



Petal Tones

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

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SEPTEMBER 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings everyone,

Although it's still August, it is beginning to feel like summer is winding down. Although I'm rarely ready to let go of summer, as this one was pretty hot and dry, I think I'm about ready. One thing I am looking forward to is the resumption of our meetings at the National Arboretum. Don't forget we've got a presentation by Karen Cichocki on terrariums and dish gardens this month, so we've featured those as our designs for the little show. This is a great opportunity to pick up some tips on how make these interesting and not just plants thrown together.

I hope everyone has had the opportunity to check out our new website which can be found at:

<http://www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org/>

Jim Hipple has done a very nice job of getting it started. You can find archives of the past Petal Tones (since Jan 2007) and easily keep up with the schedule of events. It looks like what we need now is a few beautiful photos of some of those prize winning plants everyone is growing. We've also included a photography category in this month's Little Show for all of you photo buffs, so show us what you can do.

I look forward to seeing you all,

Carol Hamelink



Best Photo 2007 Convention: Columnnea ericae
Karyn Cichocki

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND EVENTS

September 8, 2007: 10:30 AM Karyn Cichocki –
Dish Gardens and other artistic plantings.

November 10, 2007: 10:30 AM Streptocarpus

December 8, 2007: 10:30 AM Christmas Party

WHAT WE GROW – SHOW AND TELL

In addition to plants that you are planning on entering into the little show, you doubtless have something that is either in bloom or otherwise interesting, but not quite up to show quality. Please select plants to bring for the "Show and Tell section of the meeting!"

Mark



2006 Convention: Best Gesneriad with Seed Pods
Karyn Cichocki

LITTLE SHOW

Section I – Gesneriads in Flower

- Class 1 – Tuberous
- Class 2 – Rhizomatous
- Class 3 – New World Fibrous-rooted
- Class 4 - Old World Fibrous-rooted
- Class 5 – Saintpaulia

Section II – Gesneriads Grown for Foliage

Class 6 – Episcia

Class 7 – all other New World

Class 8 – Chirita and Petrocosmea

Class 9 – all other Old World

Section III – Other Horticultural Entries

Class 10 – New Hybrids or Species

Class 11 – Rarely Seen Hybrids or Species

Section IV – Artistic and the Arts

Class 12: Dish Garden or Natural Planting – These are not the same thing. A dish garden should be artistically balanced with a good selection of harmonious plant materials. Gesneriads MUST predominate. A Natural Planting is an artistic planting of one or more plants in a natural material (rock, driftwood, or other material). Only one entry of each type per exhibitor, but each exhibitor can have one dish garden and one natural planting.

Class 13: Terrarium – straight sided

Class 14: Terrarium – curved sided

Class 15: Photography – a print, no larger than 8 x 10", appropriately framed or displayed. If we get enough photos we'll subdivide the class to match the new TGS classes: plant close-up, whole plant, and plant photographed in nature. Only one entry per exhibitor, unless they fall into different classes of the three categories mentioned here.

Let's all pretend it's our Annual Show instead of "just" a "Little Show." We all need to practice for next March. Karyn will help judge the show; let's give her a good workout.



Terrarium with marvelous patina: Grown and Photographed by Mark Zukaitis

WHY I LOVE TERRARIUMS

BY: Mark Zukaitis

I don't need to tell you that the above pictured terrarium is a labor of love. They acquire such a beautiful patina with patience. A terrarium with an appropriate plant – such as a smaller plant that can live to maturity without becoming too large for the space, as well as a plant that requires high humidity. This terrarium has a single *Gasteranthus attratus* which by the looks of it will NEVER outgrow this terrarium. Someone at work received the glass vase with flowers in it and gave it to me when the flowers died.

Actually, you probably already can tell I'm being sarcastic.

Sarcastic and excited to have Karyn Cichocki here to advise us regarding appropriate plant material for terrariums and dish gardens – as well as the planting of that material and the grooming required to keep them looking their best.

There are lots of good possibilities in the Seed Fund. I have found that the miniature *Sinningias* look good in terrariums, but if I set them in too much light they get hot – and these little plants do like a fairly bright light – and since I do not grow under fluorescents heat buildup in a window is a problem, not to mention that size become an issue when you are putting it on a window sill. I will keep trying – there are several bubble bowls and various other transparent containers accumulating waiting to be planted into a magical self-contained landscape!

Members are all welcome to bring their terrariums to the September meeting! We all look forward to see the fruits of our fellow members' labors!

NCAC TGS WEBSITE IS UP!

One of our newer members, Jim Hipple has put a lot of effort into our website! Watch for an announcement that our website, www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org, which has been going through some changes, is up and running – for information, entertainment and back-issues of this newsletter. However, even though it is under construction I can see how beautifully, and creatively it has been done.

Thank you Jim!

Ed.

BRAZIL SEED CLUB

Just a reminder that if you are a member of the NCAC TGS and would like to participate in this seed club, please send me an email and I will add you to the list. Three times a year, I get the seed availability list forwarded to me from Larry Skog. I then distribute this to everyone who has emailed me and asked to participate. Participants then select their top 6 seed orders and email that to me. The rest of the protocol can be found in the April issue of *Petal Tones*.

Carol Hamelink

ROOTS – KARYN CICHOCKI'S STORY

BY: Karyn Cichocki

I've always been interested in gardening but did it mostly outdoors. I first got involved in indoor gardening with your typical houseplant and then a few African Violets. In the early 80s and joined an AV club and got involved in growing for show and then entering the design section of the shows. There was a member in our club that would bring a couple of *Streptocarpus* and *Chirita sinensis* 'Angustifolia' to the shows. I really feel in love with the Chirita but was not able to grow it as my growing area was too warm. I joined the LI Gesneriad Chapter about 6 months before I moved to NJ in 1994 and really got bitten by the bug. I now grow in my unheated basement where the temperatures are much cooler and dip into the mid 50s in the dead of winter. This is great for growing many Gesneriads. I discovered that there were several clubs that met at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morristown, about 40 minutes from my home, and I soon joined the two AV clubs and the Gesneriad Chapter.

I struggled for several years with the *Saintpaulia* hybrids until I finally came to the conclusion that they just didn't do well with the cold winter temperature. I still grow a few hybrids but have expanded my collection of *Saintpaulia* hybrids and grow these on a two tube light stand in my dining room.

Being a new person discovering all the wonderful genera in this plant family, I just had to get almost every plant that I could get my hands on. I have added quite a bit of plant material to the compost heap in my back yard in the twelve years I have been in NJ. But I have finally learned that there are some plants, mostly those that require warmer temperatures than I have, that don't do well in my conditions and I have learned to let them go.

My first Gesneriad Society convention was the Nashville, TN convention in 1999. This was my first try at entering in the Artistic Section and I found it to be a challenge as I didn't have much of my own plant material. I now grow most of the plant material that I use in my arrangements and plantings as I find it less stressful to depend on finding something at the sales table.

Maryjane Evans, who single handedly took care of the seed fund for so many years, was a member of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum Gesneriad Society. What a treat to get to much new plant material as she tested much of the seed that she received. She was always handing me a little container of seedlings to grow on for our sales table. It is from her that I get great enjoyment out of propagating plants for our Chapter sales tables and from growing plants from seed. It is a challenge and you have to have a lot of patience because some plants take several years before they reach blooming size.

I am now on the Seed Fund committee and feel that it is important to grow species and try to set seed for the seed fund. I have cut down on the hybrids that I grow and keep a few to use for my artistic arrangements. My collection consists of *Streptocarpus*, *Sinningia*, *Kohleria*, *Petrocosmea*, *Columnnea*, *Nematanthus* and a few plants of other genera. I have just started growing Alpine Gesneriads which I figure should do well in my growing conditions. I also have a few Orchids and Begonias. My outdoor gardens feature a variety of perennials but I really enjoy *Hosta* and Day Lilly. I am now a Master Gesneriad Society judge as well as a Senior African Violet Society of America (AVSA) judge. Besides participating in local shows, I attend the conventions for the Gesneriad Society, AVSA, AVSC and NYS. I've held several different positions in the local clubs that I belong to.

I am also an avid bird watcher and belong to a local bird club and enjoy birding when I go away to the conventions.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

BY: Carol Hamelink

Since the advent of the fluorescent light fixture, growing blooming gesneriads indoors has been a viable option. I will not provide an in-depth review of lighting, since large amounts of information can be found online and in many publications. However, I do want to provide some guidance on how to tell when your plants are getting too much or too little light. If you have a plant that doesn't seem to thrive for you, moving it to an alternate location with either more or less light may make a difference.

A plant that doesn't get enough light may have elongated internode lengths (distance between leaf petioles) which can inhibit the ability of the plant to stand upright. The plant may also exhibit pale coloration in its blooms or even a complete failure to bloom. A plant that gets too much light, on the other

hand, may exhibit photobleaching (the areas exposed directly to the light will fade) or appear tight and bunched up as the petiole length is so short that all of the leaves are crowded together at the growth center.



Dish Garden: Grown and Photo by Karyn Cichocki

In my house, I have only one four tube plant stand (all stands are 2 feet deep). This is where I grow most of my *Kohlerias* and *Sinningias*. For some plants, even four tubes is not enough light. In an attempt to keep the foliage on *Sinningia speciosa* compact, I have even added an additional compact fluorescent tube (23watts) to the four tube stand where the *speciosas* are clustered. The added light is making a dramatic difference in the foliage of these plants. The lighting for these plants is still a work in progress, as the blossoms are failing to open completely—suggesting that I may have the additional lamp a bit too close. On the other hand, miniature *Sinningias* appear to tolerate a wide range of lighting conditions, and grow well on both the 4 and the 2 tube stands.

Saintpaulias and *Chirita* prefer less light and do quite nicely on two tube stands. I have grown a best-in-show *Chirita* 'Stardust' under four tubes, but as that space is very limited, most of my *Chiritas* have been moved to the two tube stands. *Chirita* 98-083 tended to get brown tips on the leaves when it was growing under four tubes, but no longer has this problem under two tubes. *Episcia* also seem to be quite tolerant of variable conditions. They've grown well for me in east facing windows, under 4 fluorescent tubes and seemingly equally as well under two tubes.

I have a windowless office at work. Under the credenza cabinets is a single fluorescent tube. Surprisingly, a couple of *Chiritas* are doing better there than they have on the 2 tube stands at home. *Chirita* 'Jade Moon' and *Chirita brassicoides* 'Marble Leaf' have been shy bloomers for me until I placed them about 6 inches

below this single bulb. It may be the short distance to the light that has made the difference, since the peduncle (stalk supporting the flowers or inflorescence) on the Chirita Jade Moon is much shorter and more attractive than on the siblings growing at home which are 12 to 18 inches below the light bulbs.

In that windowless office I have placed two small fluorescent lamps from one of the big box stores. Each lamp has a 27 watt full spectrum bulb. I tried a few *Saintpaulias* under these lamps, but found they did not bloom, which means they did not get enough light. However, *Streptocarpus* 'Kim' is doing very well. Surprisingly, a couple of *Episcias* are also thriving – even blooming modestly, with a blossom here and there.

The amount of light a plant receives depends on a number of factors. The most obvious are the number of bulbs and how long the bulbs are turned on. The distance from the bulb to the plant is also important – the further from the bulb, the less light the plant receives. Without a reflector or lens, the brightness decreases as the square of the distance. The brightness also varies along the length of the tube; fluorescent bulbs are brightest at the center and darkest near the ends. Even the area around the light stand affects the light level. If you put a mirror behind the light stand, the plants will receive more light.



Another View of Karyn Cichocki's Growing Area: Photo by Karyn Cichocki

The age of a bulb is also important. Fluorescent bulbs decrease in brightness while they are turned on. Although most literature recommends changing bulbs every year, few of us are so rigorous. Some people recommend changing every other bulb during the interval when light hours are being ramped up for producing maximum bloom for show entry. Since there are shows each spring and fall this would ensure that all the bulbs get replaced each year. Although I usually use a bulb until it burns out, I am presently noticing phototropism (turning toward the light) on the front edge of some shelves which may be telling me that it's time for new bulbs.

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome back to an active new season – Summer is over and we are off our bi-monthly schedule with Petal Tones and looking forward to the September meeting! How fast time goes by! By now everyone's plants have recovered from the winter doldrums, have had a nice long growing season and look good enough to bring to the meeting either for the Little Show or for the Show and Tell (Not to mention, for the Raffle Table of course)! Our raffle table has been incredibly rich since I have been coming to meetings. It will be great to be back!

SEE YOU AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING! PLEASE BRING PLANTS FOR THE LITTLE SHOW, SHOW AND TELL AND THE RAFFLE TABLE!!!!

We have been very fortunate with speakers at meetings. The quality has been and continues to be the highest it can be! Therefore, in order to keep you all involved with these exciting, fun and informative programs I am running the following message that was in the last issue by Jim Roberts. We would greatly benefit from your input.

FUTURE PROGRAM TOPICS

Please go over the list and send the editor what topics in the following list are of interest to you (mzukaitis@msn.com).

- Trained Gesneriads (bonsai, sculpted)
- Natural Plantings
- Hanging plants (growing large epiphytes well)
- Terrarium plants (high humidity, small growing plants)
- Saintpaulia species
- Any specific genus – you name it for us:
- Alternate growing media (leca stones, long fiber sphagnum, bark slabs)
- Alternate growing methods (hydroculture, wick watering)
- Growing from seed
- Asian Gesneriads
- Photographing Gesneriads
- Gesneriads in the Wild
- Hybridizing Gesneriads
- Judging – Hold a Judge's School at the Arboretum
- Alpine/ Winter Hardy Gesneriads
- Other topics????

We would like to balance the arts and plant culture in planning the meetings. Please consider this list or any other ideas you may have. We will bring this up at the February board meeting, so if you cannot make the meeting, feel free to email your ideas to one of your elected officers. I think we can attract some quality speakers from many places on the east coast; we know a lot of them.

And most Gesneriad experts love talking about what they love!

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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