

Petal Tones

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

Volume 35, number 3

January 2007



PRESIDENT'S GREETING

I hope the Holiday season and New Year find you and your plants healthy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing president Laurene Jones for her dedicated service for the past four years. Our club has seen many changes over these past few years, as our membership has both waxed and waned. Last year the club voted to change our meeting schedule to nominal by-monthly meetings (schedule posted below). As many of you know, our National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society has agreed to host the National Gesneriad convention in 2009. Although this is a big commitment, we know that we have the talent and energy to pull this off, but we will need everyone's help.



Alsobia 'Cygnet'

The newly elected board of directors is full of enthusiasm and great hope for this year. We are coming up with new ideas to re-vitalize the club and add excitement to the meetings including the reinstatement of the "Little show" and "What's Blooming" at each meeting as well as opportunities to win door prizes simply by attending meetings, details below. I would also like to thank our outgoing Petal Tones editor, John Boggan, for his hard work over the past 8 years! Please help me to welcome our new Petal Tones editor, Mark Zukaitis, whom many of you know from the Gesneriphiles Digest. Mark is a long time gesneriad enthusiast, you can see more information about him in the "Greetings! From the Editor" column, as well as newsletter deadlines. My hope is that this year we can re-ignite our passion for gesneriads and our enthusiasm to get together to discuss them. For this I need help from all of you. Please pass this newsletter on to anyone you know who may be interested in gesneriads.

Happy growing, Carol Hamelink

MONTHLY PLANT RAFFLE

We all have extra goodies that are too good to toss but that we have no sales outlet for. Bring them to the meeting and we will share them with each other. Everyone who attends the meeting will be given a raffle ticket. Extra tickets can be purchased at 3 for \$1. After

the business meeting tickets will be drawn until all the donated plants, cuttings, rhizomes, tubers, pots, soil, whatever are gone. If we run out of tickets, the donated items on the table will be available for a "grabfest" (first to grab it keeps it). This will be a great way for us all to share our collections and get new treasures.

MONTHLY LITTLE SHOW

Are you frustrated by never having your best plants in flower to coincide with the annual show? Do you want

to learn more about how plants are judged, and earn ribbons towards a special prize to be given out in December? Then bring that show plant to our meeting this month. We are re-introducing the Chapter Little Show at this month's meeting. Rules: Any Gesneriad worthy of being shown is allowed into the show. Plants should be clean, bug and disease free (of course!) and entered in any of the horticulture classes used at our show in September. Judging will be done competitively, just as in a standard Gesneriad show, with "imaginary ribbons" awarded to the winners in each class. Judging will be done by a team consisting of whoever we have at the meeting who's a qualified judge. If no judges attend the meeting, the general membership will award 1st, 2nd and 3rd place ribbons based upon their knowledge of the plants shown. And unlike a normal judged show, the judging will be done "in the open" so that you can hear the discussions as the judges praise (or criticize) the entries. All comments will be

valuable insights on how to grow your plants better. Sweepstakes for the most blue ribbons and Best of the Year for the highest score will be awarded at the end of the year. Please limit your entries to 3 plants per grower per meeting.

Also, each month will feature two design classes. All are encouraged to enter designs - we need the practice for National in 2009. The design titles for this month are:

"Winter Blahs" - a small design no more than 8" in any direction.

"Florida Vacation" - an underwater design.

Judging will take place immediately after the business meeting, while we are getting ready for the monthly program / speaker.

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Kohleria warszewiczii

WHAT'S IN BLOOM

We all have a favorite plant that flowers when we least expect it. It may not be show quality, but it's probably worth sharing. Bring the plant along and you'll be given a few minutes to tell the rest of us how you grow it, what makes it special to you, and get ideas on culture from other members who may also be growing it. Plants grown for special foliage can be shown here too!

Jim



Pink flowered Episcia species that Mauro Peixoto has growing under one of the benches in his greenhouse

FEBRUARY EPISCIA PROGRAM

The February NCAC TGS meeting features a talk on growing Episcias by Lee Linett. Many of us grow these lovely plants for their beautiful foliage, but a quick web search reveals a much greater potential that includes a surprising capacity for creating unusual shapes as well as beautiful blooms in shades of orange, pink, purple and even yellow. Join us in February as Lee shares tips on how to grow a prize winning Episcia in as little as six months. The meeting will also include a plant sale and swap, so you can add some Episcias to your gesneriad collection. Stay tuned for the February issue of Petal Tones which will include an article by Lee on growing Episcias that provides a taste of her February program.

DECEMBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The December NCAC-TGS Holiday party was once again held at the National Arboretum. The meeting was well attended with great food and a large selection of raffle plants. No one went home empty handed unintentionally! Many thanks to all who donated plants and cuttings.

The candidate slate put forward by the nomination committee was elected into office. The new officers for the next 2 years are:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| President: | Carol Hamelink |
| Vice president: | Jim Roberts |
| Secretary: | Jim Christ |
| Treasurer: | Larry Skog |
| Directors: | John Boggan John Rountree Denice Whitman |

SPRING IS COMING SOON

Achimenes mexicana is a beautiful scaly rhizomatous gesneriad from Mexico. The flowers are a nice purple slipper shape, similar to *Achimenes dulcis*, or *Sinningia speciosa*.

If you grown *Achimenes mexicana* or any scaly rhizomatous gesneriad, this time of year is a great time to bring Rhizomes for the plant sales table. *Achimenes mexicana* is a graceful plant – it has always grown as a single stem for me, with soft alternate leaves and those beautiful large blue-purple flowers. If you like fuzzy plants you would enjoy growing this plant with its gentle, crystalline indumentum.

This is the time of year to share *Achimenes* rhizomes! It won't be long before they begin to initiate growth. For me *A. Mexicana* starts in March and flowers sometime beginning in June, with long lasting flowers. This is one of my favorite gesneriads.

Upper Right, *Achimenes mexicana* with *xKoelikohleria* (now *Glokohleria* 'Pink Heaven')

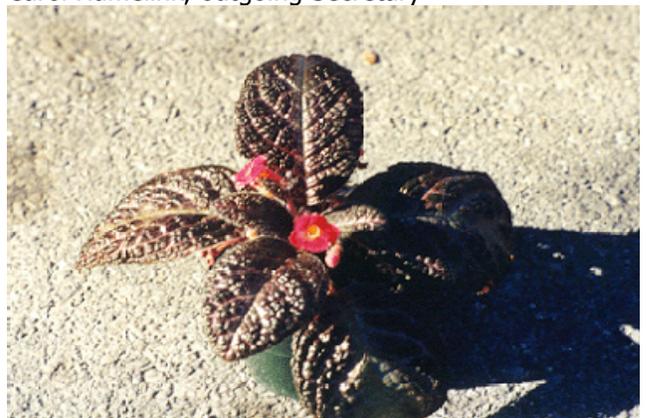


Achimenes mexicana

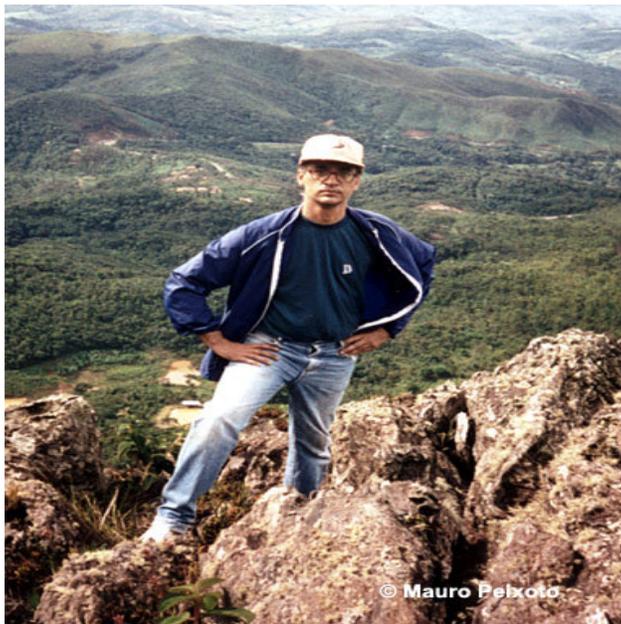
2009 CONVENTION NEWS

Lee Linett and Nell Hennessy are Co-convention chairs. The biggest need right now is still to find a hotel. Projected dates are July 8-11. Laurene Jones will handle the goodie bags.

Carol Hamelink, outgoing Secretary



Episcia 'Raspberry Tart'



BRAZIL PLANTS SUPPORT CLUB

Mauro Peixoto cultivates and collects seeds from Alstroemeriaceae, Amaryllidaceae, Araceae, Aristolochiaceae, Begoniaceae, Cactaceae, Gesneriaceae, Iridaceae, Orchidaceae, Passifloraceae and Velloziaceae plant families found growing in Brazil. In order to generate funds to help him in this endeavor he has started a support club whereby people can support his efforts and receive seed packets throughout the year. Last year our NCAC-TGS joined Mauro's seed club at the Sustaining Membership level. For the contribution of \$60 we received from Mauro 18 seed packages last year.

We currently have 10 club members who have participated in receiving these seeds. If you have not received any seeds, are an NCAC-TGS member and would like to grow from seed, please contact me at hamelinkc@yahoo.com to sign up. I have been appointed point person who collects the seed requests from the club members, receives the seeds, divides them up and sends them out. This is a great opportunity to try new varieties, as Mauro's list is generally very long. I already have seedling up from planting seeds in early December. It looks like I will have a lot of Sinningias in the near future, so if you've missed out on the earlier seed divisions, let me know and I'll save you some seedlings.

This year the club has decided to renew our membership at the Preservationist Membership level. For \$125/year we will now receive 36 seed packages this year (12 packages 3 times this year). This is a great way for all of us to increase the varieties we are currently growing in preparation for hosting the National TGS convention in 2009. Please contact me if you would like to participate by selecting and growing out Brazilian gesneriad seeds.

Carol Hamelink

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

February 10, 2007: Lee Linett will give a presentation on *Episcia* at the National Arboretum at 10:30 a.m. – You will not want to miss this!

April 14, 2007: 4/14 Program at 10:30 a.m. To Be Determined

June Summer Picnic! Day and Location to be determined

September 8, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum, program TBD

October 13, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum, program TBD

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum, **Christmas Party**

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you Carol and Jim and the Board for voting to allow me to help out with the newsletter! Our discussions regarding form of mailing were fruitful and the responses I did receive from membership regarding e-Mailing Petal Tones rather than go to the expense of copying and posting them was encouraging. Of course, for those members who do not have e-mail the newsletter will continue to be forwarded via U.S. Mail.

Personally, I'm really excited to be involved with a chapter again, and especially the NCAC chapter! I haven't been a member of a local chapter since I lived in New York and was a member of the New York chapter, where there were many, many enthusiastic people who were so generous in sharing their experience and knowledge with me. Being part of a chapter was very important to me then. There was always a large crowd and lots of excitement. The little shows were large and interesting, the raffles were lots of fun for everyone and the presentations were something we all looked forward to. For some reason though, I've heard that attendance has dropped off at the New York Chapter. I hope I am wrong. This is happening not only in the New York chapter but the National Capital Area Chapter as well. This is unfortunate. Even though I have not been involved with a chapter myself, but continued growing plants on my own, the fellowship and sharing of plant material, exhibiting our plants to be admired by others and engaging in various other activities is a very important part of keeping in touch, and up to date with what's growing, what's new and if you don't get *Gesneriads* magazine, what's not *Koellikeria* (now *Gloxinia*) or *Dalbergaria* (now *Columnea*). I don't know, maybe it is a function of the internet. What with *Gesneriphiles* and all the photographs people post in addition to the generosity of the members of *Gesneriphiles* in sharing

their plants people no longer see any need to be involved with the chapter – to make the effort to come to the Arboretum. This would only seem to make sense, but in light of the fact that we are hosting a Convention in 2009 we need lots of participation, and a vigorous and healthy chapter provides much more than what the isolated endeavor of communicating solely via our computers can ever hope to provide. At any rate, I would like to hear from as many people as possible with regards to how the Gesneriad Society has impacted your quality of life, perhaps for a future article. If I write about this topic I promise not to use names so go ahead, drop me a line.

To the members who have recently stopped attending our gatherings, I would like to ask, what is the essence of the hobby for you. What most gives you pleasure and fulfillment with regard go growing our plants? Exactly why do you, personally, grow your plants and study the natural history of Gesneriads (and other plant families as well). What would characterize the ideal chapter for you? It would be interesting to hear from people regarding these issues, particularly because so many of us have been involved for 30+ years without becoming jaded or bored. There is a lot to look back on and remember, and a lot to look forward to (especially the 2009 convention). Let me know what YOU think by e-mailing me at mzukaitis@msn.com or writing to Mark Zukaitis, 422 George Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 (Cell: 410-206-5307).

Obviously this newsletter is going out to people who

have not attended recently along with the corps group who is currently active, and so I would like to take this opportunity say please come and join us – and bring something wonderful to enter in the newly reinstated Little Show and share with us the interesting and informative presentation that Lee Linett is giving on *Episcia* at the February meeting!

PLEASE NOTE: PETAL TONES WILL BE PUBLISHED THE FIRST WEEK OF EVERY MONTH. PLEASE SUBMIT ARTICLES BY THE THIRD WEEK OF EVERY MONTH.

Surely there are times when you have something flowering, but alas and alack! These things happen off schedule for meetings and are out of bloom by the time you can enter in a little show! Never fear – take digital photos of your treasures when they are at their peak – and send the pictures to me with an article in your own words as to how you grew your plant, what attracted you to it in the first place – some natural history, what you like about that particular genus, etc. Have you been reflecting on how grateful you are to have access to the never-ending source of wonder, beauty and amazement we all know and love . . . express yourself! We all want to know what you have to say – what you think about your plants and the experience of living with them, nurturing them, procuring them. God knows we do love to trade, shaer and buy plants! I am planning to really get a lot of that off my chest, myself in the near future. . .

Happy growing and see you ALL at the February meeting!

Mark Zukaitis



Episcia 'Pink Panther'



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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 four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of Petal Tones, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

AGGS website: <http://gesneriadsociety.org> **NCAC website:** <http://members.aol.com/aggsncac>

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