

Petal Tones

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

Volume 43 Number 1

January 2012

Meeting Schedule:

Meetings will be located in the trailer at the National Arboretum unless noted.

Saturday, February 11th

Barb Stewart "Dish Gardens"

Door opens at 9:30am Meeting at 10:00am

Saturday, March 10th

Propagation and Plant Swap

Door opens at 9:30am Meeting at 10:00am

Saturday, April 14th

Michael Riley, "Epiphytes in the Concrete Jungle"

Door opens at 9:30am Meeting at 10:00am

Meeting dates for 2012

May 12th, Summer picnic, September 8th, October 13th,
December 8th

GLOXINIA 'DRAGONSONG'

By Jim Roberts from 2007 Petal Tones

Gloxinia 'Dragonsong' is not a new hybrid, but it hasn't been seen very often in shows like my other popular hybrid, *Kohleria* 'Emily Roberts'. However, it still holds a special place in my heart. I really like the plant! 'Dragonsong' is a hybrid of *Gloxinia erinoides* 'Red Satin' x *Gloxinia perennis*. Both of these plants had been in cultivation for quite some time, and both had good and bad features. However, I saw some very nice similarities between the two and thought (at the time) that these two species might make an interesting cross. At the time that I made the cross the *G. erinoides* 'Red Satin' was classified with the genus name *Koellikeria*, so I had no idea if the hybrid was even possible. However, there were many other "intergeneric" crosses being done and I figured that I had nothing to lose.



Gloxinia 'Dragonsong'-hybridized and grown by Jim Roberts

I decided to use the *Gloxinia erinoides* 'Red Satin' as the seed parent in the hybrid. I did this for several reasons. First, *Gloxinia erinoides* 'Red Satin' rarely self-seeded for me, so I figured that if a seed pod did develop from the crossing the chances were good that the pod was going to contain hybrid seed. *Gloxinia perennis* would self-seed almost half of the flowers that opened, so I would have to plant seed from many different pods to see if any contained hybrid seed. Second, the flower size between the two plants is dramatic. I wasn't sure that pollen collected from

G. erinoides would be able to travel the entire distance required to fertilize the seed in *G. perennis*. So it made more sense to use the ample pollen produced by *G. perennis* on the smaller *G. erinoides*. The third reason is that there was always plenty of available pollen on the *G. perennis*, whereas the *G. erinoides* pollen was hard to come by. If there was any loose pollen in those tiny flowers it was hard to collect.



Gesneriad erinoides

So, I had the direction of my cross chosen. I applied pollen on several *G. erinoides* flowers and to my delight all swelled nicely and were showing signs of a successful pollination after just a couple of weeks. It's been too long for me to remember how long the pods took to ripen, but the seed all turned out to be viable. Knowing that the seed was the result of a cross between two species I did not expect any seed to seed variation and just grew on a few of the seedlings. The rest were tossed in the trash. The results of my efforts: a perfect blend of the two parents. As anyone who grows or has grown *G. perennis* knows, this is no light garden plant. It can easily reach 3-4 feet tall. It generally only gets a single flower spike per stem, although a pot with many stems can be a spectacular site. The pale lavender flowers don't open very far, but emit a slightly sweet minty smell. This is one of the very

few scented *Gesneriads*. *G. erinoides* is much more manageable in the light garden. It can reach 1-1 ½ feet tall, but that's still smaller than many of the *Kohleria* that we find a way to squeeze in. The plant has attractive reddish leaves covered with silver spotting (the *G. perennis* has dark bronze, glossy leaves). The plant produces many flower spikes per stalk, but it takes several stalks to make the plant showy. The flowers are very small, two toned red and white slippers. And it too has a subtle scent. You have to get your nose right down in the flower, but it's also a little minty. The hybrid retained the multiple flower stalk trait of the *G. erinoides*, a flower in good scale to the plant which is mid-sized between the two parents, and has the two tone effect in lavenders instead of red and white. It also carried over the scent of both parents. When the plant is sitting in a light garden and the air is undisturbed you can actually smell it from several feet away.



Euglossine bees visiting Gloxinia perennis. Photo Anton Weber

G. perennis produces huge rhizomes. They often curl around the bottom of a 6" pot several times. *G. erinoides* produces very small rhizomes. The hybrid produces manageable, easy to find rhizomes closer to the size of the *G. perennis* parent. This makes sharing this plant easy. As most of you know, from a single large rhizome you can get hundreds of plants quickly by simply breaking off all the individual scales and planting them on the surface of the soil. Cover the moistened pot or enclose it in a plastic bag. Within just a few weeks the scales will push themselves out of dormancy and start growing.

I named the plant *XGlokeria* 'Dragonsong' and registered it with AGGS. I had been reading all the Anne McCaffrey Dragon books and the teeth on the bottom lips of the flowers and the airy feel of the plant brought to mind the flying dragons in her series. It is now simply a *Gloxinia* due to the reclassification of the genus *Koellikeria* to *Gloxinia*. I don't have either of the parents at this time, but would like to get them both back. I've tried to self the plant, but haven't been successful so far. Perhaps the hybrid is sterile. Or maybe it just doesn't produce very good pollen. I'd like to continue to try to hybridize with this plant, crossing it with *G. erinoides* to try get the spotting back on the leaves. And I'd also like to try crossing it with *G. perennis* 'Insignis,' a smaller growing variety of *G. perennis*, to try to increase the flower size a little. I encourage anyone interested in hybridizing to give it a try. Find some closely related plants with traits you like and see what you can do.

Bloomin' Now

Barb's



Trip to White House for Barb!

Bloomin' Now

Johanna's



Saintpaulia 'Shiawasse Trail'



Chirita 'New York'



Smithicondonia
Heartland's Joy'



Achimenes



Primulina
tamiana

Bloomin' Now

Bev's



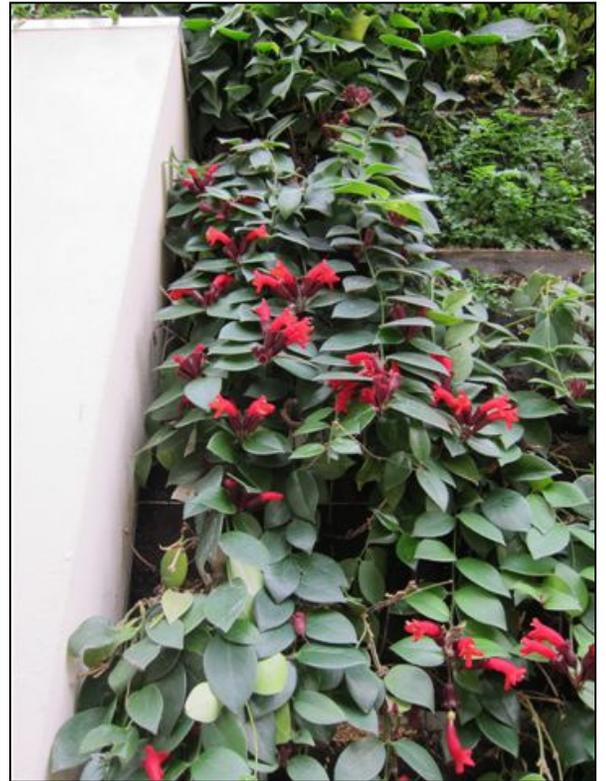
Saintpaulia Ionantha



Johanna visited Longwood & found some Gesneriads!



A beautiful *Streptocarpus* 'Concord Blue'



Photos from the MAAVS show
By Barry Wolfe



Kohleria 'Peridot's Spots n Dots'



Petrocosmea 'Shortnin' Bread'



Primulina 'Stardust'

Chapter Desperately Seeking

- Streptocarpus* 'Harlequin Blue'.....Brian Connor
- Streptocarpus* 'Rose Halo'.....Brian Connor
- Streptocarpus* 'Shenandoah Sugar Plum'.....Brian Connor
- Niphimenes* 'Lemonade'.....Brian Connor
- Henckelia malayana*.....Brian Connor
- Henckelia ANYTHING!..;*.....Brian Connor
- Pearcea hypocyrtiflora*.....Jim Roberts
- Episcia lilacine* 'Panama'.....Jim Roberts
- Streptocarpus kentaniensis*.....Jim Roberts
- Columnea orientandina*.....Jim Roberts
- Streptocarpus* 'Bristol's Goose Egg'.....Donna Beverin
- Begonia schmidtiana*.....Donna Beverin
- xAchimenaantha* 'Dutch Treat'.....Donna Beverin
- Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie'Lee Stradley
- Chirita* 'Veracunda'.....Barry Woolf
- Kohleria warszewiczii*.....Barry Woolf

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 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 from the raffle table.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org
 NCAC website: www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
 NCAC Blog: <http://petaltones.blogspot.com/>

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