



# Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

(articles and photos selected from chapter newsletters,  
our journal *Gesneriads*, and original sources)

Volume 5, Number 3

March 2014

Welcome to the latest issue of **Gleanings**! This issue includes Paul Susi's photos of the Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society's display at the Florida State Fair, my photos taken at Steve's Leaves, Carol Ann Bonner's article about Auxins, and 2014 Convention information.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings**!

Mel Grice, Editor



David Harris from Springfield, Missouri, USA, sent these photos of his new hybrid *Sinningia* 'Ozark Leprechaun Magic'. A young plant produces single blossoms like the one you see above. A more mature plant produces double blossoms with more intense coloring like you see in the photo on the right.



# Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society Goes to the Fair!

Paul Susi [psusi11@gmail.com](mailto:psusi11@gmail.com)  
Huntington Station, New York, USA

The Florida State Fair is a big event, encompassing everything from livestock competitions to all combinations of fried food. The part of the fair that always interests me is the horticulture pavilion, where everything from tropical fish tanks to hand-crafted furniture (horticulture?) is on display. The State Fair Authority provides the display space for about eleven plant societies and space for plant sales. Each plant society gets a \$250.00 stipend to offset the set up cost of the display. In addition, because of the tens of thousands of visitors over the course of the fair, plant societies can gross up to \$5,000.00 from plant sales.



The Tampa Bay Gesneriad Society won a blue ribbon this year for its display, which emphasized the shapes, colors and growth habits of gesneriads. Using between thirty-five and fifty plants (depending on the sizes of the plants) the chapter produced a very eye-catching and educational display. Both of these aspects contribute to being awarded a blue ribbon. Most of the plants in the display are grown by chapter members, as are many of the sale plants. This year's chair (and also chapter president) Jay Sespico mentioned three members, Nancy and Jerry Kast and Jo Anne Martinez, who go the extra mile each year to purchase high quality plants from vendors for sale at the Fair.

The exhibit is a total chapter activity, Jay told me. "I earnestly try to get as many members to participate as possible. Even if I have too much help, it is important to get as many people involved as possible. The chapter members who get involved with final setup never fail to be inspired by the handling of entry quality plants." Jay added, "First place means that we have produced the finest quality display out of the eleven horticultural societies that get involved with the Fair. First place means an extra \$250.00 in prize money that goes directly into the coffers of the chapter. First place means that any member who participated in any way with this very large project owns a piece of the winning entry."







Jay Sespico (left) explaining gesneriads to an interested fairgoer



Some of the plants offered for sale

All photos courtesy of Paul Susi

Editor's note – I had the fortunate experience of visiting this nursery while participating in the Gesneriad Society Board of Director's Retreat held in the Fort Worth area this February. I had to share with you some photos I took of the beautifully grown plants available from this nursery. The online retail catalog of available plants – including many gesneriads – is available at the address above.  
Mel Grice

From the website – "Steve's Leaves, Inc. is a Texas tropical plant nursery founded in 1976, providing uncommon tropical plants to consumers all over the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

Steve began his horticultural journey with an interest in terrariums at the age of 13. By the time he was 18 (1976) he had started a backyard nursery. Filling the back seat and trunk with his home grown tropical plants, he drove to each local florist and nursery until his daily supply was sold. In 1991, after filling up his two backyard greenhouses and two leased commercial greenhouses, Steve consolidated his operation onto four acres in Lewisville, Texas.

For the past 38 years, our plants have been available in home centers, supermarkets, independent garden centers, nurseries, and other retail locations across the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. Now, our tropical plants are available online to consumers across the United States. Browse hundreds of varieties on our site and find a new plant or rediscover an old favorite. We cater to plant people. Don't hesitate to fill out our contact form with any questions."





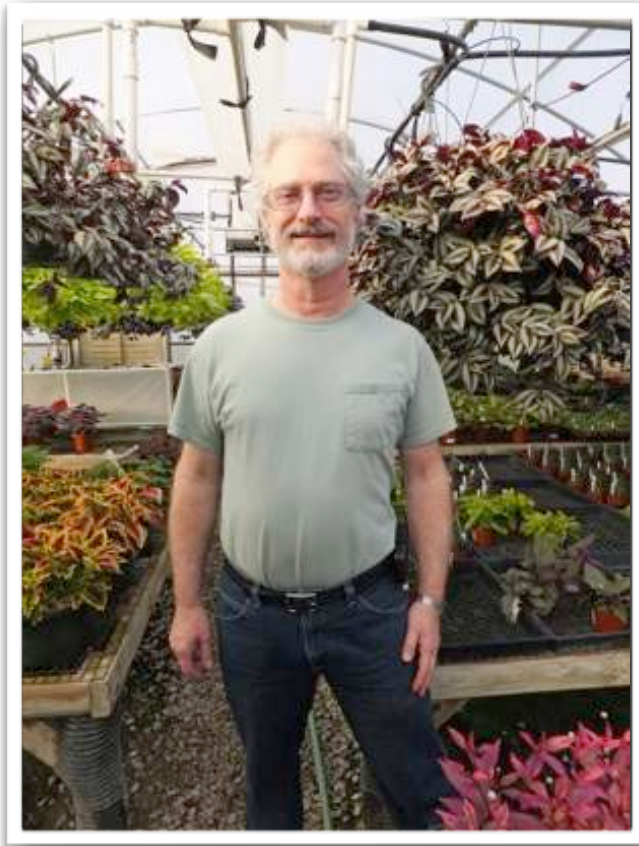
*Nautilocalyx adenosiphon*



Board member Gussie Farrice selecting plants



Photos courtesy  
of Mel Grice



Steve



Board members Norah Otto, Irina Nicholson, Carol Ann Bonner, and Julie Mavity-Hudson



# Auxins

Carol Ann Bonner <[cabonner@gmail.com](mailto:cabonner@gmail.com)>  
Nashville, Tennessee, USA

How is it that you can grow a gesneriad (or a peperomia or crassula or begonia, for that matter) from a leaf? A stem already has nodes, and nodes can produce more leaves or adventitious roots, but a leaf! It doesn't have much of anything.

The answer is complicated, but it pretty much boils down to *auxin*. Auxins are plant hormones that promote growth in specific areas depending on what the plant needs to respond to its surroundings, and they work even though they occur in minute amounts. For example, the weight of hormones in the common pineapple plant compared to the weight of the plant is equivalent to the weight of a needle in 44,000 pounds of hay!

Indole acetic acid or IAA, the most common naturally occurring auxin, is produced in various parts of a plant, primarily the stem tips, and in the African violet, the leaf blade. Auxin is continuously transported down to other parts of the plant, for example, to the growing roots. When the leaf is removed from the plant, IAA is still transported down the petiole where it now accumulates at the base and develops a mass of parenchyma and meristematic cells called a callus. Parenchyma cells retain the ability to divide after maturity while meristematic cells have no predetermined form; they can become phloem or xylem or epidermis – whatever.

As the IAA continues to travel to the callus, the increasing concentration eventually stimulates roots to form. The root tips now produce cytokinin, a different type of plant hormone that causes cell division and differentiation (i.e., it causes the cells to develop into specialized types.) The cytokinin is transported back to the callus where it stimulates shoot formation, and a young plantlet is born.

Commercial rooting powders are made from various synthetic auxins at low concentrations. I'm not sure many gesneriad growers use rooting powders anymore (we have used them only once, I believe, while working at Atlanta Botanical Gardens.) Whether that is because the synthetic auxins aren't as effective with gesneriads as the naturally occurring forms, or the low concentration is too low, or the inert ingredients like talcum powder inhibit growth, I don't know. It's possible to buy pure forms of synthetic auxins, but remember the vanishingly small doses that exist in the plants in nature – too high a concentration not only won't stimulate growth, it can kill your plant! After all, 2,4-dichlorophen-oxyacetic acid is a synthetic auxin – and also half of the infamous herbicide Agent Orange.

Sources: <http://www.biologie.uni-hamburg.de/b-online/ibc99/koning/vegpropa.html>

Peter H. Raven, Ray F. Evert *Biology of Plants* (New York, Worth Publishers, 1981)

Here's a link to some interesting pictures of A.V. explants and the results of balance versus imbalance between the auxins and other substances needed for growth:

[http://www.liv.ac.uk/~sd21/tisscult/av\\_pics.htm](http://www.liv.ac.uk/~sd21/tisscult/av_pics.htm)

This article appeared in a slightly different form in **Gesneri-Eds**, Vol. 42, No. 3, March 2014, Julie Mavity-Hudson and Carol Ann Bonner, editors.



## **Convention 2014**

The Gesneriad Society's  
 58th Annual Convention  
 DoubleTree by Hilton - Nashville  
 Downtown  
 315 4th Avenue  
 Nashville, TN 37219 USA  
 July 1 - July 5  
 Hosted by the  
 Tennessee Gesneriad Society  
**REGISTER NOW!**

<http://gesneriadsociety.org/Conv2014/index.htm>

Photo on the right shows just a few of the special gesneriads being propagated for plant sales at this summer's convention.

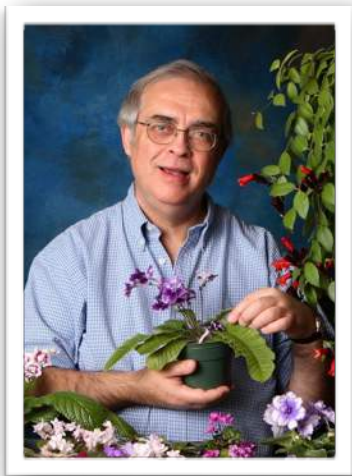


### **March 22 — Seattle WA The Puget Sound Gesneriad Society annual judged show and sale**

Swanson's Nursery, 9701 - 15th Avenue  
 NW, Seattle, WA 98117  
 Plant sales: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
 Show: Noon to 4:00 p.m.  
 Contact: Bob Clark  
[bobclark98122@gmail.com](mailto:bobclark98122@gmail.com)

### **April 12-13 — Oyster Bay, NY The Long Island Gesneriad Society Annual Show and Plant Sale**

Planting Fields Arboretum, Conference  
 Center, Oyster Bay, NY  
 April 12 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
 April 13 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
 Contact: Ben Paternoster  
[ben9@optonline.net](mailto:ben9@optonline.net)



**From the editor —**

I have just returned from the Philadelphia Flower show. There will be lots of photos of interesting gesneriads exhibited there in the April issue.

If you have suggestions, comments, or items for possible inclusion in future issues, please feel free to contact me at [melsgrice@earthlink.net](mailto:melsgrice@earthlink.net)

Happy Holidays!

Mel

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**Donations**

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Paul Susi, Development Chairperson  
2 Rushmore Street, South Huntington, NY 11746

For additional information, contact: <development@gesneriadsociety.org>.

**Membership and Changes of Address**

The Gesneriad Society Membership Secretary, Bob Clark,  
1122 East Pike Street, PMB 637, Seattle, WA 98122-3916 USA

**Changes of Address** — Send changes of address to the Membership Secretary <membership@gesneriadsociety.org> 90 days prior to moving to avoid missing an issue. The Society is not responsible for replacing issues missed because of late notification of address changes. Back issues may be ordered from The Gesneriad Society Publications.

**Renewals** — Send dues to the Membership Secretary. A Renewal Notice is sent two months prior to the expiration date of your membership. (The expiration date is printed on your mailing label/ membership card on the back cover of *Gesneriads*.) Please remit your dues prior to the expiration date to avoid missing an issue as we are not responsible for replacing issues missed because of late payment of dues. Back issues may be ordered from Publications.

**Application for Membership — *The Gesneriad Society, Inc.***

WELCOME – membership in our international society includes quarterly issues of *Gesneriads – The Journal for Gesneriad Growers*, a copy of *How to Know and Grow Gesneriads*, a packet of gesneriad seeds and a wealth of information about our chapters, flower shows, publications, research, slide programs and seed fund. Membership begins upon receipt of dues.

**New Member** Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Renewal** Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
FAMILY NAME GIVEN NAME MIDDLE INITIAL

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET

\_\_\_\_\_ CITY STATE ZIP CODE COUNTRY

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

(Rates in US\$)	Mailing in US 1 year	Mailing in US 3 years	Mailing outside US 1 year	Mailing outside US 3 years
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<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Household</b>	\$26	\$73	\$31	\$88
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<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Green Option</b>	Electronic journal copy (no print copy) for Individual or Household Members \$20 (one year), \$55 (three years) anywhere in the world			

**I wish to make a tax-deductible contribution of \$** \_\_\_\_\_

Elvin McDonald Research Endowment Fund     Nellie D. Sleeth Scholarship Endowment Fund

Frances Batcheller Endowment Fund

Students and Speakers Convention Fund

In Honor     Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks or money orders payable in US\$ on a USA bank to: **The Gesneriad Society**

Or, charge my  VISA, or  MasterCard

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: **The Gesneriad Society Membership Secretary, Bob Clark,  
1122 East Pike St., PMB 637, Seattle, WA 98122-3916 USA**

For application online: [www.gesneriadsociety.org](http://www.gesneriadsociety.org)