

# *Paliavana prasinata*

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**B**eing a trusting soul and taking everything at face value, you won't believe my experience with a six-foot tree in the greenhouse.

I have been growing my "tree" for over five years, and it has never bloomed in that five years, UP UNTIL NOW. I purchased the seed from the AGGS Seed Fund as the description classified it as medium tall. As I said before, I'm a trusting soul and felt that it would grow to somewhere around three feet. It also claimed it needed direct sun to bloom. When it matured and I felt it should bloom, it was moved out into a flower bed. It didn't bloom there either. I had to bring the thing in before winter as our winter nights sometime drop down into the upper twenties. After all, I had a few years invested in this plant. Now, mind you, it was growing all the time. By the end of its third year, it was topped and the top set down to start over. Still the thing didn't bloom. At this time it is over six feet tall and pushing the shade cloth off the ceiling of the greenhouse. Off the bench and onto the floor for more head space it went. By now, it's also top heavy, so it's tied to the greenhouse door. We don't use that door much anyway and the other entrance opens into the dining room. Yes, my greenhouse is part of my home.

After placing it on the floor, I noticed it was in bud. Great day, I am finally going to see it bloom! Then I notice I've lost the name. A few emails later I have a name. I was also told that there were only a few species of *Paliavana* in cultivation and please set seed on it. Another told me to cross it with a sinningia. My answer to that is "Who would want a six-foot sinningia?" I tried anyway with a large-growing sinningia. I went daily to pollinate my giant. It was very discouraging to see the capsules fall off one by one. Then it dawned on me to cross in the other direction—the paliavana onto the sinningia. It's too early to say it was a success but there are swollen ovaries on both. The paliavana was selfed and the sinningia (also grown from seed that came from John Boggan) is the seed parent. I will endeavor to set more seed as it is still in bloom. I believe the secret to blooming my monster is HEAT, not the sun. We had a heat wave and the 100 degrees in the greenhouse did the trick.

After harvesting my seed, once again the plant will be topped to a more reasonable size. I will look forward to blooming it out again. There doesn't seem to be much literature on my paliavana other than it is thought to be pollinated by bats, comes from Brazil and has a fragrance at night. (However, I noticed no fragrance.) The growth pattern is single stem with opposing medium green leaves. The flowers are almost bell-shaped with a longer bottom lip. They are light green with reddish-bronze spots on the outside. Inside the bell it is even a lighter green with spots. The leaves are large, tend to be very fragile, and fall off with just a small bump. I tried to root them with no success.

Most of the fun in growing the "other" gesneriads is growing them from seed. Our Delta chapter buys a lot of seed. I start them and then pass them out to the members when they are big enough to handle. Our aim is to grow something you know nothing about and make it bloom. We try to make it fun and challenging at the same time.



*Paliavana prasinata.*  
Photo from the collection of Dr. Margaret H. Stone.

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