



Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

(articles and photos selected from chapter newsletters, our journal *Gesneriads*, and original sources)

Volume 8, Number 3

March 2017



Welcome to the latest issue of **Gleanings**! This issue includes photos of *Primulina medica*, photos from the Atlanta Botanical Garden, Ruth Coulson's article about calyx-double sinningias, and information about the next Gesneriad Society webinar.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings**!

Mel Grice, Editor



Karyn Cichocki of Lafayette, New Jersey, USA, sent these photos of *Primulina medica* GSC 1412 grown by Betsy Sherwin. Karyn says that the hairs on the leaves give it a velvety look but Betsy reported that the leaves are very brittle and easily broken. Karyn was also impressed with the number of blooms per stalk.

See next page for Irina Nicholson's photos of this plant growing in the wild in China.



Primulina medica in China

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A very easy to grow plant, it propagates from a leaf but needs to be kept at a barely moist level to prevent rotting. It will benefit from adding some dolomite lime to the soil.

The interesting part is the story behind this plant. It is a traditional Chinese medicine plant used for arthritis sufferers. It was over-harvested to such

Photos by Irina Nicholson

Here is a photo of the only place where this *Primulina* still grows in the wild.



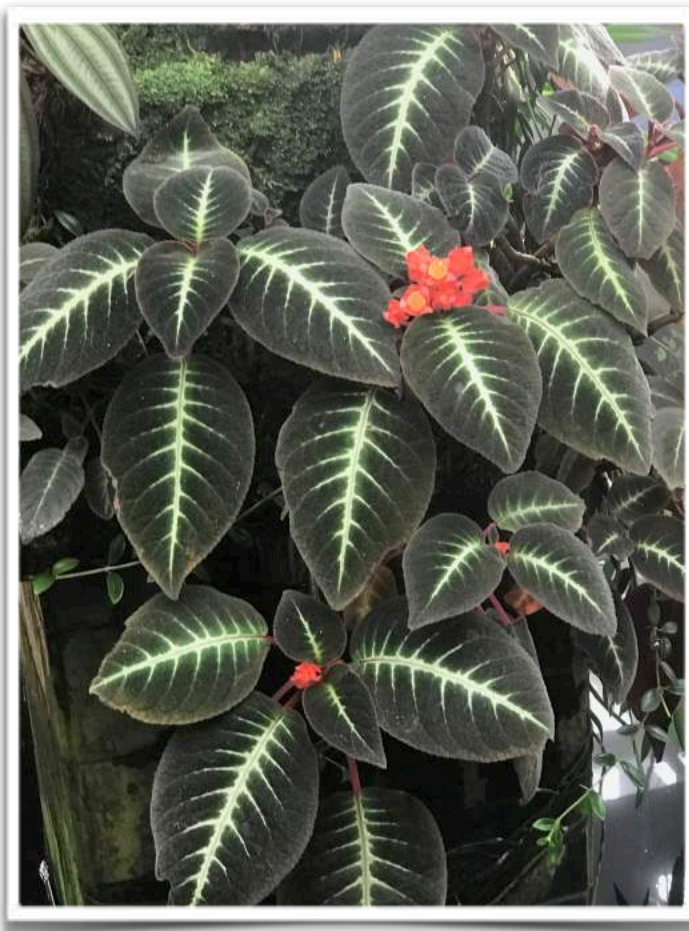
an extent that it almost became extinct. The Chinese government entrusted the protection of the last known location to the local village elders. Botanists from Guangxi Botanical Gardens in Guilin are permitted to go there and collect seeds. They have their own population of this critically endangered plant in their greenhouse, and they were able to share some seeds with us.

Gesneriads at the Atlanta Botanical Garden

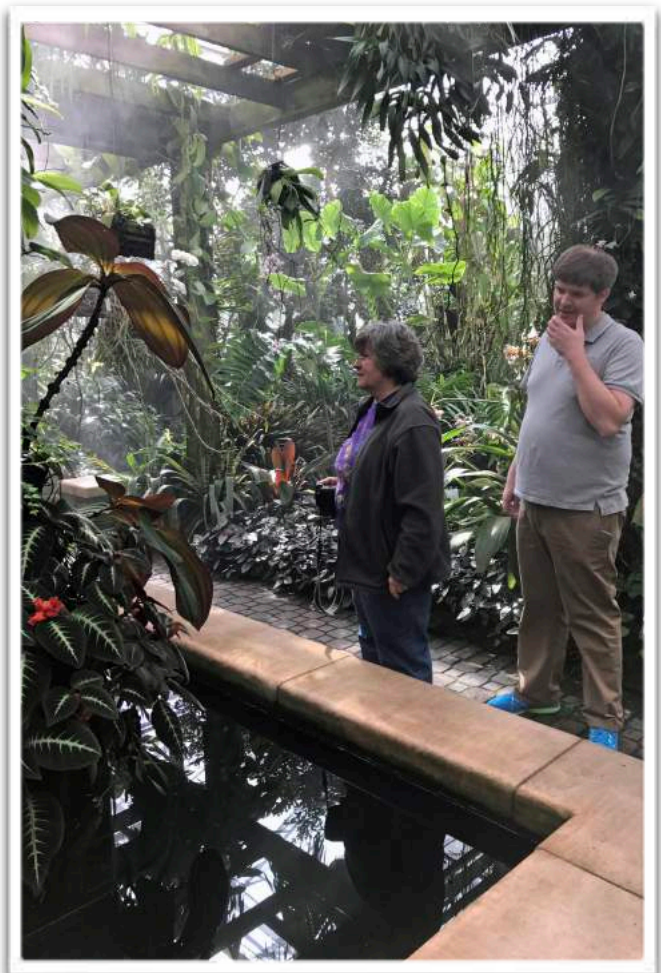
Mel Grice
melsgrice@earthlink.net
Englewood, Ohio, USA

The Gesneriad Society Board of Directors held its 2017 Retreat at the Atlanta Botanical Garden in February. Board members discussed ways to improve our Society, provide additional benefits to our members and better publicize the joys of growing gesneriads.

Our sincere thanks go to the Atlanta Botanical Garden staff for hosting us at the gardens by providing rooms for our meetings as well as guided tours of the public display areas and the extensive gesneriad collections maintained in the back greenhouses. Be sure to visit their beautiful gardens and conservatory when you are in the Atlanta area.

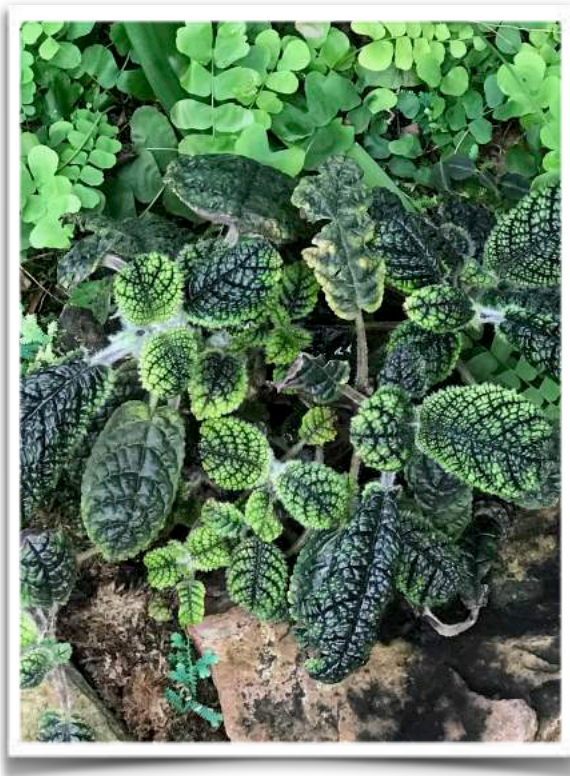


Corytoplectus cutucuensis



Board members Karyn Cichocki and Jeremy Keene admiring the display of *Corytoplectus cutucuensis*

Mel Grice photos



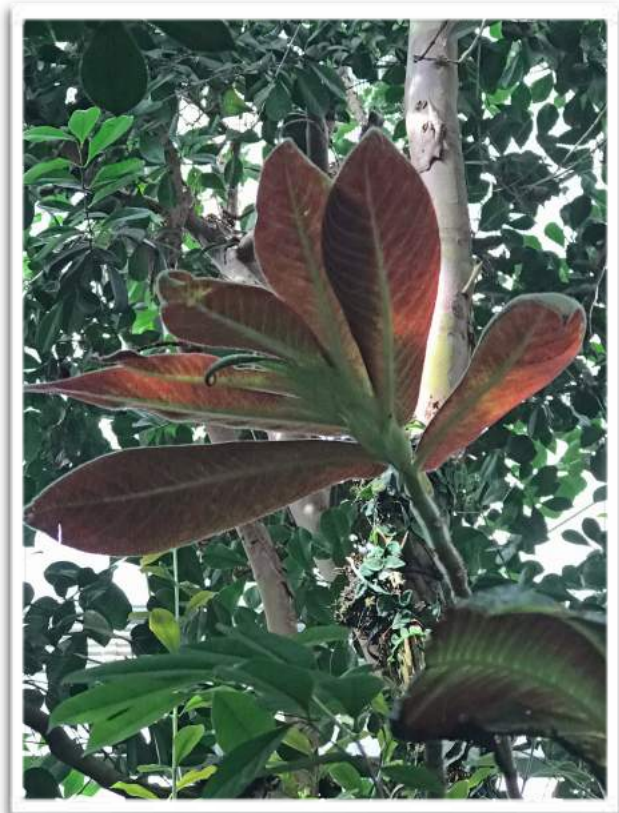
Nautilocalyx erytranthus



Columnea flexiflora



Board member Stephen Maciejewski
photographing the bloom on *Nautilocalyx lynchii*



Columnea polyantha



Columnea magnifica



Drymonia rhodoloma



Columnea polyantha



Codonanthisopsis ulei



Codonanthopsis crassifolia

Mel Grice photos



Columnea kienastiana



Gesneriad Society Board members in the private greenhouse



Drymonia coriacea

Calyx-double sinningias and humidity

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What are calyx-double sinningias? The calyx is made up of the sepals which are normally leafy and green. They enclose the developing corolla which is made up of all the petals, as well as the reproductive parts of the plant. When the calyx is extended, coloured and textured the same as the petals so that it looks like another set of petals, you have a calyx double. It is possible to hybridise with calyx doubles, but as the female parts of the flower are normally badly distorted, they can only be the pollen parents.

Sometimes this calyx is split entirely into its separate sepals. Sometimes some sepals are split off but the others are fused and at other times all the sepals are fused into a whole so that they enclose the corolla neatly. Sometimes the calyx is the same or almost the same length as the corolla but may be shorter.

The first ever calyx-double sinningia was a mutation of *Sinningia cardinalis* and is called *S. cardinalis* 'Redcoat'. I have never been fortunate enough to own a plant of 'Redcoat' but photos of it may be seen at <http://www.gesneriads.ca/sinnin50.htm> and on p.3 of **GLEANINGS** for May 2012.

A couple of years ago I asked a group of gesneriad fanciers if anyone had any idea what caused a calyx-double sinningia sometimes to have a split calyx and sometimes a whole calyx. The answers I was given encompassed variants of “don't know”, “never noticed” and “doesn't really matter”. I asked a number of sinningia growers directly and still found no reason, and yet it bothers me. It is possible that there is someone who understands why this is so, but, until I find that person, the following theory is all I have to go by. I would love to hear from anyone else who has pondered this question.

I have been growing sinningias of various sorts for around 40 years and hybridising with them for more than 25 years. Calyx-doubles are not the primary focus of my sinningia interest, but I do very much like them. I feel that if the calyx is split the flower can be rather ugly. The calyx-double sinningias that I prefer are like those in photograph 1 in that they



Photo 1

almost always have almost all of the calyces whole. Sometimes other characteristics redeem a plant, like very heavy flowering or good colouring or markings. Where calyces are split on narrower semi-upright flowers the effect is often an appealing feathery appearance. My *Sinningia* 'Melody' in photo 2 is an example.



Photo 2

I have noted the following points:

1. Some sinningias almost never have split calyces. A cross I did a few years ago of *Sinningia iarae* × *Sinningia* 'Double Take' has calyx-double seedlings of this type, and I treasure those plants accordingly (see photograph 3). But there are a great many sinningias that are split at one flowering, and then later they are not at all split.
2. Larger, wider flowers are somewhat more likely to have split calyces, and narrower flowers are more likely to have whole ones.
3. Peloric or near-peloric calyx-double flowers rarely have a split calyx. Perversely I am a little disappointed by this because I thought that if an upstanding peloric flower had an evenly split calyx that folded out and back like the petals of a daisy that would be an attractive flower. That hasn't happened, though. Not for me, anyway. (see photographs 4 & 5)

So does it really matter? Well no, not really. Only if you think it matters. But it is an unanswered question and unanswered questions irritate.

Genetics can account for some of what I see, although I am not sure how the trait of whole calyces is inherited. All calyx behaviour cannot all be accounted for this way though.

Recently I came upon an old photograph of my original calyx-double plant, from which all my calyx-double seedlings have grown. It shows that almost without exception the flowers have split calyces. This doesn't prove anything, of course, but I found it interesting. It was also interesting to me to note that any photographs I have ever seen of *S.* 'Redcoat' show it also to have split calyces.

Growing conditions are also relevant. Take Dale Martens' beautiful and very popular *S.* 'Playful Porpoise' (see photograph 6). I have seen numerous photographs of plants grown by other people that show beautiful whole calyces. Just lovely. Others are like mine in that they have every calyx split. I can't help wondering why?



Photo 4

The majority of the sinningias that I have hybridised are derived from a group of species including *Sinningia cardinalis*, *conspicua*, *eumorpha*, *glazioviana*, *iarae*, *insularis*, *leucotricha*, *piresiana* and *striata*, these being



All photos by Ruth Coulson

Photo 6



the ones with which I have mainly worked. In this warm climate they grow happily outdoors, either under the protection of shade-cloth or in the open. They are thus at the mercy of the variability of the weather. Although we are close to a coastal lake and not far at all from the open ocean, we do have periods when the humidity is fairly low. At other times it is distressingly high. The dry periods mostly, but not always, occur during late winter and spring. The excessive, heavy humidity is normal in summer, particularly after Christmas until at least the end of March.

During the last few summers I have been watching the calyx behaviour in my plants. Most of my sinningias flower at their peak in September to November which is a period of drier air. And many of their calyces are split. Some of these plants will flower continuously through February and March where conditions are more humid and these flowers often have whole calyces. I believe the only possible factor to cause the differences can be the humidity.

I must also mention that in the earlier (drier) flowering period I have also found considerable distortion of the corolla in certain plants. I am inclined to think that this has the same cause.

Clearly my next challenge must be to grow some plants in conditions of humidity for the whole of their flowering period. This will be rather difficult, and at this point, I am not sure how I will manage it.

Gesneriad Society Webinars

Growing Smaller Rhizomatous Gesneriads: Our Lesser-Known Treasures



Dr. Jeremy Keene
co-chair of The Gesneriad Society's
Conservation Committee



"Lesser-Known Gesneriad Treasures" are the smaller rhizomatous gesneriads. Dr. Jeremy Keene's webinar premieres March 21, 2017, at 9:00 p.m. EST. Hear Jeremy's talk about *Diastema*, *Phinaea*, *Amalophyllon*, *Chautemsia*, *Gloxinella* and their hybrids! You will be able to see beautiful photos and listen to Jeremy describe what you are watching.

Register at: <https://the-gesneriad-society.myshopify.com/collections/webinars/products/webinar-growing-smaller-rhizomatous-gesneriads-our-lesser-known-treasures>



From the editor —

My recent trip to the Atlanta Botanical Garden was great fun! Thanks to all those who made it possible. I could really use a greenhouse like this for my gesneriads.

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

Mel

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Betsy Gottshall, Development Chairperson
108 Godshall Road, Collegeville, PA 19426
For additional information, contact: gottshb@verizon.net

Membership and Changes of Address

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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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