



Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

(articles and photos selected from Chapter newsletters, our journal GESNERIADS, and original sources)

Volume 1, Number 1

April 2010



Welcome to **Gleanings**! This new project of The Gesneriad Society is a monthly e-zine, posted as a free download on our Society Website, www.gesneriadsociety.org. As its name suggests, **Gleanings** will include articles and photos gleaned from various Gesneriad Society publications, chapter newsletters, flower show reports and photos, and whatever else the Editor may choose to include. We hope our **Gleanings** will be enjoyed by everyone with an interest in the wonderful world of Gesneriaceae. If you have suggestions or comments, please feel free to contact our editor, Mel Grice, at editor.gleanings@gesneriadsociety.org.

We hope you enjoy **Gleanings**.

Peter Shalit
President, The Gesneriad Society, Inc.



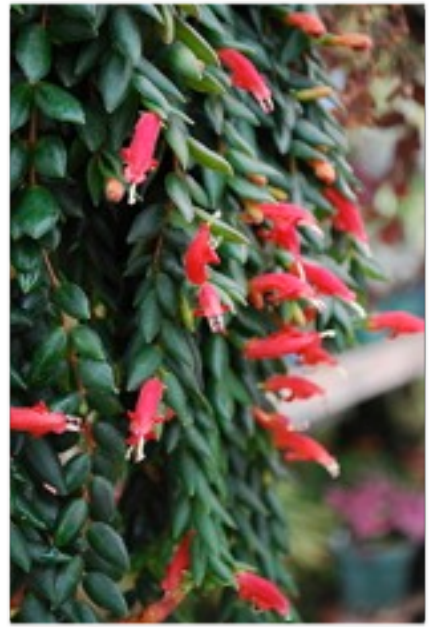
Kohleria 'Tropical Night'

Peter won Best in Show as well as Runner Up to Best in Show at the Puget Sound Gesneriad Society and the Seattle African Violet Society Show with two gigantic *Kohlerias* grown under T5 fluorescent lights. Here he is with the Runner Up to Best, *Kohleria* 'Tropical Night', an amazing John Boggan hybrid with nearly 100 flowers open; behind it can be seen *K. amabilis* var. *bogotensis* 'El Crystal', with fewer open flowers but over a meter tall and a more perfect plant, hence winning Best in Show.



A Visit to Kartuz Greenhouses

Vista, California



Aeschynanthus gracillis 'Red Elf'

Photos courtesy of Mel Grice and Paul Susi



Michael Kartuz

Back to Basics: Saucer and Wick Watering

Dale Martens <dalemartens@mchsi.com>
Sherrard, Illinois, USA

During the Publications Committee meeting at our last convention in Silver Spring, I mentioned it would be nice to have a column in this journal written by a variety of people on the basics of growing gesneriads as it would benefit those who are new and learning about gesneriads. It was also mentioned that experienced growers often find something interesting in these types of articles. Everyone agreed it was a good idea; and since I was the one who brought it up, I was encouraged to start writing!

This first column will discuss saucer and wick watering. Most of us use anywhere from 1/8 tsp to 1/4 tsp of fertilizer per gallon of water and give our plants a constant feed of nutrients. A future column will discuss fertilizers in depth. When I started growing gesneriads, I used saucers under individual pots. The reason for this was to have more control over how wet the soil was as well as to keep down the chances of spreading unwanted "critters" which can happen in community trays. There is no rule as to how often to water plants. A lot depends on the environment. In the winter my home has low humidity due to the furnace being on, and I have to water more often or watch the reservoirs more carefully to make sure they are not empty. In the spring when I have more flowers, I find the plants to be very thirsty. In fact, when I go on vacation, I remove all flowers and buds, otherwise the plants' roots will be bone dry in no time. When watering plants in saucers, be careful that the saucer doesn't have water sitting in it an hour later as most of our gesneriads prefer a good drink, but not soaking wet roots. If the plant has had prolonged drought, you will see that the soil has pulled away from the pot. If you water from the top, the water will run down the sides of the pot and quickly into the saucer, not wetting the root ball. In that case, fill the saucer with water and after an hour see if there is any water standing in the saucer. If there isn't any water, add more water and check in another hour. As soon as an hour has passed, pour out the excess water. If the root ball did not expand to fill in the gap between it and the pot, then you'll need to repot the plant.



Because I often travel, the majority of my plants have wicks and sit on reservoirs so that I can be absent from 2 to 5 weeks depending on the reservoir size. A reservoir is a container that holds water and has two holes cut in the lid. You can purchase them in pint or quart size or make your own using recycled containers such as margarine tubs. The average reservoir (pint or quart) is 3 inches tall. Wicking material needs to be acrylic or nylon (never cotton as it may rot) and cut about six inches in length for a 3-inch pot and eight inches for a 4- to 6-inch pot. I find that the soil used for the wick method must be very light so the roots are not soaking wet. I happen to use a variety of commercial soils and I use one part commercial soil and one part perlite as my mix. I put half an inch of moist perlite in the bottom of the pot. That way if I overfill the reservoir, the perlite helps to keep the soil from over-soaking. When I pot, I use very wet wicks that have been soaking in water. About 3 inches of wick will hang into the reservoir and the rest is circled up through the pot with the tip being under at least half an inch of soil at the top of the pot. Place the newly potted plant on the lid of the reservoir with the wet wick hanging into the reservoir. Add enough water so that it overflows a bit and the lid is wet. This way the wicking action will begin. Check on the pot in a week to make sure it is wicking. I do not allow the reservoirs to

completely dry. I add water while there is still an inch of water in the reservoir. Otherwise the wick might dry too much. For two months, I add water without emptying the reservoir. After two months, I remove the plant and leach the soil with clear water. Then the lid and reservoir must be cleaned.

I found the perfect sandwich baggie to line my reservoirs so I only need to clean the lid and toss the baggie. The best baggie size for me is 6-3/4" wide x 8" tall. Put the baggie in the reservoir, add water to within an inch of the top of the reservoir, and then fold down the sides of the baggie around the top of the reservoir. Put the lid on.



One of Dale's light stands filled with gesneriads growing happily on their reservoirs.

This article appeared originally in *GESNERIADS* Vol. 60, No. 1, First Quarter 2010, Jeanne Katzenstein, editor. Read other interesting articles like this about gesneriads by becoming a member of The Gesneriad Society and receiving our quarterly 56-page journal.



Paliavana prasinata at Kartuz Greenhouses.

Seeds of this and other gesneriad species as well as hybrids are available from our Seed Fund — one of the benefits of membership in the Society.





Sinningia hybrid (*S. calcaria* × *S. 'Anita Baldwin'*) grown by Ben Paternoster



Chirita 'Destiny' grown by Rosemary Platz

From the editor —

Hope you like the new e-zine. Please feel free to send me photos and articles for future issues. You never know who or what will be featured next.

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The Gesneriad Society Membership Secretary, Bob Clark,
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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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