



# 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 10

October 2014



*Columnnea* 'Broget Stavanger' (below) entered by Paul Sorano and *Columnnea* 'Aladdin's Lamp' entered by Ralph Robinson (right) – two of the award-winning gesneriads shown at the Ohio State AVS Show. See more photos on page 6.  
Mel Grice photos

Welcome to the latest issue of **Gleanings**! This issue includes a visit to Paul Kroll's growing area, photos from the Ohio State AVS Show, Gary Hunter's article on *Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie', and Coming Events.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings**!

Mel Grice, Editor



# A Visit to Paul Kroll's Growing Area

Paul Kroll [pfkroll@me.com](mailto:pfkroll@me.com)  
East Aurora, New York, USA



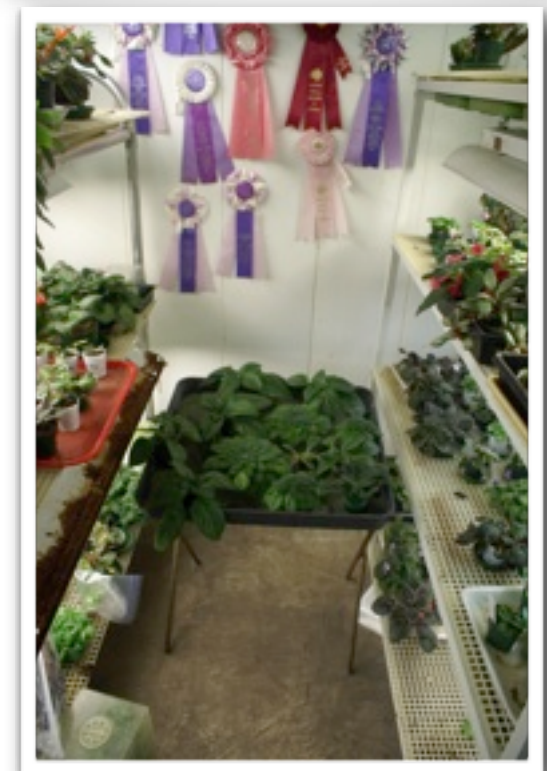
"I number the shelves so that I can make an inventory of prospective show plant entries and design possibilities. It just makes my life easier and the preparation faster."

(Lower right) petrocosmeas growing in tray receiving only light reflected from the light stands.

All photos by Mel Grice



*Gesneria pedicellaris*







(above) Six tube fixture (with two tubes not lit) provide extra light for some genera that require extra light



(left) Paul's favorite watering aid

(below) Saintpaulia leaves placed in water in nursery flats awaiting propagation

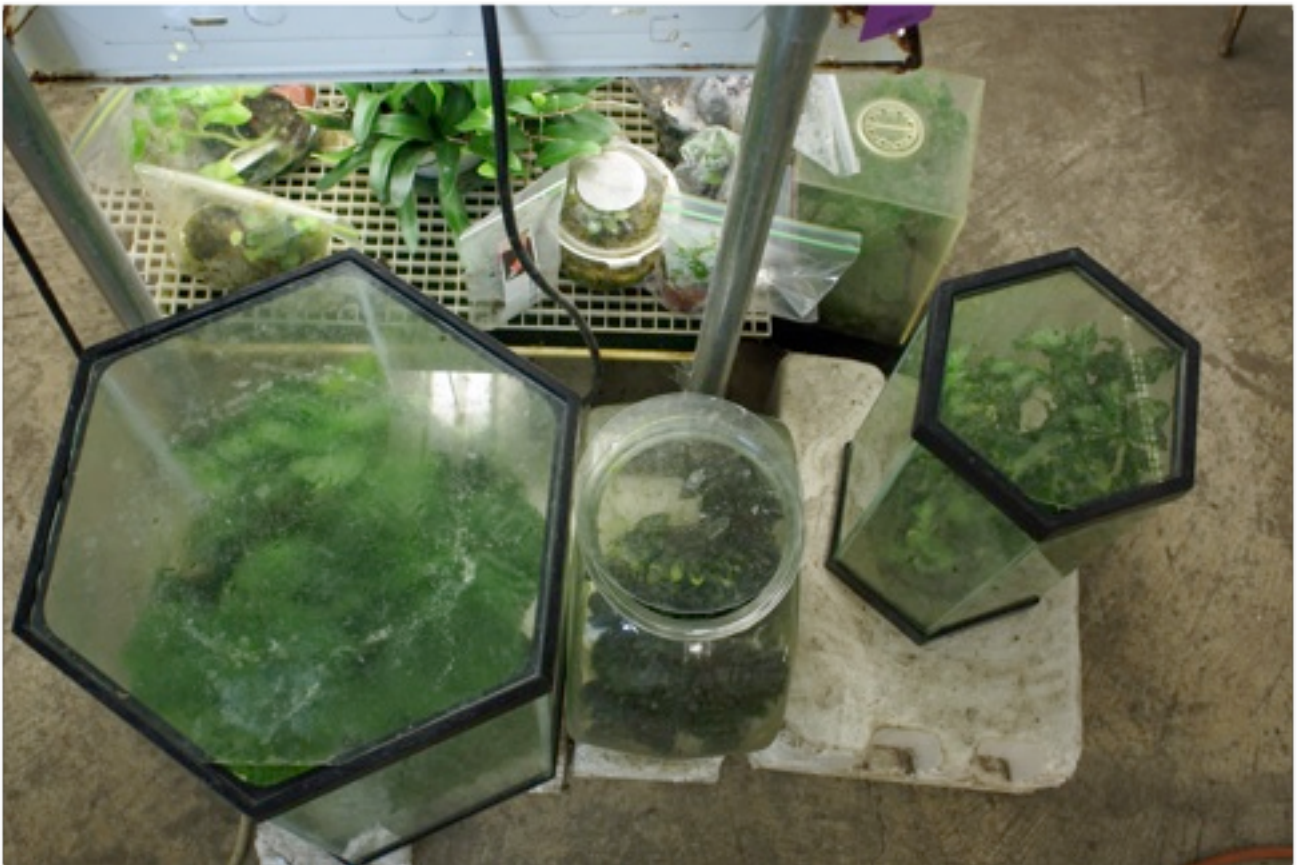




(above) Floor fan directs air toward the ceiling



(upper right) Plastic bags, sticks, labels, etc. hang from basket attached to side of light stand



Gasteranthus grown on floor beside the light stand





Paul's potting bench



## Photos from the Ohio State AVS Show



*Saintpaulia* 'Ma's Blue Spinner'  
Marge Farrand - Best in Show



*Episcia cupreata*  
Paul Kroll

Mel Grice photos



*Corytoplectus cutucuensis*  
Mel Grice



*Raphiocarpus petelotii*  
Mel Grice



# Why *Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie' is the *Sinningia* Breakthrough of a Lifetime

Gary K. Hunter [Gary@garysspecialtyplants.com](mailto:Gary@garysspecialtyplants.com)  
Gary's Speciality Plants, Drumore, Pennsylvania, USA

The hybrid *Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie' has proven itself to be a tough plant. Other micro-miniature sinningias such as *S. pusilla*, *S. pusilla* 'White Sprite' or *S. concinna* do not grow well without the added humidity of a terrarium. However, *S. 'Li'l Georgie'* is extraordinary in that it doesn't need the extra humidity.

*Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie', a primary hybrid between the extra small species *S. concinna* × *S. muscicola*, was created by Jim Steuerlein in Florida and distributed in 2009. Through observation it has become apparent that *S. 'Li'l Georgie'* is an ordinary houseplant. And that's good news! This is the breakthrough that was always needed for this group of tiny plants to gain acceptance as a usable commercial plant. Although the smaller species are almost too small to handle in the retail environment, *S. 'Li'l Georgie'* is a little bigger and more rugged.

Most gesneriad collectors seek out new plants and test them for wherever their interest lies – growing for fun, hybridizing, or growing for show. Members reading this will want to experience *Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie' for themselves. On the other hand, casual plant buyers are unaware of the intrigue. They don't know that this tiny flowering plant is a dramatic breakthrough. They see it, they buy it, but after admiring it, most people don't know what to do with it. Miniature gardening may be the draw.

## Miniature Gardening

Miniature gardening is a new segment of the commercial plant business. Many garden centers are creating retail space showing finished miniature gardens, as well as selling "mini" plants and accessories to make your own.

When buying plants for a miniature garden, gardeners want a tiny flowering plant to fit into their scene, but there are very few appropriate plants on the market. They are surprised to find *Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie' and happy with how it looks.



*Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie', grown by Bill Price, photo: Winston Goretsky

## Tissue Culture

*Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie' has many advantages, but for wide distribution, one major shortfall. There are no practical means of large-scale propagation other than tissue culture.

In 2011, Mary Schaeffer and I were collecting plants for The Gesneriad Society Convention in Philadelphia, which was hosted by the Liberty Bell Chapter. We contacted Dr. Jon T. Lindstrom, Associate Professor of Horticulture at the University of Arkansas, to get some of his new sinningia hybrids. From that relationship, Jon propagated several sinningia varieties in his tissue culture lab for me. I quickly focused on *Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie'. Jon proved that he could successfully propagate it by tissue culture and I proved that I could root the

plantlets he shipped me. We were to the point of large-scale production when Jon was diagnosed with stage four melanoma cancer. His death was a stunning and sad loss.

I am currently working with a new tissue culture lab, Dan River Plants, and expect to be able to introduce *Sinningia* 'Li'l Georgie' to the commercial horticulture trade soon.

## The Breakthrough

As a partner in Y Combinator, a startup incubator, Paul Graham constantly evaluates new business ideas. He says to ask the question, "Why now?" If this is such a great idea, why hasn't someone else already done it? Ideally, the answer is that it only recently became a good idea, because something changed, and no one else has noticed yet.

Will S. 'Li'l Georgie' be the second most successful sinningia in commercial horticulture behind the Florist Gloxinia? It could be. In fact, it could become the leading flowering plant in the Miniature Gardening category – the most significant breakthrough of my lifetime.



*Sinningia concinna*, one parent of S. 'Li'l Georgie'. 1861 botanical illustration (as *Stenogastra*).

This article appeared originally in *GESNERIADS* Vol. 64, No. 2, Second Quarter 2014, Peter Shalit, editor. Read other interesting articles like this about gesneriads by becoming a member of The Gesneriad Society and receiving our quarterly 56-page journal.

## In Memoriam: Ginny Elbert

With great sadness, we have learned of the passing of Virginie Fowler Elbert, on August 1, at age 102. Ginny was an art student as a young woman and worked in book publishing for decades. She authored several books on arts and crafts; and she shared her passions for houseplants and cooking with her late husband, George. The Elberts wrote many books on houseplants, including the pioneering tome, "The Miracle Houseplants", which became the "bible of gesneriads" and helped popularize the family of African violets, florist gloxinias and all their cousins. The Elberts also researched the art of growing houseplants under lights indoors, publishing several books on the topic, and were co-founders of the organization that later became the Indoor Gardening Society of America. For decades, she lived in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, growing dozens of houseplants in her apartment, and was active in both the NY chapter of the Gesneriad Society and the Indoor Gardening Society. She was honored by the Gesneriad Society in 2002 with an award of appreciation. We are indebted forever to George and Ginny's contributions, and will miss Ginny's kindness, knowledge and wisdom.

Appeared originally in *GloxNews*, the publication of the Greater New York Gesneriad Society, Vol. 50, No. 1, Tsh Yang Chen, editor.



# Coming Events

## October 24-25 — Owego, NY

### New York State AVS Show and Plant Sale

Owego Treadway Inn, Owego, NY

October 24 from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.

October 25 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Contact : [heidisviolets@aol.com](mailto:heidisviolets@aol.com) or [www.nysavs.org](http://www.nysavs.org)

## October 31-November 1 — Plano, TX

### Lone Star African Violet Show

Southfork Hotel, 1600 N. Central Expressway, Plano, TX 75074

October 31 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

November 1 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Contact: [www.lsvac.org](http://www.lsvac.org) or 972-398-3478

## November 1-2 — Minneapolis, MN

### Twin Cities Chapter of the Gesneriad Society Show and Plant Sale

Bachman's Heritage Room, 610 Lyndale Ave. S, Minneapolis, MN

November 1 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

November 2 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Contact : [gesneriads@gmail.com](mailto:gesneriads@gmail.com)

## November 13-14 — North Wilmington, DE

### MAAVS African Violet Convention and Show

Crowne Plaza - Wilmington North

630 Naamans Road, Claymont, DE

Contact: <http://maavs.org/>

Plan on ordering the 2014 Gesneriad Society Convention DVD (available later this year) with images of all the flower show winners plus dozens of other high-scoring entries.



## Gesneriads 2015 Wall Calendar

Our full-color 2015 Gesneriad Wall Calendar will brighten each month with a photograph of a different award-winner from the 2013 Convention Flower Show. There's plenty of room for your appointments, and the 2015 Convention is already conveniently highlighted. Perfect for gifts. \$14 each or 5 for \$60; outside North America add \$3 per calendar for additional postage. Order now — supplies are very limited!



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**From the editor —**

The fall shows are coming. I have been asked to speak at some of them and also will be speaking at some chapter meetings. I hope to see some of you at one or more of them. Please make sure that you come by and introduce yourselves to me if I don't already know you.

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)

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2 Rushmore Street, South Huntington, NY 11746  
For additional information, contact: [development@gesneriadsociety.org](mailto: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

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**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.

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