

Gesneri-Eds

February, 2006

The Newsletter of the Tennessee Gesneriad Society

Volume 33 Issue 2

Next meeting:
2:00 p.m.
Sunday,
February 12
POTM: your
very worst!
Refreshments:
Rosa

A Message from the President

Our meeting on February the 12th at 2:00pm in Botanic Hall at Cheekwood will be a dog show!!! This is the time for you to bring all your plants which have not been ready for a show before--"dogs". You may even win a blue doggy ribbon! This will be a learning experience for us all. We will discuss what went wrong with the plants in the show, and maybe be able to prevent problems with other plants. Every one please bring at least one plant so our meeting will be a success.

Those of you who are members of the old AGGS/new GS or under new name "The Gesneriad Society" should have the January copy of GESNERIADS including cover photos by our Julie, President's message by our Carol Ann and information on the 2006 convention in Rochester, NY July 4-9th. If you are not a member of GS you should be for \$25 individual a year, and receive the great GESNERIADS publication. This January issue is fantastic -- the editor is re-acquainting us with the Gesneriaceae, including great color pictures.

My first AGGS convention was 1976 in the Washington, DC area with Pam as

roommate, and ELVIS was in the building! Five other TGS members also attended their 1st national convention. Two of the members drove my nine plant entries, Pam helped groom them in our room and I won best gesneriad in show- *Episca dianthiflora* (now *Alsobia dianthiflora* - ed.), and runner-up *Aeschynanthus micranthus*. I have been to all but two conventions since but not with plants like in 1976; I do not believe it is thirty years ago! Over the years I have made great friends, seen lots of interesting gesneriads, visited many different chapters/cities in the US and Canada and much more.

Back to 2006, our January meeting with Jonathan in the Vanderbilt greenhouses with many interesting plants was great and refreshments too. Thanks.

The March meeting is at the Lawn and Garden Show at the Fairgrounds March 2-5. This year we have a plant sale booth only so we need to talk about its organization. The meeting is Sunday before breakdown; Audrey the 1st (Sparks) is bringing refreshments.

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The middle of winter is the perfect time for all of us to start looking at the potential of our plants in preparation for our fall show in September. Remember that six months or more are really needed to get the best show plants ready. In the meantime, you all have the chance to win great prizes and awards for the plants you have now. I know you all have some plants you are hiding from us that could be big winners in our "Dog Show" at this February's meeting. I know I do. I don't think anyone can beat me for some of the "beauties" I have. They are all real "DOGS." Be sure to bring anything which you have particularly neglected, not repotted for ten years, or otherwise left to fend for itself. I know we can make this the best "Dog Show" ever. - Pam

From the (Co-) Editor

Hope all your plants are keeping snug and warm. A light snow is falling as I write this, though I don't expect it to stick. Hopefully all the Sinningia tubers are still warm down under the ground and will sprout in the spring. I know that Jonathan has several species he grows outside here in Nashville and I have grown *S. tubiflora*, *S. sellovii* and *S. speciosa* (the florist "Gloxinia") at our house, and they have sprouted for at least two or three years in a row. Eventually, I lost them due to moving things around, though I plan to try a few more species soon.

I have reported on the *Saintpaulia* (African Violet) leaves that I got from Diane and all the babies I grew. Most have been separated (I'm a little behind so have a few I need to finish up) and are doing well. They are starting to bloom even, and I am excited to see them. I am starting to run out of room, but hopefully will be able to unload the extras at the Lawn and Garden Fair. There's still time to put down some cuttings to sell at the Fairlet's try to have a good selection of Gesneriads to present to the public.

Thanks to Jonathan for hosting us at the Vanderbilt Greenhouses, it was a very interesting meeting, and we all learned a lot. Please come to the next meeting for the Dog Show, the last one was a good learning experience and a lot of fun.

Those of you who are interested in African Violets may enjoy joining the Nashville African Violet Society. They meet at the Green Hill Womens' Center in Mt. Juliet on the first Sunday of the month at 1:45 p.m. Anyone interested should call me for confirmation and directions.

Julie



originally published in "Soundings", the newsletter of the Puget Sound Gesneriad Society

CHIRITA: An Introduction

Chirita is a large Old World genus distributed throughout much of Asia. It ranges from Sri Lanka and India eastward through Nepal into China and Southeast Asia down the Malay Peninsula and onto the southern islands of Sumatra, Java and Borneo. Originally based on a small collection of Himalayan herbs, Chirita was first described in 1822.

The genus is comprised of shrubby or soft-stemmed herbs which are either perennial or annual in nature. They are terrestrial or rupicolous and can be found growing in filtered light often on limestone cliffs or rocky hillsides.

Chiritas have beautiful flowers ranging from shades of purple to white and yellow. This, along with their ease of culture and the recent introduction of new species and hybrids has led to their ever increasing popularity.

CLASSIFICATION



Family: GESNERIACEAE
 Subfamily: CYRTANDROIDEAE
 Tribe: DIDYMOCARPEAE
 Genus: CHIRITA
 Sub-genera: None, however, the genus is taxonomically divided into three sections: Chirita, Gibbosaccus, and Microchirita. Divisions are based on growth habits and other morphological (structural) characteristics. (A very general discussion of the three sections follows below.)

No. of Species: 140+.
 Type Species: The genus was initially described in 1822 by David Don, however, it wasn't until 1954 that B.L. Burtt actually described the type species *Chirita urticifolia*.
 Distribution Range: Indian subcontinent and southeastern Asia.
 Name Derivation: Selected by David Don, the name is derived from the vernacular name of one of the species.
 Root Structure: Fibrous.
 Growth Habit: Caulescent (with a stem) and acaulescent (without a stem).
 Chromosome Count: Depending upon the taxonomic subdivision: 4, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, and 18.

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

Temperature: Cool to moderately warm growing - 55 to 80 degrees F or 12 to 25 degrees C.
 Watering: Bottom or top, with the potting mixture generally allowed to dry out between waterings.
 Light: Low to medium light.
 Humidity: 40 to 50 percent.



C. 'Aiko'



C. eburnea



C. sinensis 'Hisako'



C. sclerophylla

*C. 'Keiko'**C. lutea**C. sinensis**C. heterotricha**C. fimbrisepala*

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS *Cont'd*

Fertilizer:	Continually with a non-urea based formulation, e.g., Dyna Gro 7-9-5.
Soil:	Neutral, heading upward to slightly alkaline; pH=6-7; Basic Potting Mixture (BPM) with the addition of dolomitic lime is appropriate.
Propagation:	Asexually using leaves, crowns and suckers or sexually (seed) through self or cross pollination. Hybrid plant material will only reproduce true using asexual propagation methods and techniques.

TAXONOMIC DIVISIONS

As discussed previously, the genus *Chirita* is taxonomically divided into three groups: *microchirita*, *gibbosaccus* and *chirita*. These divisions are based on differences in growth habit and morphological characters.

SECTION: MICROCHIRITA

This section contains approximately 20 species which are either soft-stemmed caulescent annuals or short-lived perennials. The best known species within this group are *C. lavandulacea* and *C. micromusa*. The name, *microchirita*, refers to the group's flowers having small calyx lobes. *Microchirita* are primarily tropical, being predominantly located in southeast Asia and the Malay Peninsula. The chromosome counts for this section are 9, 17, and 18.

SECTION: GIBBOSACCUS

This section contains approximately 80 species, all of which form acaulescent rosettes. Many of the species contained in this section are cold-tolerant, e.g., *C. fimbrisepala* and *C. subrhomboidea*. The best known species within this group are *C. sinensis*, *C. lutea*, and *C. linearifolia*. The name, *gibbosaccus*, means "swollen pouch" and refers specifically to the flower structure of *C. sinensis* (i.e., its corolla base shape). *Gibbosaccus* have a chromosome count of 18 and are restricted to locales in southern China and northern Vietnam. This section can be informally broken down into four sub-groups of related species: *C. sinensis* group, *C. pteropoda* group, *C. linearifolia* group, and a "miscellaneous group" of four species (*C. fimbrisepala*, *C. sclerophylla*, *C. subrhomboidea*, and *C. tribracteata*).

SECTION: CHIRITA

This section contains about 45 species. Although the majority of species within this section are caulescent perennial shrubs, some species are small annuals producing only one or two leaves in a growing season. *Chirita* species *asperifolia*, *briggsioides*, *walkerae*, and *moonii* are the best known of this group. Members of the *Chirita* section have chromosome numbers of 4, 9, 10, 14, 16 and 17. With species indigenous to Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and southern China, this group has the widest geographic range of the three sections.

RECOMMENDED READING

An excellent article called "The Cultivated Species of *Chirita*" by Dr. J. Boggan (Smithsonian Institute), published in *The Gloxinian*, 2nd Quarter 1998 (Vol. 48, No. 2).

Officers of TNGS:

President: Molly Schneider.....	608 Hillwood Blvd., Nashville, TN.....	356-9655
Vice-President: Pam Braun.....	5528 Pinewood Road, Franklin, TN 37064.....	794-3553
Recording Secretary: Julie Mavity-Hudson....	1015 Park Lane, Joelton, TN 37080.....	746-3532
Membership Secretary: Carol Ann Bonner	3705 Tibbs Drive, Nashville, TN 37211.....	331-5470
Treasurer: Molly Schneider.....	608 Hillwood Blvd Nashville, TN 37205.....	356-9655
Editor: Julie Mavity-Hudson	1015 Park Lane, Joelton, TN 37080.....	746-3532

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We have been asked to have a non-profit booth at the Bloom'n Garden Expo by the Williamson county master gardeners association April 7-9th in Franklin, TN. We can have small scale sales, educational materials, and recruit members anyone interested in manning the booth?

Carol Ann and I are revising the TGS by-laws to change AGGS to GS and reviewing which was last done 1979. that was the same year we donated the plant case to Cheekwood. The by-laws will be prepared for vote.

Molly

DOG SHOW SCHEDULE

February 12, 2006 2:00 p.m., Cheekwood

Division I: Horticulture

Section A: Flowering Gesneriads (Blasted or dead or practically nonexistent blooms permitted)

- Class 1: Sinningias showing signs of life
- Class 2: Any other tuberous Gesneriad with or without tuber
- Class 3: Any rhizomatous Gesneriad with erect, pendant or some kind of leaf and stem
- Class 4: Fibrous rooted Gesneriads such as Columneas, Nematanthus,

Aeschynanthus with at least one stem (leaves not necessary.)

- Class 5: Asymmetrical or otherwise formed Saintpaulia (must show vague sign of life.)
- Class 6: Any other fibrous rooted Gesneriad you have hidden away

Section B: Gesneriads grown for foliage

- Class 1: Episcia, must look like it might be an Episcia
- Class 2: Any other Gesneriad with desirable foliage which might have been desirable in another lifetime
- Class 3: Any other Gesneriad with undesirable foliage

Division II: Design & Artistic

Section A: Arrangement of dead or nearly dead cut material

- Section B: Gesneriads grown in a container which might be able to contain something
- Section C: Gesneriads whose growth has taken on a scary or weird form
- Section D: A photograph, slide or other piece of artistry which should have gone in the garbage, but you forgot

If you haven't paid your dues, this will be your last issue.



3705 Tibbs Drive
Nashville, TN 37211