



Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

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

Volume 6, Number 2

February 2015

Welcome to the latest issue of **Gleanings**! This issue includes Ruth Coulson's article about her love of sinningias, Paul Lee and Carol Ann Bonner explaining the merits of molasses and mycorrhizae, photos from the Toronto judging school, and Coming Events.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings**!

Mel Grice, Editor

Leonard Re from Fountain Valley, California, USA sent these two photos of *Nautilocalyx glandulifer*. "I've grown this plant for over 20 years and never had it bloom. Just nice maroon foliage. I grow it covered in the bathroom

upstairs in the bathtub which I never use except for plants. Last fall the plumber told me that if I don't use the faucets they will freeze into position so I use them once or twice a week. That means I have to move out the plant stand, all the plants, and turn the faucets on for a couple of minutes. This week, while doing this routine, I uncovered the plant and thought I saw a bud (see photo above). Then the next day, I uncovered the lid and it had opened completely."



A Sinningia Love Affair

Ruth Coulson mrcoulson@iprimus.com.au
Balcolyn, Australia

I never meant to get as involved with sinningias as I have. The whole thing sort of crept up on me and just grew and grew. Like all addictions do, I suspect.

It began innocuously enough when I first began gardening and growing a few indoor plants. I bought and enjoyed a few *Sinningia speciosa* hybrids to place among my other pot plants and really enjoyed those. Quite a bit later I met people who were devoted to African violets and to all gesneriad plants. I grew as many different ones as I possibly could, naturally, but eventually my fancy really turned to the sinningia genus.



Just finished repotting
Ruth Coulson photo

I suppose the reason I favoured sinningias then and ever since is the wide variety of different plants in the genus and the fact that many of them are pretty easy to grow in my conditions. I made plenty of mistakes at the beginning but soon had a lovely collection of species and un-named hybrids. Many of these were acquired from the seed funds, but others had local sources. I loved them all until I found that the *Sinningia speciosa* hybrids that were so



Flowers soon follow
Ruth Coulson photo

Although I made a few crosses with larger sinningias including *Sinningia iarae*, *Sinningia cardinalis* types and *Sinningia eumorpha* hybrids, I didn't really know what I was looking for at this time – just playing around and enjoying myself, but life eventually got in the way and I gave up doing all that for some time.

Around sixteen years ago retirement meant we moved to a beautiful location away from the city. With more space and more time I could grow more, do more and hybridise more. Of course I wasn't going to get really deeply involved, remember, but I find I have an embarrassingly large number of species and have done more than 180 successful sinningia crosses. I am constantly trying to "catch up" with the plants – watering, fertilising, potting, crossing, planting, potting out and so on and so on. Of course I am trying to do more than I should be doing, and have many more plants than I can readily care for.

But am I going to give them up? Not likely! Not if I can help it.

Whether they are hairy or woolly like *Sinningia araneosa* or *Sinningia bullata*, if they trail like *Sinningia cooperi* instead of being upright, have really pretty markings like *Sinningia gerdtiana*, or are double like my new hybrid *Sinningia* 'Quantum', I really like them all." Some colours

beautiful and so desirable did tend to wilt on really hot days. Although they recovered in cooler evenings, the flowers were badly marked and I couldn't enjoy them to the fullest. So I settled on the mid-size sinningias as the ones to really grow.

Around twenty-five years ago I first tried my hand at a bit of hybridising. Of course I started with the miniature sinningias. This proved an excellent place to get some hybridising experience, since there is minimal time between dreaming of the cross and actually seeing the flowers.



Sinningia araneosa
Ruth Coulson photo



Sinningia bullata
Ruth Coulson photo



Sinningia cooperi



Sinningia sulcata



Sinningia 'Demeter'

are quite unexpected (to me anyway) like *Sinningia sulcata* and *Sinningia* 'Stormy Weather'. But my greatest love has to be for those that really flower heavily, as I am glad to say my hybrids *Sinningia* 'Demeter' and *Sinningia* 'Fuzzy Bear' do.



Sinningia gerdiana

Photos
courtesy of
Ruth Coulson



Sinningia 'Quantum'



Sinningia 'Stormy Weather'

Molasses - You're Joking!

Paul Lee evelyn.lee2@yahoo.ca
Fergus, Ontario, Canada

I have been inspired to write this short article on molasses after listening to Mel Grice give a presentation at our chapter.

The subject of molasses came up when Mel said he was using it in his soil mix, thinking he was alone out there. Previously at the Gesneriad Society convention, when he did this presentation, I spoke to him to say I have been using it for several years. So he was no longer alone!

I will try to explain the reasons for my use of molasses being applied to plants and soil.

Why molasses? Molasses is derived from the process of making sugar from sugar cane or in some cases sugar beet. Sugar is the source of energy needed to make plants grow. To make this sugar, the plants use sunlight, minerals, vitamins, bacteria and many other materials. So molasses can supply some of these requirements, such as sugar, calcium, phosphorus, iron, magnesium, manganese, sulphur, selenium, copper, zinc, and others.

When using a soil mix such as Pro Mix with mycorrhizae, the addition of molasses feeds the mycorrhiza with sugars, and in turn will help the hyphae (threads of a fungus; collectively the vegetative part of a fungus, as per *Everyman's Encyclopaedia of Gardening*) to colonize the soil faster. Normally the plant produces sugars through its root system which feed the bacteria, and they in return supply the plant with phosphorus and other minerals that are not available to the plants. This symbiotic relationship is beneficial to both parties. The application of molasses to the soil helps to boost the bacterial activity in the soil, and makes more nutrients available to make the plants grow faster and healthier.

The application of molasses to the foliage of plants can be useful when plants are not doing well. Because of a lack of light or a poor root system, these plants show symptoms of yellowing leaves. This can mean they are unable to produce enough sugars, but by applying molasses to the foliage you can stem the decline until the plant starts to recover. This might have an application when cuttings take a long time to root.

The sources of molasses are numerous, but be careful what you get. The two main types are fancy and the blackstrap. The blackstrap is best with the sulphur still in it and should be derived from cane, as some of the beet molasses is now G.M.O. (genetically modified organism). You can also get dried molasses.

For liquid molasses I dilute 10 ml in 1 liter of water for foliar spraying and for direct ground application anywhere up to 30 ml per liter.

I hope this has been of interest to you and maybe suggest ideas on how to use this versatile and safe product in ways you have never thought of.

Note – Paul Lee is a commercial grower of greenhouse vegetables near Toronto, ON, Canada. He previously raised ornamental plants for the nursery trade.

Reprinted from *Toronto Gesneriad Society Newsletter*, February 2015, 39, no. 2, Stan Sudol, editor.

What are Mycorrhizae?

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Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Mycorrhiza (plural "mycorrhizae", from the Greek "mykos" for "fungus" and "riza" for roots) is a body formed by the (usually) symbiotic relationship between a fungus and a vascular plant. Most fungi grow long, filamentous structures called hyphae that are finer even than root hairs. Through a mycorrhizal fungus's mutualistic relationship with a vascular plant's roots, the fungus gains access to carbohydrates and the plant has better access to water and nutrients due to the greater surface area the hyphae provide. Mycorrhizae have an important role in facilitating phosphate uptake, and, as we know, phosphate is essential for root growth.

Although this relationship was first described in 1885, the near ubiquity of such associations has only been discovered in the last 30 years. It is now known that more than 95% of all vascular plants have mycorrhizae. (Interestingly, brassicas such as cabbages and broccoli do not form such combinations.) Therefore, it seems reasonable that most plants have evolved to benefit from living with their appropriate fungal partner. And some plants, including all orchids at some stage of development, are *myco-heterotrophic*, which means they get some or all of their nutrients from parasitism of their associated fungus.

The subject of mycorrhizae is too complex to cover in any detail here (or for me to understand much about without taking a graduate level course.) Here is a useful link for those who are interested in more information:

<http://people.unil.ch/iansanders/mycorrhizas/>

Reprinted from *Gesneri-Eds*, the newsletter of the Tennessee chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Volume 43, issue 2, February 2015, Carol Ann Bonner and Julie Mavity-Hudson, editors.

Toronto Judging School



Gillian Smith photo

Paul Kroll pfkroll@me.com
East Aurora, New York, USA
Mel Grice melsgrice@earthlink.net
Englewood, Ohio, USA

Twenty-nine people attended a Gesneriad Judging School given on January 10, 2015. The weather was -9°C and snow surrounded St. Philip's Lutheran Church, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada. Paul Kroll and Mel Grice taught the school. Four students, out of the twenty-nine attending, wrote the exam.



Mel Grice photo



Smithiantha hybrid
Gillian Smith photo



Emma Bygott and Julie Thompson labeling some of the plants brought in for practice judging
Gillian Smith photo



Paul Kroll discussing the merits of some of the plants that were brought in by Toronto chapter members
Gillian Smith photo



Streptocarpus 'Trina Ballerina'
Gillian Smith photo



Artistic design created by Judy Zinni for practice judging
Gillian Smith photo



Sinningia araneosa
Gillian Smith photo



Steve Kerr, Michael Erdman, and Anne Clarke-Stewart writing the exam
Mel Grice photo

Judy Zinni and Deanna Belli show one of the attendees how plants are judged
Mel Grice photo



Anne Clarke-Stewart, Holly Pohl, and Michael Erdman point scoring plants
Mel Grice photo



Kohleria 'Red Ryder'
Gillian Smith photo

Coming Events

March 21 — Seattle, WA

Seattle AV Society and Puget Sound Gesneriad Society Show and Sale

Swanson's Nursery, 9701 15th Ave., NW, Seattle, WA 98117

March 21 Sale from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Show from noon to 4:00 p.m.

Contact : SAVS — seattleafricanvioletsociety@yahoo.com

PSGS — bobclark98122@gmail.com

March 21-22 — Glencoe, IL

Northern Illinois Gesneriad Society Show and Sale

Chicago Botanic Gardens, Nichols Hall, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022

Contact: gess321@gmail.com

March 28 — Christiana, DE

Delaware African Violet & Gesneriad Society Show and Sale

Boscov's, 361 West Main St., Christiana, DE 19702

March 28 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Contact : <http://gesneriadsociety.org/chapters/DAVS/>

March 29 — Toronto, ON, Canada

Toronto Gesneriad Society Show and Sale

Toronto Botanical Gardens

777 Lawrence Ave., East, Toronto, ON, Canada M3C 1P2

March 29 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Contact: jtbrownlie@idirect.com 905-270-6776

April 11-12 — Oyster Bay, NY

The Long Island Gesneriad Society Show and Sale

Planting Fields Arboretum, 1395 Planting Fields Road, Oyster Bay, NY 11771

April 11 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

April 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Contact : ben9@optonline.net 631-549-6788

April 11-12 — Cincinnati, OH

Cincinnati & Dayton African Violet Societies Show and Sale

Eastgate Mall, 4601 Eastgate Blvd., Cincinnati, OH 45245

April 11 from noon to 9:00 p.m.

April 12 from noon to 5:00 p.m.

Contact : pennypwic@aol.com 859-240-9057

June 30-July 4 — Oakland, CA

59th Annual Gesneriad Society International Convention

Hosted by the San Francisco Chapter of the Gesneriad Society

Marriott Oakland City Center, 1001 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94607

Register online at <http://gesneriadsociety.org>

See the Gesneriad Society website for more coming events





From the editor —

I had a wonderful time visiting with old and new friends in Toronto last month. Thanks to everyone there who made my visit so memorable! They certainly grow beautiful plants and know how to transport them safely in freezing weather.

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

Mel

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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 received with each copy 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, programs and seed fund. Membership begins upon receipt of dues.

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