



Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

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

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This issue includes Julie Mavity-Hudson's article on hybridizing streptocarpus, gesneriads blooming now, and Dale Martens' article on rhizomes.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings**!

Mel Grice, Editor

Terri Vicenzi sent this photo on the right of *Streptocarpus* 'Bristol's Oriental Art', a hybrid created by Ralph Robinson (Rob).

Terri Vicenzi photo

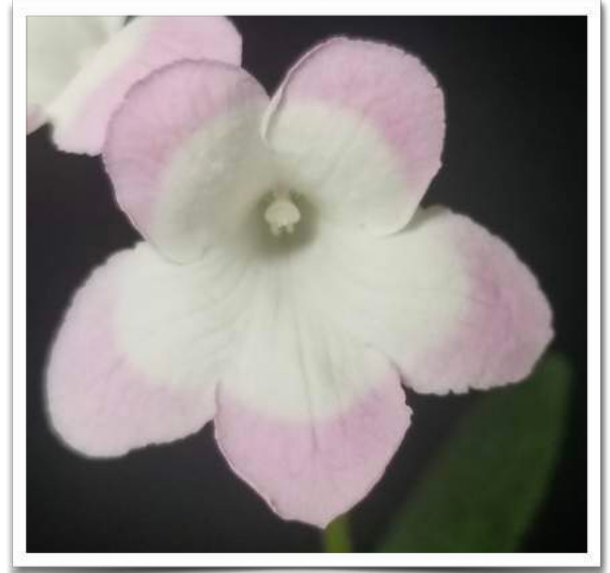


An Adventure In Hybridizing *Streptocarpus*

Julie Mavity-Hudson

Quite a few years ago I was growing *Streptocarpus* 'Roulette Cherry', S. 'Roulette Azur' and S. 'Alissa'. I managed to get them all blooming at the same time and did some crosses. I crossed S. 'Roulette Cherry' with S. 'Roulette Azur', and S. 'Alissa' with S. 'Roulette Cherry'. Now it is possible that one or both of these crosses ended up being an accidental selfing. I'm pretty sure I emasculated (cut off the mother's pollen sacs) before it was ready to accept pollen, but it was a long time ago, like possibly fifteen or more years. I collected the seed, folded it up into little papers, placed it in little envelopes, put them in a zip loc bag in the refrigerator and forgot about them. I decided to donate some of my seed to The Gesneriad Society a couple of years ago, so I ran germination tests by planting some of the seed. I surprisingly got very good germination but left the seed pot in a plastic bag. When you don't transplant seedlings, they will usually stay very small and sort of sit there for a long time. Finally, in late 2020, I transplanted some, but they still weren't doing much, so I started fertilizing them a few months ago. They really took off and are starting to bloom now.

If you aren't familiar with the 'Roulette' series, they are very interesting blooms, white with a thick colored band around the outside. 'Cherry' is red and 'Azur' is blue/purple. I know a couple of people who have selfed 'Roulette Cherry', including Dale Martens. She said that only 10% of the progeny had that pattern. It's hard to figure out the genetics. If it was a straight recessive gene, all the progeny would have it. If it is a dominant gene and carried two copies of it, once again all should show it. If it is dominant and has only one copy of the gene then 75% should have the pattern. If it's a lethal dominant then two out of three should have the pattern (with the fourth not being viable). So you can see it must be more complicated, perhaps involving two genes that both have to come together to produce the pattern.



The interesting thing is that, so far, the only one that has the pattern is one of the ones that is supposed to be crossed with S. 'Alissa', which does not have

the pattern, which is what makes me think it might be an accidental selfing. Only five have bloomed so far. Only one of them is the alleged 'Alissa' cross. It is really quite pretty, with a pale lavender edge. The others are pretty as well, but are not particularly different from other hybrids out there, so I won't do anything with them except maybe grow them outside next summer. There are still a number that haven't bloomed yet, so I'll wait and see how those turn out. It's been fun, anyway.



Julie Mavity-Hudson photos

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the newsletter of the
Tennessee chapter of the
Gesneriad Society, Volume 49,
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Julie Mavity-Hudson, editor.

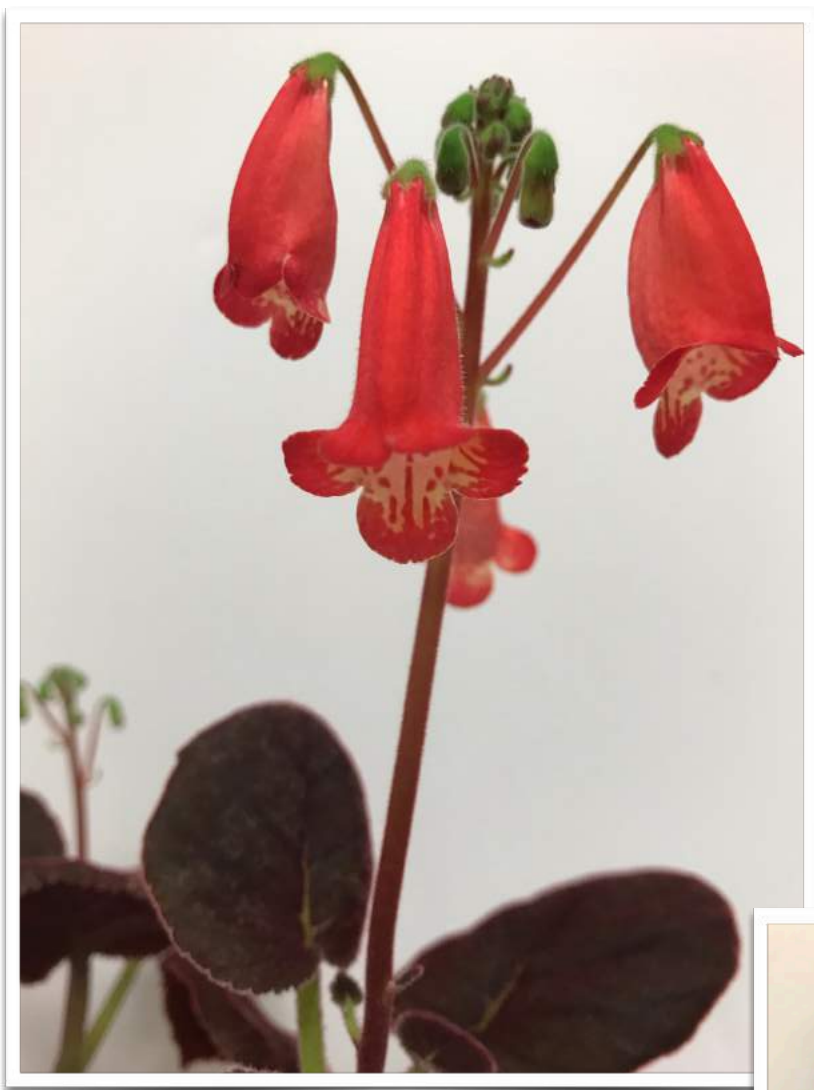
Blooming now...



Karyn Cichocki sent these photos of Dale Martens' new hybrid, *Primulina* 'Dale's Dancing 'til Dawn'.

It is a cross between *Primulina petrocosmeoides* and *Primulina medica*.

Karyn Cichocki photos



Smithiantha cinnabarina

Judy Zinni



Sinningia 'HCY's Centre Heart'

Mel Grice

Back to Basics: Rhizomes

Dale Martens

While living in Southern California, I got some of my first rhizomes from Kartuz Greenhouses. Because I was living in such a mild climate, I was able to grow achimenes outdoors in dappled sunlight under an olive tree, hanging-basket style. The pots were pretty big, so I'd put about ten unbroken rhizomes evenly around the pot for a spectacular show of flowers a few months later.

Scaly rhizomes consist of numerous scales, tightly bundled together, that remind me of a skinny pinecone. The scales are actually modified leaves. Each scale can make a plant and I've used that to my advantage. For example, when Clay Anderson gave me one of his *xAchimenantha* hybrids that had just gone dormant in the fall, I stored most of the rhizomes in a plastic baggie with moist vermiculite, but I took half a rhizome and broke it into scales. I put the scales on top of a light, soilless mix and put a lid on the container. The baggie of rhizomes didn't sprout until the following February, while the scales sprouted at their pointy ends within four to six weeks. Thus, I was able to grow a blooming plant "off



A rhizome with separated scales



The author's entry of *Smithiantha* 'Vivian's Gift' grown from a single rhizome scale

season." In May of 2015, I entered a blooming *Smithiantha* 'Vivian's Gift' at the AVSA convention. It had been grown from a scale, by convention time it was not nearly as large as a plant grown from a whole rhizome; on the other hand it was in bloom, and many attendees commented that they'd never seen a smithiantha blooming in May.

Scaly rhizomatous gesneriads are my favorites, and one reason is their dormancy, which leaves me with clear plant stand space in the winter. For good rhizome production, allow the plants to die back, while slowly letting the soilless mix dry out, but not letting it go bone dry. Then, cut off the dead top growth and store the pots. I prefer to store pots in plastic baggies because I don't want

the pots to get bone dry. Often, I'll dig up the rhizomes and put them into smaller bags with some moist vermiculite. Smithianthas and their intergeneric offspring seem to need a moister environment during storage than achimenes rhizomes.

In the spring one needs to check the pots and/or storage bags for new growth. If you are going to keep the rhizomes in the old pot, then leach out last year's fertilizer salts with three cups of room temperature tap water.

Kohleria is a genus that doesn't seem to have winter dormancy. When the main plant begins to decline, the root area will produce scaly rhizomes. Before you know it, the pot is sprouting with new growth. Therefore, cut off the declining plant, and soon you'll have a pot full of new plants. At that time, it's a good idea to leach the pot of fertilizer salt build-up, by slowly pouring through the pot three cups of room temperature tap water.

My first Best in Show was for *Eucodonia verticillata* 'Frances'. Here's how I grew it: I took a shallow, plastic saucer and drilled holes in the bottom for watering purposes. I put about half an inch of fine perlite in the saucer, on top of which I then laid horizontally around twenty rhizomes. I covered the rhizomes with soilless mix nearly to the brim of the saucer. I placed the saucer within ten inches of the tube lights to keep the emerging sprouts from getting leggy. I turned the saucer every other day, and gave it a balanced fertilizer. At that time I was using ¼ teaspoon per gallon of water.

We've all put away rhizomes, only to find they've sprouted about four to five inches of growth. What do you do? You have some options. If the growth is rather thick, with several leaves, and if it has a lot of roots, you can cut off the top two inches, and plant the tip cuttings alongside the remaining stems. Another option is to cut off the remaining growth all the way back to the tip of the rhizome, and throw it away. Pot the rhizome, and it'll sprout again. You also have the option of digging a hole in the mix, and putting the rhizome and all of



The author with her prizewinning plant of *Eucodonia* 'Frances'

The container used to grow Dale's prizewinning plant.





The tip of a newly sprouted achimenes peeking above the soil with a condiment container over it to hold humidity

that length of sprouted growth into the hole, with just the tip peeking out. Keep in mind the sprout has had humid conditions in the storage baggie. Therefore, if you plant it deep in the pot with only the tip of the sprout above the soil, that tip will



Smithiantha scales sprouting

wilt without some sort of increased humidity. I either put a short straw in the pot and cover it loosely with plastic food wrap, or I cover the tip with a clear plastic condiment container. As the sprout grows, I start to cut holes in the condiment container to let more air inside to eventually harden off the young plant.

Some plants, like *Gloxinella lindeniana* and *Seemannia gymnostoma*, will produce above ground propagules in the leaf nodes. Such propagules generally seem to be searching for a good place away from the main plant for propagation purposes. One plant produced at least a dozen of these propagules that embedded themselves in my plant room's carpet. When the tips find a good place (like the carpet), then a normal rhizome is produced on the tips of such



Seemannia gymnostoma propagules gathered into a pot were eventually covered with soil

propagules.

At one of the Society's auctions, I won part of Karyn Cichocki's entry of *Monopyle* sp. GRE 12131. When I got home from convention I put down leaves for propagation. To my surprise, each leaf not only produced a new sprout, but at the bases of the sprouts were fat scales. Eventually I found out that this species doesn't produce normal scaly rhizomes, but just a small clump of fat scales.

This journal will arrive about convention time. I encourage you to purchase rhizomes at convention. It's easiest to wash them using a strainer. I examine the washed rhizomes carefully with a magnifying glass. Often, plants grown outdoors have some sort of pest, so after washing the rhizomes, I spray them with insecticidal plant soap, which I leave on for about five minutes. Then I rinse them before planting them. So, do you plant them vertically, with the pointy end up, or horizontally? It doesn't matter. I place them at least an inch below the surface of the mix in the smallest pot possible. When the plants are about three inches tall, I replot them into a larger pot and remove the base four leaves to pot them deeper. Try planting a grouping in that larger pot.



Monopyle sp. GRE12131 along with a sprout with scales at its base

Achimenes in bloom in the greenhouse of Michael Kartuz. Photo courtesy of Michael Kartuz



Other photos by the author

This article appeared originally in GESNERIADS Vol. 66, No. 3, Third Quarter 2016, Peter Shalit, editor. Read other interesting articles like this about gesneriads by becoming a member of The Gesneriad Society and receiving our quarterly 64-page journal.

