



# 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 4

April 2013

This issue includes photos from the Philadelphia Flower Show, a summary of Bob and Dee Stewart's talk on potting, Leonard Re's photos from the South Coast AVS show, and Coming Events.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings!**

Mel Grice, Editor



Karen Allen of Fredericksburg, Virginia, USA sent these photos of *Streptocarpus* 'Eva', a Polish variety hybridized by Piotr Kleczynski.

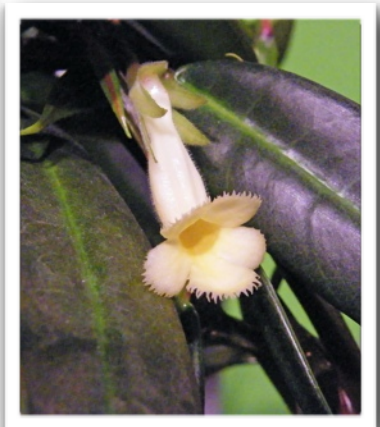




# Philadelphia Flower Show 2013



*Drymonia decora* - Charlene Marietti  
Paul Susi photo



Karyn Cichocki photos



Karyn Cichocki photo





Plant was entered as *Nematanthus* 'Black Magic' but appears to be misidentified  
 Lynn Cook & Troy Ray  
 Charlene Marietti photo



*Primulina* 'Aiko' - Nancy Bruhns  
 Charlene Marietti photo



*Sinningia iarae* - Lynn Cook & Troy Ray  
 Paul Susi photo





*Nematanthus pycnophyllus* 'Rio das Pedras' - Lynn Cook & Troy Ray  
Karyn Cichocki photo



Karyn Cichocki photo



*Sinningia piresiana*  
Charlene Marietti  
Wallace Wells photo



*Saintpaulia* 'Rob's Lilli Pilli'  
Charlene Marietti  
Charlene Marietti photo

Paul Susi photo



# Potting Program Notes

Bob and Dee Stewart [aeschynanthus@verizon.net](mailto:aeschynanthus@verizon.net)  
Stow, Massachusetts, USA

[This is a summary of the talk given by Bob and Dee Stewart on soil and potting at the March meeting of the New England chapter of the Gesneriad Society. - ed.]

## ***When to Repot***

One reason to repot a plant is that it is drying out too quickly because the plant has outgrown the pot. One rule of thumb that is sometimes helpful is that if the plant needs to be watered more than twice a week then it might prefer a larger pot.

Another reason for repotting is if the plant is suffering from excessive water retention because it is in an excessively large pot or in a poorly draining mix. Excess water around the roots can lead to root rot, which in turn means that the plant cannot absorb enough water, so the plant wilts. This type of wilt is not cured by adding water!

Many people like to repot regularly even if the plant seems to be doing well. Repotting every year or two can be helpful. Repotting also gives you a chance to see what is going on with the roots. Repotting regularly can also allow you to remove soil that is suffering from salt buildup, although solving the problem at the source would be better.

Cuttings eventually need to be potted. If you use long-fiber sphagnum for rooting cuttings, be sure to remove the material before adding soil. Buried long-fiber sphagnum will decompose and cause root damage.

Many growers repot Achimenes and other seasonal rhizomatous plants every year. This gives an opportunity to harvest excess rhizomes to create more plants or to give to other growers.

Some people repot tuberous Sinningias at the end or the beginning of each growth cycle.

## ***Materials for Pots***

In olden times most pots were made of clay, but today most pots are made of plastic.

Commercial growers overwhelmingly prefer plastic. Plastic is less expensive, it is lighter (for lower shipping cost both in and out), it usually does not break, and it allows less-frequent watering.

Clay pots allow faster evaporation of water, which can be helpful for plants that prefer to be on the dry side. Because clay allows evaporation through the sides of the pot, they can also keep the plant roots cooler, which can be helpful. The extra weight of clay can help to avoid tipping over of plants that are tall or are exposed to wind. Many people feel that clay pots look better.

Clay pots tend to grow algae on the surface. They also tend to get salt crusts on the outer surfaces. These two issues (both resulting from water movement out through the clay) mean that they are more difficult to keep clean.

For the best drainage in large pot sizes, use a wire or plastic mesh basket, lined with moss to contain the soil.



## ***Pot Shapes***

Pots are available in a wide range of shapes, from tall-and-skinny to short-and-wide. In addition to the esthetic issues, the pot shape has consequences for the amount of water retained.

For equal soil volume, a short-and-wide pot will retain more water than a tall-and-skinny pot. This is because most of the retained water is at the bottom of the soil ball, and a short-and-wide pot has more area on the bottom.

An extreme shape is the bonsai pot. These pots are very shallow and are designed to hold a very small amount of soil. These pots can work quite well for growing *Sinningias*.

## ***Size of Pot***

Most gesneriads will do best with a rather small-looking pot, well-draining mix, and regular watering. Trying to reduce watering frequency by using a large pot of soggy mix is a bad idea; it will result in root rot. More gesneriads have been killed by over-potting than by under-potting.

One rule of thumb is that the pot size should be one-third of the plant's "wingspan."

An exception is plants grown outdoors. The sun and wind can dry the mix quickly, and you may need a larger pot for these plants.

When you increase pot size, do it in the smallest possible step. A 4" pot looks only slightly larger than a 2" pot, but it holds eight times as much soil!

## ***Soil Mixes***

Gesneriads do well in a light well-drained soil mix. "Well-drained" really means that when water has finished draining out the bottom holes there are plenty of small air spaces between the soil particles. If the mix feels coarse and "clumpy" when wet, it is probably OK; if it feels like mud, it is probably not OK.

Most growers use a commercial peat-perlite-vermiculite mix.

Sphagnum peat moss is the main water-holding material in the mix. There must be enough to hold the amount of water that you need. Too much peat moss will result in too much water-holding, so some non-water-holding material is usually added.

The most common non-water-holding material today is perlite. Sand, gravel, pumice, or crumbled Styrofoam will all work. Commercial operations like perlite because it is very light which reduces shipping charges. The greater weight of sand or gravel can be an advantage if you have tall plants that tend to tip over.

Plants that need to stay wet (such as *Achimenes*) can use a heavier (more peat) mix than plants that prefer to be dry (most epiphytes).

Vermiculite is mostly used to hold fertilizer molecules until the plant needs them. Only about 10% is needed for this purpose.

One issue with peat-based mixes is what happens when they get too dry. If sphagnum peat moss gets dry it is difficult to re-wet. Furthermore the material shrinks when dry, and pulls away from the side of the pot.

Then when you water the plant, the water runs down the outside of the soil ball and out the bottom, without really wetting the soil mix. If you don't notice this, then the plant stays dry and eventually declines.

If you do notice the problem in time then you can repair it. Water well, wait a few minutes, water again, and keep doing this cycle until the soil ball actually gets wet.

### ***Repotting Process***

The repotting process starts by taking the plant and its soil ball out of the old pot.

Remove any of the old mix that is loose. If there is a lot of loose mix that means that the plant roots were not occupying the whole soil ball. This in turn means that the old pot was too big, and/or that the plant roots had rotted from excessive water-holding.

Also gently remove any of the old mix that has deteriorated. Old mix tends to break down into finer particles which in turn hold too much water and do not drain well. Consider washing off old mix under a gentle hose spray.

Remove old lower leaves in bad condition.

In some plants you may also want to remove suckers to give a more symmetrical plant for showing. Treat the suckers as cuttings so you have backup plants.

Select a new pot of the correct size and type.

Select the soil mix that you will use. Often it is helpful if the mix is slightly damp when you are potting with it. If nothing else it reduces the amount of dust floating around. Do not add a lot of water to the mix before use; it becomes messy and can cause any fertilizer in pre-made mixes to clump into the bottom.

Often you will want to bury the plant deep enough to cover bare sections of lower stem. The plant will look better, and roots will form at the buried nodes. Do not use an oversized pot to accomplish this though.

Press down only gently on the soil when repotting; excessive pressure compacts the soil.

Reprinted from *Bells and Slippers*, the newsletter of the New England chapter of the Gesneriad Society, April 2013, Bob and Dee Stewart, editors.



## Coming Events

### **April 27 — Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada**

**Lakeshore African Violet Society** judged show and plant sale

St. Philip's Lutheran Church

61 West Deane Park Drive

Etobicoke, Ontario, M9B 2S1 (The East Mall and Rathburn Road)

April 27 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Free parking. Sales tables and some supplies will be available.

Additional information: call Doris Brownlie 905-270-6776 or email Beverley Williams

[beverleyandbrucewilliams@rogers.com](mailto:beverleyandbrucewilliams@rogers.com)

**May 4 – Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada**

**Vancouver African Violet & Gesneriad Society** judged show and plant sale

VanDusen Botanical Garden, Floral Hall

5251 Oak Street (at 37th Avenue)

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

May 4 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Additional information: Carol Lenaghan [countercraft@rogers.com](mailto:countercraft@rogers.com)

**May 10-11 – Towson, MD**

**Baltimore African Violet & Gesneriad Society** judged show and plant sale

The Shops at Kenilworth

800 Kenilworth Drive

Towson, MD

May 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (sale); 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. (show)

May 11 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Additional information: Shirley Huffman [bshuffman2@aol.com](mailto:bshuffman2@aol.com)

Also visit us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/BaltimoreAfricanVioletClub?ref=ts>

**May 26 - June 2 – Austin, TX**

**African Violet Society of America** annual convention

Renaissance Austin Hotel

Arboretum Boulevard

Austin, TX 78759

Additional information:

<http://www.avsa.org/convention/index.html>



**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)

**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



**Leonard Re from Fountain Valley, California, USA sent these photos of his award-winning plants shown at the South Coast AVS Show.**



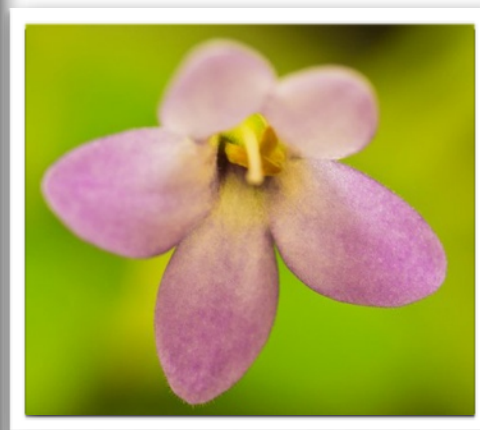
*Streptocarpus* 'Lavender Rosette'  
Leonard Re photo



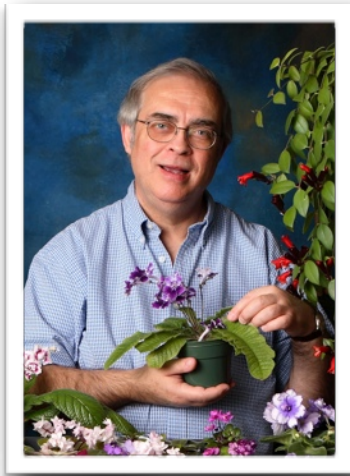
*Saintpaulia* 'Rob's Bo Peep'  
Leonard Re photo



*Sinningia* 'Deep Purple Dreaming'  
Jacquie Eisenhut photo



*Petrocosmea* 'Keystone's Angora'  
Jacquie Eisenhut photo



**From the editor —**

Thanks to Karyn Cichocki, Charlene Marietti, Paul Susi, and Wallace Wells for taking photos of the Philadelphia Flower Show since I could not be there in person this year. More spring shows will soon be here! Take lots of photos.

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.

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Students and Speakers Convention Fund

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