



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 8

August 2015

Welcome to the latest issue of **Gleanings!** This issue includes photos from the Gesneriad Society's 2015 Flower Show, Thad Scaggs discussing the genus *Smithiantha*, as well as information about two events coming up this October: the Northeast Regional Gesneriad Convention and a Webinar on growing and hybridizing *Streptocarpus*. Hope you enjoy **Gleanings!**

Mel Grice, Editor



Ron Myhr of Ashburn, ON, Canada submitted these two photos of a small-growing *Sinningia speciosa* hybrid that he obtained a few years ago in a local supermarket. Maximum leaf tip-to-tip diameter is 10", individual flowers are 2" across. This is quite a lot smaller than the standard Brocade series.



Gesneriad Society 2015 Flower Show Photos

Some of the special plants exhibited
(You are able to view photos of the award winners in each class on the [Oakland Convention](#) page on the Gesneriad Society website.)



Saintpaulia 'Thunder Surprise' - Leonard Re

Photos courtesy of Bob Clark

Convention videos can be accessed on [YouTube](#).



Primulina lutea - Bill Price



Photos courtesy of Bob Clark



Primulina 'Ms. Beige' - Lan Jiun Wu



Primulina 'Loki' - Bill Price



Gesneria Collection - Hung Nguyen



Sinningia conspicua - Keith Dabney



Sinningia 'Peridots Darth Vader'
- Terri Campbell

Photos courtesy of Bob Clark



Henckelia walkerae - Bill Price



Primulina 'Maxtimer' - Bill Price

Photos courtesy of Bob Clark



Sinningia gigantifolia 'Itatiaia'
- Alan LaVergne



Primulina globulosa var. *yungshouensis*
- Bill Price



Sinningia 'Dale's Pink Cockatoo'
- Lan Jiun Wu

See more award-winning photos in *GESNERIADS* Vol. 65, No. 4, Fourth Quarter 2015, Peter Shalit, editor. Read interesting articles about gesneriads by becoming a member of The Gesneriad Society and receiving our quarterly 56-page journal.

Artistic and the Arts



"Dim Sum" - Laura Buckner



Streptocarpus 'Rose's Red' - Ron Myhr



Photos courtesy of Bob Clark

Smithianthas

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Smithiantha is another genus in the rhizomatous group of gesneriads. Smithianthas are easy to grow and bloom. Their rhizomes, like achimenes are also easy to save so they can be grown and bloom again for many years. They are usually grown in individual pots rather than multiple plantings. A one-half inch to one-inch piece of rhizome is all you need to make a beautiful blooming plant. Smithianthas are, unfortunately, rarely exhibited in our shows because they haven't started blooming (at least enough to exhibit) for fall shows or they have started going dormant before spring shows. I've seen smithianthas exhibited a few times, but never specimens as magnificent as they can be at their peak during the winter months. Their season can be manipulated by growing from scales, but it is still very hard to time for show and you will not get the same size plant you get from a rhizome.



Smithiantha 'Splashdance'

I like to wait until I see my rhizomes breaking dormancy or just beginning to sprout. They can be started earlier, but they may just sit for a while until they're ready or until it warms up. If started early you need to be careful not to overwater because they don't start using water until growth begins, and sitting in constantly wet mix will rot rhizomes. Occasionally when I have a lot of rhizomes of a single variety I will start them in a six, eight or even ten-inch pot depending on how many I have, but 90% or more are started in single pots. My smithianthas are grown almost exclusively outdoors on my lanai. If I'm growing indoors they go under the strongest light source, those on the lanai are started and grown in full sun with only the screen overhead to diffuse the light just like my achimenes, kohlerias and most other

rhizomatous gesneriads. I usually use Miracle-Gro Moisture Control Potting Mix now, but I have experimented with other mediums. I used straight long-fiber New Zealand sphagnum moss for a while with great success. The acidity of the moss complemented the alkaline water making the medium close to neutral. I also found the sphagnum moss didn't break down as quickly as peat moss, but it is more expensive and harder to find. I use my regular gesneriad/violet mix if I'm growing rhizomatous genera on my light stand, and I wick all of my pots even those in the heavier Miracle-



Gro mix though I don't grow them on reservoirs. It's so easy to pot with a wick in case it's needed in the future for a spectacular specimen.

I start a rhizome in a Solo cup or in plug trays if I'm starting very many of them. Like all of my pots, except leaves and plug trays, I add a wick. I start them in full sun where I intend to grow them through their annual cycle or until they're blooming and I display them inside. When there are four pairs of leaves, I remove the lowest pair, pot into a deep 3½" or 4" pot with the lowest pair of leaves left near or at potting mix level. After potting up, I pinch the tip or top pair of leaves down to the next pair. This helps make a shorter, bushier plant. You can pot up without pinching for a taller plant that will bloom sooner. I have had varieties with a dozen spikes on a plant, which is rare, but four to six spikes is normal after pinching. I use a balanced fertilizer regularly throughout the life cycle until the blooms are finished. I let them grow on until they are ratty looking like achimenes, then cut the foliage off, leave in the pot and stop watering or remove the rhizomes and store in zip lock bags with barely damp moss or vermiculite.

Smithianthas are very easy to hybridize; they set seed readily. Often the anthers will be right in front of the pistil, so as it grows to reveal the stigma, it can run right into the anthers exposing pollen and selfing the plant. It is best to remove the anthers as soon as they are visible, a

day or two after the blossom opens. Smithianthas come in a wide range of colors: soft pastels to bright and bold, multi-colors, spotted and streaked. There are still many possibilities to be had. They also cross relatively easy with achimenes to create xAchimenantha. These usually have the basic foliage and blossoms of achimenes, but are thicker and more upright growing. I recommend giving smithianthas a try – they're quite easy to grow and very rewarding during the cooler months.



Smithiantha 'Thad's Custard Pie'



Smithiantha 'STx S1'



Smithiantha 'Thad's Neon Freckles'

All of the photos shown here were taken

between the end of November and mid-January. I have used smithianthas as centerpieces for Thanksgiving and my Christmas parties.

Reprinted from *The Dixie News*, Vol 63, no. 3, August 2015, a publication of the Dixie African Violet Society www.DAVS.org, Mary Lou Harden, editor.



Webinar: Growing and Hybridizing Streptocarpus

Listen to Dale Martens discuss streptocarpus growing and hybridizing in the first [webinar](#) sponsored by The Gesneriad Society. A webinar is the perfect opportunity for members who do not belong to chapters and or can't attend meetings to find out more about gesneriads. And, if you are not a member of The Gesneriad Society, this is an opportunity to hear one of the best growers and top-notch hybridizers of gesneriads. The webinar will be available on either October 21 at 9 p.m. EDT or October 24 at 2 p.m. EDT.



Northeast Regional Gesneriad Convention

October 3 from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

October 4 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Haggerty Education Building, 353 East Hanover Ave., Morristown, NJ 07960

Hosted by the Greater New York, Frelinghuysen Arboretum, and Long Island Chapters of the Gesneriad Society.

Contact: Mary Lou Robbins marylourobbs@hotmail.com

or Jill Fischer HF.JG.Fischer@comcast.net



From the editor —

I enjoyed giving a Skype presentation to the Tennessee Chapter this past weekend.

The photos in this issue of the Gesneriad Society Convention in Oakland represent just a fraction of the entries exhibited. Additional photos are available on the Gesneriad Society website.

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

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