



Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

(articles and photos selected from Chapter newsletters, our journal GESNERIADS, and original sources)

Volume 2, Number 9

September 2011



Welcome to the latest issue of **Gleanings!** This issue includes an article by John Boggan on Seemannias as Bedding Plants, photos from the Long Island Gesneriad Society, and Coming Events for October.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings!**

Mel Grice, Editor



Streptocarpus Fernwood's Cherries Jubilee'

Here are photos of two of my new favorite *Streptocarpus* plants that bloomed for the first time. Top left is a Lee Stradley hybrid and the one on the right is a Paul Lee hybrid.

Mel



Streptocarpus 'Victorian Lace'

Seemannias As Bedding Plants

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Washington, D.C., USA

For almost 20 years, I was so fixated on gesneriads as houseplants that my growing – and breeding – was entirely directed towards small plants, indoors, under fluorescent lights. When I lived in upstate New York I occasionally summered plants outdoors – always in pots – but it was only after I settled down in a house with a yard in Washington, D.C. that I started to appreciate the potential of some of the larger-growing gesneriads not only as outdoor container plants but as bedding plants grown directly in the ground.



I have tried a variety of gesneriads outdoors but one of the most successful genera has been *Seemannia*. This small group of species, included until recently in *Gloxinia*, does quite well in our mid-Atlantic climate and at least one species, *Seemannia nematanthodes*, is supposed to be hardy to zone 7b. I have also been inspired by seeing *Seemannia sylvatica* grown as a bedding plant, in full sun, while on vacation in southern Florida in the winter. In the last few years I have been working on producing dark-leaved

hybrids and I think some of these hybrids may have commercial potential as bedding plants.

Seemannia purpurascens 'Purple Prince' was my first *Seemannia* hybrid, resulting from a cross between two different wild collections of the species. *S.* 'Purple Prince' is a tall, dark-leaved hybrid with pink flowers with a contrasting green limb. Although pinching helps keep it compact, it ultimately gets too tall for growing indoors but performs very well outdoors in containers or in the ground where it has plenty of head room. Inspired by my success with this plant, and intrigued by the reputed hardiness of *S. nematanthodes*, I have made crosses between these two species in hopes of producing hybrids with attractive foliage that are also hardy. In this I have been at least half successful and have recently released three new cultivars from these crosses that combine dark foliage with bright red flowers.



Seemannia 'Big Red'



Seemannia 'Little Red'

Seemannia 'Big Red' and *Seemannia* 'Little Red' are sibling seedlings from the cross (*S. nematanthodes* x *S. purpurascens*) x *S. nematanthodes* 'Evita'. The *S. purpurascens* parent was not the same as the one that produced *S. purpurascens* 'Purple Prince' but was a dark-leaved seedling that popped up among green-leaved seedlings in a sowing from wild-collected seed of the species. The F1 hybrid was nothing exceptional so I backcrossed it to *S. nematanthodes* in an attempt to get a dark-leaved version of that species, with some success. *S.* 'Big Red' has large olive-green leaves and large scarlet-red flowers much like those of *S. nematanthodes* 'Evita'. *Seemannia* 'Little Red', as the name suggests, has smaller flowers. The foliage is also smaller but darker and contrasts nicely with the intense red flowers. Big Red is

the nickname of my alma mater (Cornell University) and is also the name of one of our neighbors' cats. Our neighbors have a second cat from the same litter named Little Red, which suggested the name for the second plant. The two are probably too similar, but my hope is that at least one of them will inherit some of the hardiness of *S. nematanthodes* 'Evita'. *Seemannia* 'Red Prince' is an F1 hybrid from *S. nematanthodes* 'Evita' x *S. purpurascens* 'Purple Prince'. I had previously made the same interspecific cross but using different selections of the two parent species; I repeated it because both *S. purpurascens*



Seemannia 'Red Prince'

'Purple Prince' and *S. nematanthodes* 'Evita' are superior versions of the species. The new F1 hybrid likewise had much better form and foliage than the previous F1 hybrid that I had used to produce *S.* 'Big Red' and *S.* 'Little Red'. *S.* 'Red Prince' has very dark, glossy foliage and deep red flowers. It's very similar to the other two hybrids but I have used it in further breeding and decided it was nice enough in its own right to name.

Seemannia species and hybrids are easy to grow in rich, well-drained soil that is neither too wet nor too dry. Most do well in bright or

dappled shade but will stay more compact and bloom better if they get direct sun for part of the day, preferably in the morning. *S. nematanthodes* and its hybrids, in



Seemannia nematanthodes 'Evita'

particular, benefit from morning sun but direct mid-day sun will scorch their leaves. They respond well to pinching when young to produce a fuller, more compact plant. My plants have held up well to sun, rain, heat, and humidity in my zone 7 garden and I have had virtually no problems with slugs, aphids, or other pests. I hope to see more growers trying these plants outdoors.

Seemannias go dormant in the winter and produce scaly rhizomes that can be overwintered indoors, and will stay dormant for months as long as they are kept cool and dry. In this respect they are very similar to Achimenes, but the scaly rhizomes are larger. The rhizomes can be started indoors in later winter or early spring under lights – providing as much light as possible – and planted out in early May. Although *S. nematanthodes* 'Evita' is supposed to be hardy to zone 7b I haven't yet found this or any other Seemannias to be hardy in my zone 7a/b garden, even through a mild winter. I keep leaving hybrids in the ground every fall, mulching and crossing my fingers, in hope of hitting the right genetic combination to get such great plants to survive more than one growing season!



The online version of this photo – <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dctropics/6062403159> has the new cultivars individually labeled along with descriptions of each.

This article appeared in a slightly different form in **Petal Tones**, Vol. 42, No. 7, August 2011, Donna Beverin, Editor. **Petal Tones** is the newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of The Gesneriad Society editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org or petaltones@gmail.com

Back issues: <http://nationalcapitalgesneriads.org/petaltones.html>

Long Island Gesneriad Society 2011 Flower Show and Little Show photos

<http://sites.google.com/site/gesneriadlongisland/home>

Sinningia 'Rosemary'
— Ben Paternoster

Photos courtesy
of Paul Susi



Sinningia bullata —
Ben Paternoster



Sinningia 'Powder Puff' — Esperanza Kesler



Sinningia guttata — Ben Paternoster



Design - Saltwater Taffy — Ben Paternoster



Design - Mounds or Almond Joy



Chirita 'Piccolo'



Sinningia insularis
— Paul Susi



Saintpaulia 'Rob's
Boogie Woogie' —
Esperanza Kesler

Coming Events for October..

October 2 — Morristown, New Jersey

FRELINGHUYSEN ARBORETUM GESNERIAD SOCIETY ANNUAL SHOW & PLANT SALE

"IN TUNE WITH GESNERIADS"

Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morristown, NJ

Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Free admission and free parking

Contact: [Karyn Cichocki](#)

October 8 — Arvada, Colorado

GLOXINIA GESNERIAD GROWERS FALL SHOW AND SALE

Echter's Greenhouse, 5150 Garrison St., Arvada, CO 80002

Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Free admission and free parking. Beautiful show plants and designs on display in judged show. Gesneriads, African violets plants, cuttings and leaves for sale.

Contact: Larry Boyer at the [Chapter Website](#) for further information.

October 15 — Baltimore, Maryland

THE BALTIMORE AFRICAN VIOLET & GESNERIAD CLUB'S ANNUAL FALL SALE

The Shops at Kenilworth, 800 Kenilworth Drive, Towson, MD 21204

Saturday, October 15 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Hundreds of beautiful sale plants including African violets, other gesneriads and unusual houseplants, supplies, leaves, cuttings, soil mix and much more. Experienced growers will be there to answer your growing questions.

Contact Shirley Huffman bshuffman2@aol.com or 301-854-2021

October 21 & 22 — Kansas City, Missouri

HEART OF AMERICA GESNERIAD SOCIETY ANNUAL SHOW AND PLANT SALE

Loose Park Garden Center Building, 5200 Pennsylvania Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri

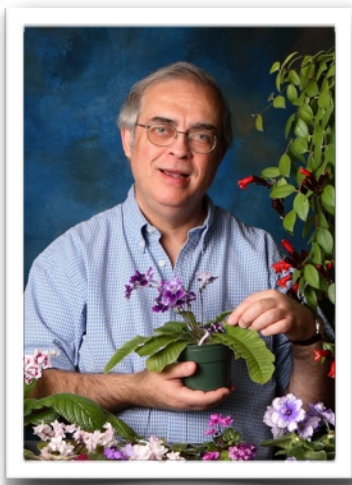
Loose park is at the intersection of 52nd Street and Wornall Road, just South of the Country Club Plaza Shopping area.

Plant sale only open Friday — Noon to 4:00 p.m. (flower show not open due to judging)

Show and Sale both open Saturday — 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This will be a judged flower show. The public is welcome to enter gesneriads in the show as long as the entries conform to the schedule. Entries will be accepted from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Friday October 21. Judging — 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

contact: [Susan Grose](#)



From the editor —

The fall shows are almost here. Hope to see some of you at one or more of them!

Please remember to have someone send me photos from your show for inclusion in future issues of GLEANINGS.

Please continue sending articles. If you have suggestions, comments, or items for possible inclusion in future issues, please feel free to contact me at editor.gleanings@gesneriadsociety.org.

Mel

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Paul Susi, Development Chairperson
117-01 Park Lane South, Apt. C1A, Kew Gardens, NY 11418
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.

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