



# Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

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

Volume 4, Number 2

February 2013

This issue includes photos of Nancy and Jerry Kast's growing areas, Dale Martens' observations on *Episcias*, Jaco Truter's discussion of *Streptocarpus eylesii*, information about the 2012 Gesneriad Society Convention DVD, and Coming Events.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings!**

**Mel Grice**, Editor



Irina Nicholson from Lakewood, Colorado, USA contributed these photos of *Kohleria* 'Pinafore', a new hybrid created by Betty Cessna. The dark green foliage contrasts nicely with the long lasting coral flowers. The "longifolia"-shaped leaves with dark red hairs on the backside create a special effect. *Kohleria* 'Pinafore' resulted from a cross of *K. Lucianii* and *K. 'Peridots Kitlope'*.



# A Visit to Nancy and Jerry Kast's Growing Area

Nancy Kast <[jnkast@aol.com](mailto:jnkast@aol.com)>  
San Antonio, Florida, USA



Jerry has built some new plant stands. He took 40 gallon fish tanks and designed the framework to hold large pieces of plastic to make enclosures for tall growing gesneriads such as *Gasteranthus* that require 100% humidity and lower light levels.





Growing on the lanai





Propagation box for  
Gasteranthus cuttings



Jerry has his own light stand in a  
spare bedroom.



Taking care of so many plants is hard work!

# Coming Events

## **March 9 — Spring Hill, FL**

### **Lecture on African Violets and other Gesneriads (free)**

Spring Hill Branch of the Hernando County Library, 9220 Spring Hill Drive, Spring Hill, FL 34608

March 9 from 2:45 to 4:30 p.m.

Additional information: Thad Scaggs [tascaggs@gmail.com](mailto:tascaggs@gmail.com) or 352-398-1679

## **March 9 (Snow Date: March 16) — Wilmington, DE**

### **Lecture and workshop on African Violets (free)** given by Quentin Schlieder and Mary Schaeffer

Delaware Seed Company, 3624 Kirkwood Highway, Wilmington, DE 19808

March 9 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Additional Information: 302-999-1616 or [info@delawareseed.com](mailto:info@delawareseed.com)



## **Convention 2013**

The Gesneriad Society's  
57th Annual Convention  
Hyatt Regency Toronto  
370 King Street  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
July 2 - July 6  
Hosted by the  
Toronto Gesneriad Society

## **REGISTER NOW**

Flower Show and Plant Sales  
Open to the Public and FREE  
Friday, July 5 – 9 AM to 5 PM (sales)  
2 PM to 5 PM (show)  
Saturday, July 6 – 8:30 AM to 12 Noon (sales)  
8:30 AM to 3 PM (show)

# Back to Basics: Growing Episcias

Dale Martens [dalemartens@mchsi.com](mailto:dalemartens@mchsi.com)  
Sherrard, Illinois, USA

The easiest and prettiest gesneriads to grow, in my opinion, are Episcias. Flowers range from orange and orange-red, to pink, blue, white, and yellow. Leaves can have all sorts of metallic colors as well as pink and white variegation. And they are easy to grow from seed.

The Gesneriad Society's Seed Fund has many seeds from both species and hybrids available. Sow the seed onto a moist, but not soaking wet, soil-less mix in a container with a lid. Seedlings should sprout within three to four weeks. Keep the mix moist if the seedlings are slower to germinate. Of all gesneriads I've grown, Episcias react the best when the seedlings are transplanted often. You'll see them double in size very quickly.

Vegetative propagation is also easy, especially by removing stolons rather than propagating a single leaf. Take a stolon and remove the bottom two leaves. Bury the stem past where those leaves emerged and up to the base of the next lowest set of leaves. I recommend that you don't cover the stolon while it is rooting as that tends to make the stolon grow taller and look leggy. Another option for quick rooting is to take a stolon still attached to the mother plant, remove the bottom two leaves, and pin it down into soil in another pot. In either case, roots will form within a week, and by two weeks' time you'll have a nicely rooted plant.

The key to getting a solidly rooted plant is to remove all new stolons and flower buds for at least two months. After that, allow only a few stolons to grow as a plant with dozens of stolons can look messy. If you have a pink/white variegated Episcia, taking a leaf for propagation will usually give you a green plant, so be sure to root a stolon.

Usually the variegated Episcias tend to need higher humidity and grow well in domed or clear-sided containers. If your show plant is in a clear container, make sure the lid is clean when you take it to show. The judges may take off points if the leaves are pressing against the lid and sides of the container so much that it distorts the leaf shape and/or smashes the flowers.

**Growing requirements.** Feed Episcias a balanced fertilizer at the rate of 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon per gallon of water. If your fresh soil mix is commercially made with fertilizer already added, then begin at the rate of 1/8 teaspoon per gallon after two months. Some growers like to foliar feed, but if you start this process, then commit to it or you may see inconsistent leaf growth.

Episcias grow well under two T-12 cool-white fluorescent tubes timed for 11 to 12 hours a day. Four T-8 tubes kept mine more compact and they seemed to have more flowers, but the leaves appeared to be more bleached looking. If your Episcia has resisted blooming, allow the soil to dry out to the point of slight wilting. Then for the next week give it a little water to barely moisten the soil. After that, water as usual. This seems to stimulate the plant to bloom.

Episcias are cold sensitive and 50 degrees Fahrenheit can be lethal. If your plant room is cold in the winter and you are unable to put the Episcias in enclosed containers, cut a large piece of clear plastic food wrap and place it loosely over each plant. Another option is to put a couple of plastic straws in the pot and cover the plant with a gallon size, clear baggie.



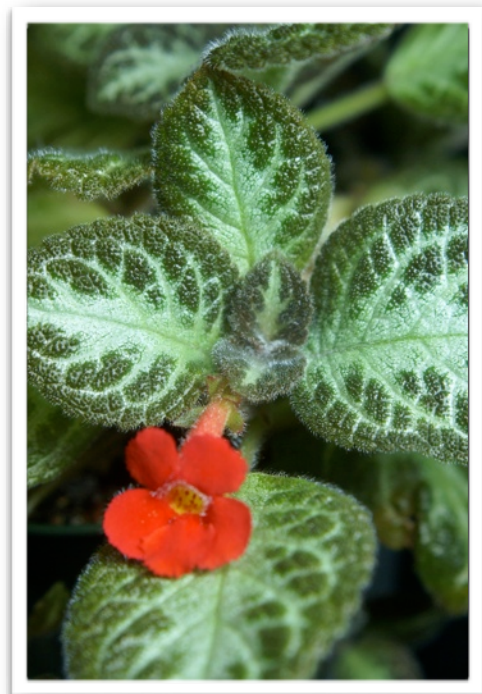
The straws will keep the baggie from touching the top of the plant. If your plant is on wick watering, it will react better to the cold if the soil isn't constantly wet, so place the plant in a saucer temporarily, keeping the soil barely wet. This helped to save my plants when we lost electric power during winter snow storms.

Pests include spider mites, which destroy the centers of each plant and stolons. Pesticides for spider mites are often too damaging to *Episcia* leaves, so tossing the plants in the trash is often the main solution. Neem oil and commercial products for thrips don't seem to harm the leaves. I tend to spray Neem oil onto leaves of recently acquired plants, being sure to spray the underside of the leaves, too.

A species or hybrid *Episcia* can be entered in a flower show grown in different ways. For example, one can enter an *Episcia* as a single plant without stolons, as a single plant with multiple stolons, and in other ways such as on a trellis, or growing on sphagnum as a topiary. Members of The Gesneriad Society are able to read and download some of the back issues of the journal. The Third Quarter 2009 issue of GESNERIADS is all about *Episcias*. In that issue there is an article I wrote on creating an *Episcia* 'Silver Skies' ball. In 1995 I entered *Episcia* 'Silver Skies' grown on a trellis, which you can see at Ron Myhr's Gesneriad Reference Web at <http://www.gesneriads.ca/episci10.htm>.

**Hybridizing *Episcias*** is a challenge because high humidity seems to be required in order to set the fruit, which normally is berry-like in appearance and about the size of a pea. Pollination success is increased if the flower has been open more than 24 hours but less than three days. The fruit needs about 60 days to ripen and then it dries and splits, revealing dark brown or black, round seeds with a covering of whitish material sort of like an egg's albumen. Seed will sprout within three weeks and needs high humidity for the first two months to grow well. Those of us who hybridize *Episcias* have discovered that the final coloration isn't revealed until the plant is around 18 months old. Crossing yellow flowers with blue flowers or orange flowers with blue flowers seems to result in pink flowers and most of the time those pink flowers are sterile. Self-pollinating *Episcia* 'Suomi' with bright yellow flowers usually gives around 90% orange flowers and 10% yellow flowers with light green foliage.

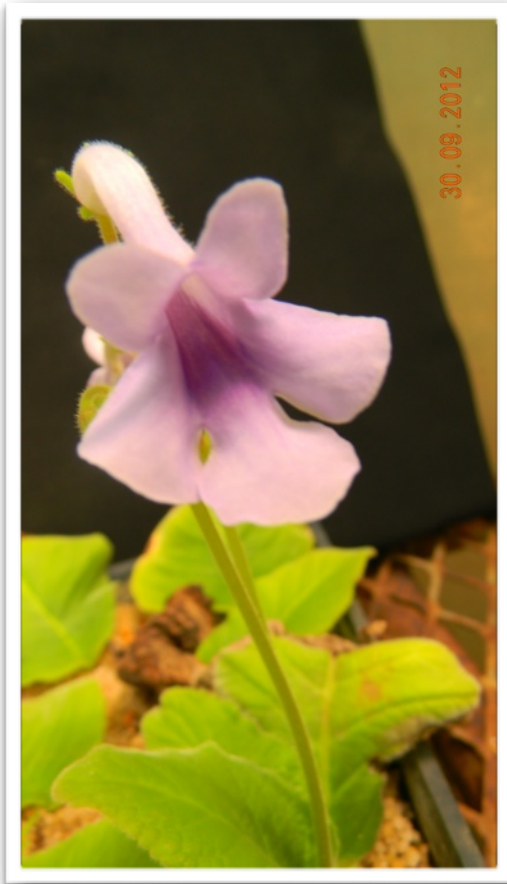
**Spread the word.** If your area has a begonia group, I recommend that you offer to give a program on *Episcias* since most begonia growers are attracted to the various colors and patterns on *Episcias*. Take several plants to show along with baggies of stolons to give away in a raffle. *Petrocosmeas* and *Primulinas* might also impress the begonia growers. In addition, have some *How to Know and Grow Gesneriads* booklets available for sale and some copies of membership applications for The Gesneriad Society.



This article appeared originally in GESNERIADS Vol. 62, No. 4, Fourth Quarter 2012, Jeanne Katzenstein, editor. Read other interesting articles like this about gesneriads by becoming a member of The Gesneriad Society and receiving our quarterly 56-page journal.

# Streptocarpus eylesii — another "potent-smelling" species from Zambia

Jaco Truter [Jaco.Truter@fenner.com](mailto:Jaco.Truter@fenner.com)  
Isando, South Africa



Two seasons ago, an orchid collecting friend of mine made a trip to the northwest portion of Zambia to collect various epiphytic orchid species. In his travels, he collected *Streptocarpus rhodesianus* ssp. *rhodesianus* (featured in a previous article) at Kabompo Gorge, plus another unidentified unifoliate species from very close by, growing in thin soil/humus layers in the shade of rocks high above the Solwezi River. The plants were all very "dead" when received in September, at the end of the dry season, completely dry and withered. I planted them up, and fortunately they plumped up over a period of about two weeks. Then the waiting began!

The first small leaf started flowering this season, carrying only about 6 large flowers. It has turned out to be *Streptocarpus eylesii* ssp. *eylesii*. This is the most westerly locality for it. The species, which is now divided into 4 sub-species is centered in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Tanzania. From the photos, the salient features can clearly be seen. In certain localities, this species is monocarpic, flowering once and then dying off, and in other Malawi localities, the plants are perennating, flowering over a number of seasons.

What really astounded me about this particular form of the species was not that it was scented, because I have grown plants from Zimbabwe before that had a very pleasant sweet almost banana scent, but not this form. It is absolutely identical in smell to *Streptocarpus vanderleurii*, a large white-flowering monocarpic unifoliate from South Africa. It can best be described as pungent honey-creosote. The two species have a good few thousand kilometers separating them and yet the identical scent. Scent is very rare in the genus!





Dear Gesneriad Friend,

If you pre-ordered a 2012 Convention DVD, you will be pleased to know that the DVDs are finally done and have all been shipped. You should receive yours in a week or so. If you do not receive it, please let me know.

If you did not pre-order a DVD, you should consider purchasing one. Not only is it an excellent memento of a fabulous Convention, but it also contains a wealth of gesneriad material you can review, study, and share with local clubs. If you are looking for programs for your club, you will find lots of them right here. The contents are as follows:

**PowerPoints:**

- Hybridizing Gesneriads in Taiwan (GHA Meeting) by Vivian Liu
- Judges Workshop by Paul Kroll
- Sinningia Farming in California by Alan LaVergne
- Sinningia Hunting in Brazil by David Zaitlin (includes text script describing images)
- Drymonia by Laura Clavijo
- Monopyle by Jeremy Keene
- Gasteranthus by Cassandra Coleman and John L. Clark
- Conservation of Gesneriaceae in China by Wei Yi-Gang
- Gesneriaceae of South China by Wei Yi-Gang
- Flower Show by Julie Mavity-Hudson
- People and Events by Julie Mavity-Hudson

**Plus:**

- Hundreds of high-resolution images of plants and people
- PDF copies of all four 2012 issues of Gesneriads
- PDF copy of 2013 Gesneriad Calendar (out of print)

The price is \$15.00. DVDs can be ordered from this page –

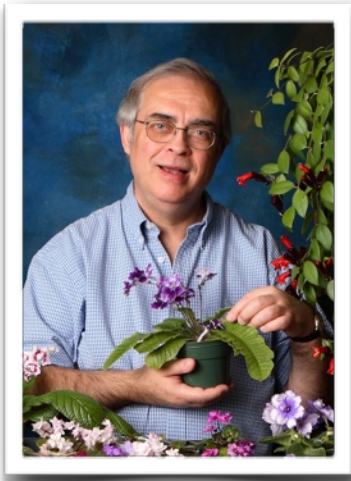
<http://tinyurl.com/b2rup48>

of the Gesneriad Society Website.

Cheers,

Peter Shalit,  
[gesnerieditor@gmail.com](mailto:gesnerieditor@gmail.com)





**From the editor —**

Snow and ice one day and then 60° F the next day here in Ohio where I live. I am so thankful for the blooming green plants in my plant rooms! Please take photos to send me that can be shared in future issues.

Please continue sending articles. 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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Paul Susi, Development Chairperson  
2 Rushmore Street, Huntington Station, 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

**Changes of Address** — Send changes of address to the Membership Secretary [<membership@gesneriadsociety.org>](mailto: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 \_\_\_\_\_

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| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Green Option</b>    | Electronic journal copy (no print copy) for Individual or Household Members \$20 per year anywhere in the world |                          |                              |                               |

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

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Students and Speakers Convention Fund

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