

Petal Tones

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

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Episcia 'Unpredictable Valley' Grown by Jim Roberts

PRESIDENT'S GREETING

I hope you all enjoyed the last club meeting as much as I did. We had a couple of new people join and were delighted to see some long time members as well. The raffle table had an impressive amount of plants and related goodies. Thanks to everyone who contributed! We had a lovely Little Show last month and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in April with their new lovelies. I apologize for taking so long to get the Little Show judged. We have decided to try to do that in the back of the room during the program to try to speed things along. This means you'll need to get your plant entered and your designs finished before the talk at 10:30. I encourage everyone to participate. This is a great learning experience for those entering the plants, as well as those of us judging them. If you have a plant that you like, bring it along. The gesneriad family is so large there's a good chance that we haven't all seen it before. If you have a plant that can't wait until the next meeting, take a picture of it and send it along to Mark for the newsletter. Chirita 'Vertigo' was blooming nicely on my stands last week, but the blooms are dropping fast, so it won't wait until April. Although the plant doesn't yet have a beautiful rosette, it has large beautiful variegated foliage and large sturdy bloom stalks. Despite my lack of photographic skills you can hopefully see the plant's potential in the photo below.

Although winter clearly hasn't given up the fight yet, I'm hoping this snow storm today was the last! Just last week, after that prolonged cold spell, it was beginning to feel like spring. The plants are even starting to wake up. The Achimenes rhizomes are beginning to grow, and the *Seemannia purpurascens* rhizome sprouts have broken the surface this week as well. I grow a lot of Episcias in an easterly facing window. When they start to perk up, I'll know spring is truly here. Here's hoping that's right around the corner. Happy growing.

Carol Hamelink

DESIGN CLASSES FOR APRIL MEETING

"Spring is Sprung": 12" x 12" arrangement of planted gesneriad, design must show motion. If you plan a hanging design, please bring your own set up for hanging.

"Miniature Magic": 5" x 5" arrangement of planted or fresh cut gesneriad material.



Arrangement: "Winter Blahs" by Carol Hamelink

FEBRUARY LITTLE SHOW RESULTS

Thanks to everyone who brought in plants for our first Little Show in a number of years. There were 12 entries which gave our panel of judges a real work-out in the short time that they had to evaluate them.

HERE ARE THE RESULTS:

SWEEPSTAKES in horticulture tie to **Carol Hamelink**

BEST IN SHOW to Carol Hamelink for K.'Green Goblin'

BEST IN ARTISTIC to **Carol Hamelink** for *Winter Blahs* with 94 points-Carol gets to write/decide the 2 classes for Artistic/the Arts for our next meeting.



Kohleria 'Green Goblin' grown by Carol Hamelink

FINAL TALLY:

Section B Class 9 Kohleria in Bloom:

- K. 'Green Goblin'-Carol Hamelink-96 points-Blue
- K. 'Emily Roberts'-Carol Hamelink-94 points-Red

Section C Class 15 Columnea in Bloom:

- C. sanguinea 'Gigantea'-Lee Linett-85 points - Red

Section D Class 28 Saintpaulia Trailing:

- S. 'Rob's Toorooka'-Shirley Huffman-93 points-Blue

Section E Class 35 Variegated Leaf Episcia:

- E. 'Unpredictable Valley'-Jim Roberts-96 points-Blue



Columnea Sanguinea 'Gigantea' grown by Lee Linett

Section E Class 34 Episcia Grown For Foliage:

- E. 'Chocolate Velour' -Carol Hamelink-95 points-Blue

Section E Class 36 Petrocosmea for Foliage:

- P. *forrestii*-Shirley Huffman-93 points-Blue

Section E Class 38 Other Gesnies Grown for Foliage:

Drymonia *serrulata* 'Bronze'-Jim Roberts-86 points-Red

Arrangement 8" 'Winter Blahs':

Carol Hamelink-94 points-Blue

Jim Roberts-93 points-Red

Arrangement 'Underwater 'Florida Vacation':

Carol Hamelink-82 points-Red

Jim Roberts-72-points-White

Congrats to all who entered. Judges for the show were Carol Hamelink, Lee Linett and Jim Roberts. Maybe we need to get some more accredited judges in the group. The judges did not judge their own plants or arrangements, but it would certainly help to have full panels of three at all times.



K 'Emily Roberts' hybridized by Jim Roberts, Grown by Carol Hamelink

UPCOMING MEETING DATE

April 14, 2007: 10:30 AM National Arboretum - Lee and Bob Stewart will give a presentation relating to the following:

"Water and Soil Basics"

This will be an interactive talk covering a variety of topics in water quality and soil mixes for growing gesneriads. Some of the topics included will be:

1. what should be tested for, what minerals might be missing;
2. how plants absorb water and what they do with it;
3. pH, soluble salts
4. drainage
5. mix ingredients, and capillarity.

Questions from the audience are encouraged during the talk and will steer the discussion.

Anyone who wishes can bring a sample of their water (in a clean well-rinsed small glass jar) and samples of their soil mixes for Bob Stewart to test

**GLOXINIA 'DRAGONSONG'
By Jim Roberts**

Our new editor is just what we need. Someone who will bug the heck out of us until we write an article for Petal Tones. Mark has asked me for several articles, including one on a hybrid of mine that I brought in for the "What's in Bloom" part of our meetings in February.

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.

I decided to use the *Gloxinia erinoides* 'Red Satin' as the seed parent in the hybrid. I did this for several reasons.



Gloxinia 'Dragonsong'-hybridized and grown by Jim Roberts

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 the *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.



Euglossine bees visiting *Gloxinia perennis*. Photo Anton Weber

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. I hope everyone at the meeting was able to detect it. When the plant is sitting in a light garden and the air is undisturbed you can actually smell it from several feet away.



Gloxinia erinoides

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.



Gloxinia 'Dragonsong' in arrangement entered by Jim Roberts NCAC Little Show

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. Anyone with plants or rhizomes to donate?

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.

DESPERATELY SEEKING!

This is the place to post your wish lists, or plants you'd like to find.

Carol Hamelink's wish list – if anyone has any of these I'd be happy to arrange a trade, or be willing to purchase.

- Gloxinia rupincola*
- Gloxinia sylvatica*
- Streptocarpus 'Crystal Ice'
- Chirita 'Cynthia'
- Kohleria 'Ganymede'
- Sinningia 'Peridots Darth Vader'
- Sinningia *speciosa* 'Tigrina' type
- Sinningia 'Amizade'
- Sinningia Rio das Pedras- no luck at starting seeds!

Jim Roberts' wish list - Gesneria species or hybrids (other than *humilis* or *christii*)

Any Diastema

Any former Trichantha or Dalbergaria alliance members of the Columnea tribe.

I'll trade or pay for any of the above.

Contact me at 443-838-1935

Jim Roberts



Carol Hamelink's Humidity Chamber. Photographed by Carol Hamelink

NEW HUMIDITY BOX

By Carol Hamelink

I'm trying a new humidity chamber this winter. Jim set up a terrarium to force a couple of *Amorphophallus* that were very late

at breaking dormancy. Luckily for me, they quickly became too tall, so I adopted it for all of the high humidity loving gesneriads that are new to me. We put a fish aquarium heater set to 80F in the water reservoir at the bottom to keep it nice and warm. The plants are all wicked, just like on my plant stands, but with the cover in place it's dripping with moisture (see photo below). The pink *Episcias* are really taking off, growing better than they have in the bubble bowls I used last year. I got a couple of *Nautilocalyx* starters at the national convention last summer and a few *Gesnerias* from fellow club members that are thriving in there! It's fun trying new plants, as well as new ways of growing.

See page 4 for her photo (ed.)

KOHLERIA GREEN GOBLIN

By Carol Hamelink

Basic soil mix: 1 part Promix potting soil, 1 part perlite, 1 quart horticultural charcoal per 5 gallons 1:1 mix. Since *Kohlerias* don't like to dry out, big pots (larger than 4 inches) get two wicks. I try to monitor them to make sure the wicks are continuously working and the plants stay moist. *See the photograph of Carol's Little Show entry of K. 'Goblin' on page 2. ed.)*



Grown and Photographed by Carol Hamelink

CHIRITA VERTIGO

By Carol Hamelink

Same basic soils mix as for *Kohlerias*, but lightened even further with the addition of more perlite. *Chiritas* don't like to stay wet and prefer to be on the dry side. I still wick them, but monitor and take them off of the wicks every couple of weeks to let them dry out.

GREETINGS! FROM THE EDITOR

Lee Linett's *Episcia* presentation was received with great interest at the February 10, 2007 meeting. Her talk covered everything from types and varieties of *Episcia*, their culture, and how to groom them for show. Not least in importance was the suggestion to wipe the pot off with a half-and-half solution of vinegar and water to get the white mineral deposits off, then finishing with a light coat of oil to give the pot a nice, clean look.

I hope you send me your wish lists! What a great opportunity to both obtain and share plant material with other members.

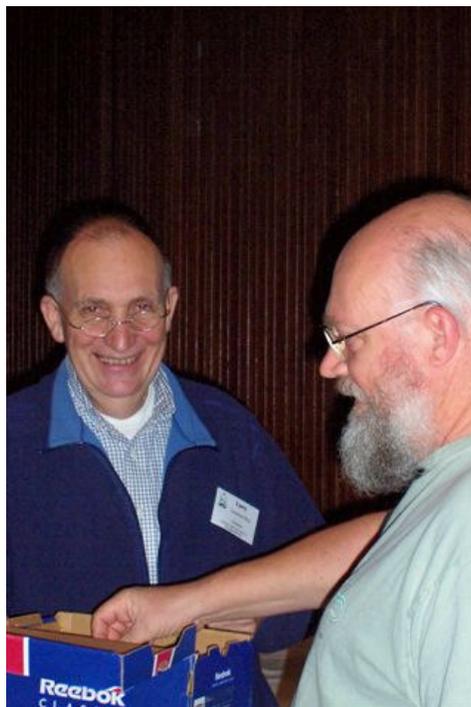
One DEFINITE on my wish list is Jim Roberts *Gloxinia* 'Dragonsong'! The photo does not do it justice. The plant has a truly magical quality – a rare wildflower from an ancient and mystical land. I can't wait to grow this one!



Lee Linett showing us how to use a shower cap to keep the pot, soil, and moisture contained and away from tablecloths, etc.

Lee also let us know how easy it is to find things to plant in – starter plants can go into little cups you get filled with barbecue sauce with Buffalo Wings – or the tops from laundry detergent (which also double as boosters under the lights because they are tall and narrow – and you can free up the pots you used to use for more planting! Lee's presentation was very informative and delightful and if you were not there I am sorry you missed her!

HOWEVER – it is not too late for those of you who did not come to the last meeting to plan to see what Bob Stewart has up his sleeve at the next!



Larry Skog holding the raffle tickets as Christian draws for a prize from the raffle table

He and his wife Dee have been growing and showing for many years, and have made a name for themselves at the of The Gesneriad Society conventions for growing both unusual, seldom seen plants very well, and some things we have seen before but in unusual ways. I will never forget the photographs I came across from the last Convention showing *Streptocarpus* growing mounted – like an epiphyte! I can't wait to see what he will bring to show us, in addition to the presentation on soil, water and what can be added to soil and water to make our plants grow to their maximum potential.

Mark Zukaitis

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.

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