



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 6

June 2013

This issue includes photos from the African Violet Society of America show and Dale Martens' suggestions for preparing horticultural entries for show.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings!**

Mel Grice, Editor



Nancy Kast from San Antonio, Florida, USA sent these photos of *Ornithoboea wildeana*. This very large plant is 29 inches high and loaded with blossoms.

Nancy attributes the yellow edging on the leaves to growing the plant too close to T5 lamps.



Gesneriads at the African Violet Society of America show in Austin, Texas



Primulina linearifolia
Best Other Gesneriad (Amateur Division)
Elmer Godeny



Saintpaulia 'Rob's Galiwinku'
Best in Show (Amateur Division)
Ben Haning
Alcie Maxwell photo



Kohleria 'Napoleon'
Best Other Gesneriad (Commercial Division)
Patty Daniel



Saintpaulia 8 clone *Cha Simba*
Best in Show (Commercial Division)
B.J. Ohme

All photos by Mel Grice except where noted



Sinningia 'Ozark Austin Frost'
David Harris



Primulina dryas 'Hisako'
Kevin Degner



Kohleria hirsuta USBRG 96-163
Beverly Powers
Alcie Maxwell photo



Alcie Maxwell photo



Streptocarpus 'Sweet Ella Bella'
Marjorie Bullard



Brandon Erikson from Omaha, Nebraska taking photos of his new compact *Streptocarpus* hybrids. Brandon uses the alpha name 'Bud's' when naming his hybrids.



xPhinastema 'California Dreaming'
Bill Price



xSmithicodonia 'Heartland's Joy'
Alcie Maxwell



Henckelia 'Moon Walker'
Beverly Powers



Columnnea 'Dragon Fire'
Elmer Godeny

Your Horticultural Entry

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Examine each potential show plant carefully and plan your cultural care strategy for preparing the plant for entry. In general, I consider four general care guidelines – light, fertilizer, humidity, and pests – as well as a range of techniques to enhance presentation of specific plants. First, the cultural conditions.

1. **Light:** Now is the time to turn the plant one-quarter turn, once a week. If you decide to give an extra hour of tube light to stimulate blooming, only increase the time by an hour a month and probably no more than 13 hours total or you'll have tight centers or leaves that curl under.
2. **Fertilizer:** leach the pot of excess fertilizer salts by slowly pouring two cups of water through the pot, not allowing the plant to sit in that water. Feed fertilizer consistently or the leaves will show inconsistent growth or nutrient deficiencies.
3. **Humidity:** Watch humidity levels as when air conditioners come on, house humidity can decrease.
4. **Pests:** As spring turns to summer, be vigilant for thrips. The warmer the plant room, the more thrips seem to multiply.

Then, depending upon the plant, here are some techniques to enhance your potential show plant. Some can be done now, and others just prior to entry.

Shaping: if your plant has a rosette/starfish shape such as *Petrocosmeas*, *Saintpaulias*, *Primulinas*, and many *Sinningias*, now is the time to consider how to improve symmetry such as repositioning leaves with toothpicks against petioles. Those toothpicks should be removed when they've done their job and before entering the plant. In addition, you might need to remove several of the base leaves if they display uneven growth. To determine which leaves are best removed, place a piece of white paper under the plant so you can clearly see the symmetry/shape by looking straight down on it. Then place small pieces of white paper over the leaves you think need removed to see what the plant would look like without them. If your hanging basket gesneriads such as *Columneas* and *Nematanthus* have bare areas on the soil, take cuttings to fill in the top.

Repotting: Consider whether three months' new growth will be necessary for the plant so it doesn't topple. Also determine if damaged or yellowish lower leaves need to be removed and the root ball placed deeper in the new pot. When



Remove several outer leaves to improve symmetry.

transplanting so close to a show, first pour tepid water through the pot to leach the soil of excess fertilizer salts. This is not the time to damage the roots so if you pot the plant into a slightly larger pot, do not disturb the root ball. If your root ball has a wick embedded in it, do not pull on it to remove it. Instead, just cut off the excess wick and leave the rest of the wick alone. Pots need to be clean and a neutral color without designs to detract from the plant. Consider bonsai-type or shallow pots for miniature plants, for trained or sculptured entries or for Sinningias that have interesting tubers to showcase. If you want to expose more of the tuber, use a spray bottle and spray away soil with water.



This Episcia is one-sided. Center the plant in the pot, or add cuttings to bare spot.

If your plant seems to be over potted, it may be possible to take some cuttings or plants from another pot of the same hybrid/species and add them to the bare areas in the pot. If not, then repot the plant into a smaller pot. To minimize damage to the root ball, spray soil away with water rather than cut roots to make the root ball smaller.

Write the name of the plant and your name on the bottom of the pot as no labels should be visible for show entries as there are times when having the correct spelling on the bottom of the pot is exactly what you need. Make sure the pot stays clean.



Stakes and ties on this Achimenes are too conspicuous.

Staking: If your show plant is tall, now is the time to consider staking it so it does not lean. Each stake should be as inconspicuous as possible and ideally slightly darker than the color of the plant's stem. (It may be necessary to paint the stake.) The height should be shorter than the plant so it is not seen and plastic or metal so it doesn't rot. Tie the plant to the stake with a neutral-colored tie such as a dark thread, but take care it is not tied so tightly as to damage the stem over the next few weeks. The judges may deduct points if the stake and/or ties are noticeable.

Stolons: This isn't a contest to see who can grow the most stolons on Episcias. Unless you are using a trellis or topiary, there are times when too many stolons cause a messy, stringy-looking entry. A few months before the show, select stolons to be removed and do not allow more to grow unless you need better shape/

symmetry. A pleasing appearance would be one to three main plants and two or three primary stolons on each that are not one-sided. Secondary stolons, if also symmetrically balanced, may be visually pleasing, but seriously consider if more stolons aren't detracting. My experience is that a bonus for removing stolons on Episcias early enough in the growing cycle is increased blossom count.

Top Dressing: The week before the show you might consider a neutral-colored top dressing, especially in cases where soil is visible and the white perlite detracts. Dark top dressing is sometimes used to highlight an interesting tuber. Some use black pebbles, sphagnum, charcoal, or pure peat as a top dressing. Sphagnum is acidic, so after the show remove it for gesneriads that are sensitive to low pH such as Streptocarpus, otherwise the roots will grow into it and you'll find leaves turning yellow.



Consider a neutral top dressing.

Maturity: Fully developed show specimens are desirable as show plants and score higher under "Cultural Perfection" than immature plants. With multiples of the same hybrid or species in one pot, it is important that the maturity of each be nearly the same so that all are blooming as equally as possible. When it comes to determining point scores for "Bloom," the flowers should be well distributed. For example, if you have three plants in one pot, and two of them have an abundance of flowers and the third plant has no flowers or just a few buds with color, the flowers are not evenly distributed and points are likely to be deducted. Consider removing the immature plant if it can be done without damaging the other plants. Do keep in mind that berries, showy bracts/calyces, and buds with color count as blooms.

Leaf Trimming: Any gesneriad leaf is allowed trimming, although I've not observed that done on Saintpaulias. The cut shape must mimic the natural leaf. Often on Streptocarpus, the leaf tips or sides are damaged, but not enough to justify removing the whole leaf. Use craft scissors (remember pinking shears?) to create notched edges if that's what the other leaves have. Right before entering a plant, and after I've trimmed the leaf, I use the juice from an African violet petiole or pure aloe vera to rub on the wound to help prevent browning.



Cleanliness: bring to convention scissors, a soft brush, and a pair of tweezers to groom your plants. The score sheet category "Condition" includes the cleanliness of

the leaves and pot. As a judge, I find myself disappointed for the exhibitor when they lose points for something they could have easily corrected right before entering the plant. Make it part of the final routine to clean the leaves, remove spent blossoms, and trim any peduncles after cutting off spent flowers.

Fruit: It is an educational experience to see fruit, berries, capsules, or seedpods on **species** gesneriads at a show. When colorful or decorative they count towards "Bloom" as well as "Ornamental Value." If they are not decorative, but you have a goal of sending seed to the Society's Seed Fund, I suggest you write that on a white, 3" x 5" educational card/label and submit it with your entry. The panel of judges may consider an abundance of non-decorative fruit to be a distraction and points may be deducted. Go to the Society's web site and take a look at photos of past entries that won a "Best Gesneriad Exhibiting Fruit" special award.



Cobananthus with colorful calyces

Educational Card/Label:

Although any entry can include a 3" x 5" white card to give information, some classes require it. Read the Show Schedule carefully for guidance on educational cards/labels and follow the requirements for card sizes and color (always white) as well as necessary or suggested information. The goal is to educate the judges, exhibitors, and public about the entry.

Kohleria 'Peridots Salish'

Hybridizer: Iain James

Parentage
Seed Parent: Kohleria 'Karl Lindberg' — Pollen Parent: Kohleria 'Peridots Kitlope'.

Discussion
Cross successfully achieved on July 21, 2008; resultant seed sown on March 12, 2009; first flowering September 9, 2009.
Cultivar is pollen sterile but seed fertile, and will only reproduce true by vegetative means, i.e., cuttings, rhizomes.
Future work and crosses with this cultivar will be focused on stabilizing and intensifying the "doubleness" or calyx fringe trait displayed by its flowers.

Distinctiveness and Desirability
Large-leaved and vigorous but displaying a relatively compact growth habit, spreading outward rather than upward.
During active growth, flowering is continuous with alternating periods of heavy to moderate bloom. Cultivar displays traits of increased blossom size and color which are significant improvements from those of either parent. To varying degrees, a large proportion of blossoms exhibit "doubleness", i.e., extra calyces or fringes.

Pedigree

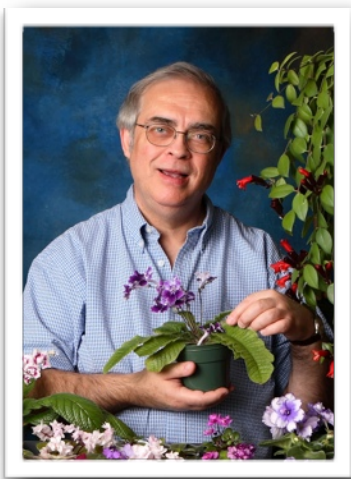
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graph TD
    A[K. 'Tane' →] --- B[K. 'Peridots Kitlope']
    A --- C[K. 'Dark Velvet' →]
    B --- D[K. 'Peridots Salish']
    C --- D
    D --- E[K. 'Karl Lindberg']
        
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All photos by Dale Martens

Enter a show plant: We are often more critical of our plants than the judges are about them. I'd be rich if I had a dime for every time I heard a person who earned an award say they nearly left that plant at home because they didn't think it was "good enough." Volunteer to clerk if you are not a judge. You will learn so much from listening to the judges evaluate an entry.

This article appeared originally in GESNERIADS Vol. 63, No. 2, Second Quarter 2013, Peter Shalit, editor. Read other interesting articles like this about gesneriads by becoming a member of The Gesneriad Society and receiving our quarterly 56-page journal.



From the editor —

The AVSA Convention in Austin, Texas was lots of fun. Many beautiful plants were exhibited. I'm looking forward to the Gesneriad Society Convention and hope to see many of you there! 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

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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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