

On February 14, 2011, FONA announced that it had received a \$1 million donation that it will use to establish an endowment to help preserve the Azalea and Boxwood collections at the USNA. The \$1 million donation, the largest single donation in

FONA’s history, was made anonymously by friends in honor of prominent attorney Brendan Sullivan Jr., and Lila Sullivan, longtime residents of the Washington area. “This generous donation, offered in the hour of the Arboretum’s greatest need, reflects not only the donor’s passion for this national treasure, but also confidence that the Arboretum leadership will make sound decisions relating to the collections in the future” said Kathy Horan, Executive Director of FONA. In that announcement, FONA’s Board of Directors Chairman, Jeanne Connelly, added “FONA recognizes that these are difficult economic times and all government agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, will face significant budget cuts in the coming years. That is why it is important for private partners to step in to protect one of the nation’s most valuable treasures and one of Washington, D.C.’s most important green spaces.”

Later the same day, in a prepared statement, the USNA Director, Dr Colien Hefferan, wrote “The U.S. National Arboretum is suspending actions to remove the Glenn Dale Azaleas from our extensive collection of Azaleas, as well as the National Boxwood and Perennial Collections subject to further discussions with stakeholders about the process and criteria for decisions about our collections. Although the resource challenges facing the Arboretum which initially led to these decisions are still very real and in need of a solution, we want to reassess our current resource use and opportunities to expand private support before we reduce or eliminate collections the public so values.”



Photo of the USNA Perennial Collection Courtesy of the USNA web site

Dr. Hefferan also wrote “We have heard and appreciate the public outpouring of comments about de-accessioning the Glenn Dale Azaleas and the Boxwood and perennial collections. Managing resources through difficult times is challenging, but

with the advice and guidance of our many stakeholders and colleagues we hope to develop an effective and well-understood policy for implementing decisions about our collections, as well as innovative approaches to developing new resources to sustain and support the Arboretum.”

The Arboretum has established a new comments box on their web site at <http://usna.usda.gov/> to solicit guidance from the public and stakeholders about the process and criteria that the USNA uses regarding decisions about their collections, and for their ideas for resource development to maintain the collections and programs at the Arboretum. The comments box is under the “Arboretum Information” tab. Dr. Hefferan wrote “Please share your ideas and recommendations regarding these issues by responding to the questions we have posted in our new comment box on this web site. We are eager to add your ideas to our decision-making processes. Over the next month, we also will be seeking more structured guidance from both horticultural and arboretum professionals, and from stakeholder groups. I hope that both the process of gathering this guidance and the ideas gleaned, help us to formulate and implement a collections policy at the USNA which is both enduring and well understood by the public.” In view of recent events, the stakeholder’s meeting should be quite lively.

Jeanne Connelly applauded the Arboretum’s announcement saying “We are delighted that Dr. Hefferan has listened to the Arboretum’s constituents and are heartened by the willingness of the Arboretum’s new leadership to engage the public in an open discussion about decisions relating to its collections.”

This spring, FONA will launch a major fundraising campaign to raise an additional \$1 million needed to maintain these treasured collections into the future. Hopefully, other private partners, such as plant societies and their members, stakeholders, local garden clubs and individuals, will step forward to help FONA to reach its goal. Over the years, FONA has provided substantial funding and support to the Arboretum for the maintenance of its collections. Plant societies, their members, other stakeholders as well as individuals have volunteered to work in the Arboretum’s collections thereby reducing some of the need for Federal funding.



Photo of the Glenn Dale Hillside on Mt. Hamilton Courtesy of the USNA web site

Due to deteriorating economic conditions the likelihood of additional Federal funding for the Arboretum and its collections is decreasing. Please consider making a donation to FONA, or volunteering to work in one of its collections or in an administrative capacity. If you choose to make a monetary donation to FONA, consider earmarking it for the endowment for the preservation of the Arboretum’s Glenn Dale Azalea Collection on Mt. Hamilton and its National Boxwood Collection and its Perennial Collection. Further information is available from FONA at www.fona.org or (202) 544-8733, and www.savetheazaleas.org . If you would like to view the USNA Collections, please visit <http://usna.usda.gov/> .

Treasurer’s Report:

I wanted to let you know that the raffle at the February meeting brought in \$129, which is the largest amount so far from a raffle. Also, so far I have received \$105 in memory of Nell to be sent to the student convention travel fund of The Gesneriad Society plus an amount from the Chapter. I will continue to receive funds in memory of Nell through the April meeting. Several members have renewed, as well as new members have joined. However, there are still about 10 who have not yet renewed for 2011.

Larry Skog, NCAC Treasurer

BLOOMIN' NOW



Streptocarpus 'Alissa'



Sinningia 'Amizade'

Barb Stewart grows her *Sinningias* in a large aquarium under 3 tubes. Her *Streptocarpus* and *Chirita* are grown on her light stands. Barb grows most of her *Streptocarpus* and *Chiritas* in clay pots on trays with matting, which they seem to like. It helps them cope with an irregular watering routine.



Chirita linearifolia

Barry Woolf has some beautiful *Streptocarpus* & a *Sinningia* blooming.



Streptocarpus: 'Neil's Strawberry' & 'Pink Surprise'



Sinningia cardinalis

Kitty Hedgepeth's *Saintpaulia* 'Yukako' a Chimera



Jim Roberts found some really nice commercially grown *Chirita* 'Aiko' at a local greenhouse



Harold Belcher's outdoor Jasmine is blooming now!



Atlanta Botanical Gardens Gesneriads: Jim Roberts



Columnea flexiflora



Columnea linearis



Corytoplectus cutucuensis



Aeschynanthus species *Drymonia*



Paradrymonia autumnoflora



Kohleria or *Pearcea*



Pearcea hypocyrtiflora



Columnea species



Columnea species



Columnea angustifolia

DESPERATELY SEEKING

Columnea schiediana.....Ki
Streptocarpus 'Harlequin Blue' Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'Rose Halo' Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'Orange Sherbet' Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'Heartlands Tanzanite' ... Brian Connor
Streptocarpus 'Designer Gene' Brian Connor
Kohleria 'Gnista' Brian Connor
Kohleria 'Solkatt' Brian Connor
Kohleria 'Tobbe' Brian Connor
Kohleria 'Maja Graddnos' Brian Connor
Kohleria 'Blizzard's Bing Cherries' Brian Connor
Saintpaulia species, Any Bev N
Begonia smithiantha Donna Beverin
Achimenesantha 'Dutch Treat' Donna Beverin

Please send a list of a plant you would love to grow via email. It will be posted here in the newsletter. A generous member will share! Petal Tones has a wide distribution and chances are good that someone will be able to get you what you want.



Mr. Gesneriad is welcoming your questions about growing Gesneriads!

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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