



The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society

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MAAVS Updates

The Mid-Atlantic African Violet Society (MAAVS) held its 23rd Annual Convention and show in the Doubletree by Hilton Riverfront in the delightful town of New Bern, NC. The Delaware delegation was one of the largest with ten members attending.



Eight of our members attend the MAAVS 23rd Annual Convention in New Bern, NC. Pictured from left to right in the back row are President Mary Schaeffer, Quentin Schlieder, Stephanie Griffith and Mark Griffith. Pictured in the front row are Dick LaFashia, Bobbie LaFashia, Paula Spisak and Pam Orris. Not pictured are new members Drew Norris (he may have been in the bar doing his Karaoke performance of Tina Turner!) and Jim Roberts. And yes, some of us are wearing our bear ears!

Most of our members arrived on Thursday, November 7, 2013 for registration and when commercial sales were being set-up and horticultural and design exhibits were being entered. The show was judged the following morning from 9 a.m. – noon, and although the show was small, there were some beautiful entries.

The Sales room also opened at 9 a.m. and many of the major growers were present, including Lyndon Lyons, Rob's Violet House, Blue Bird Greenhouse, Violet Gallery, Fancy Bloomers and Cape Cod Violetry. Mary Schaeffer and Quentin Schlieder also set up the DAVS table inviting MAAVS to Delaware in November 2014. The shopping pads and LED Pens were popular promotional items, and the basket of Lyndon Lyons new introduction offered as a raffle prize raised \$120.00 to defray expenses for next year's MAAVS Convention in Delaware.

Stephanie Griffith organized and supervised the Hospitality Room, which unfortunately was located at the far end of the Hotel on the 4th floor.

The Show Room opened at 1 p.m. and many of our members received awards for their entries, including:

Best in Class 66 and Best Gesneriad Grown for Foliage - *Columnnea sanguinea* won by Mary Schaeffer.

Best in Class 72 and Judge's Award of Merit - Design "Gummy Bears" - won by Bobbie La Fashia

Best in Class 22 - Orchard's Bumble Magnet won by Bobbie La Fashia

Best in Class 25 - Rob's Jitterbug won by Bobbie La Fashia

Best in Class 58 - *Primulina dryas* 'Hisako' won by Pam Orris

Best in Class 18 - Picasso won by Mark Griffith

Best in Class 61 - *Episcia* 'Silver Skies' won by Stephanie Griffith

There were two excellent presentations on Friday afternoon including "Meet the Commercials DVD plus the new AVSA Website" by Tom Glembocki and "How I grow African violets" - Linda Abplanalp. There was an opportunity to purchase the DVD's featured in Tom's presentation and these will be included in the programs for next year. The Meet the Commercials" will be an excellent preview to introduce the vendors at the MAAVS Convention DAVS will host next November.



The DAVS exhibit promoting the 2014 MAAVS Convention in Delaware.

The Friday evening costume dinner in a MAAVS tradition and was preceded by a cocktail hour and an

opportunity to socialize. The best costume theme had to be Goldilocks and the Three Bears as portrayed by the members for the Springfield Club. Linda Kilby was hysterical as Goldilocks, and the three bears were portrayed by Joan Santino, Barbara Jones and Peggy Mooney who regularly judge the DAVS Annual Show.

Saturday, November 9, 2013 provided additional opportunities to shop with the commercial vendors and to view and photograph the show. Karyn Cichocki and Jill Fischer presented their demonstration titled in the morning and new DAVS member Drew Norris presented a very informative program on "Soil Mixes."

The MAAVS General Membership meeting and Election of Officers rounded out the afternoon activities. The Awards Banquet was held Saturday evening and several DAVS members had the opportunity to sit and socialize with noted Saintpaulia hybridizer George McDonald from New Jersey. What a wonderful conclusion for a great convention!

Your Horticultural Entry

by Dale Martens

Editor's note: *This article appeared in the June 2013 issue of Gleanings. Dale Martens is a consummate grower of a wide range of Gesneriads, including Saintpaulias, and her tips in this article should greatly improve your entries, whether you are an experienced or novice grower.*

Examine each potential show plant carefully and plan your cultural care strategy for preparing the plant for entry. In general, I consider four general care guidelines—light, fertilizer, humidity, and pests— as well as a range of techniques to enhance presentation of specific plants.

First, the Cultural Conditions.

1. **Light:** Now is the time to turn the plant one-quarter turn, once a week. If you decide to give an extra hour of tube light to stimulate blooming, only increase the time by an hour a month and probably no more than 13 hours total or you'll have tight centers or leaves that curl under.

2. **Fertilizer:** Leach the pot of excess fertilizer salts by slowly pouring two cups of water through the pot, not allowing the plant to sit in that water. Feed fertilizer consistently or the leaves will show inconsistent growth or nutrient deficiencies.

3. **Humidity:** Watch humidity levels as when air conditioners come on, house humidity can decrease.

4. **Pests:** As spring turns to summer, be vigilant for thrips. The warmer the plant room, the more thrips seem to multiply. Then, depending upon the plant, here are some techniques to enhance your potential show plant. Some can be done now, and others just prior to entry.

Shaping: if your plant has a rosette/starfish shape such as *Petrocosmeas*, *Saintpaulias*, *Primulinas*, and many *Sinningias*, now is the time to consider how to improve symmetry such as repositioning leaves with toothpicks against petioles. Those toothpicks should be removed when they've done their job and before entering the plant. In addition, you might need to remove several of the base leaves if they display uneven growth. To determine which leaves are best removed, place a piece of white paper under the plant so you can clearly see the symmetry/shape by looking straight down on it. Then place small pieces of white paper over the leaves you think need removed to see what the plant would look like without them. Remove several outer leaves to improve symmetry. If your hanging basket gesneriads such as *Columneas* and *Nematanthus* have bare areas on the soil, take cuttings to fill in the top.

Repotting: Consider whether three months' new growth will be necessary for the plant so it doesn't topple. Also, determine if damaged or yellowish lower leaves need to be removed and the root ball placed deeper in the new pot. When transplanting so close to a show, first pour tepid water through the pot to leach the soil of excess fertilizer salts.

This is not the time to damage the roots so if you pot the plant into a slightly larger pot, do not disturb the root ball. If your root ball has a wick embedded in it, do not pull on it to remove it. Instead, just cut off the excess wick and leave the rest of the wick alone. Pots need to be clean and a neutral color without designs to detract from the plant. Consider bonsai-type or shallow pots for miniature plants, for trained or sculptured entries or for *Sinningias* that have interesting tubers to showcase. If you want to expose more of the tuber, use a spray bottle and spray away soil with water. If your plant seems to be over potted, it may be possible to take some cuttings or plants from another pot of the same hybrid/species and add them to the bare areas in the pot. If not, then repot the plant into a smaller pot. To minimize damage to the root ball, spray soil away with water rather than cut roots to make the root ball smaller. Write the name of the plant and your name on the bottom of the pot as no labels should be visible for show entries as there are times when having the correct

spelling on the bottom of the pot is exactly what you need. Make sure the pot stays clean.

Staking: If your show plant is tall, now is the time to consider staking it so it does not lean. Each stake should be as inconspicuous as possible and ideally slightly darker than the color of the plant's stem. (It may be necessary to paint the stake.) The height should be shorter than the plant so it is not seen and plastic or metal so it doesn't rot. Tie the plant to the stake with a neutral-colored tie such as a dark thread, but take care it is not tied so tightly as to damage the stem over the next few weeks. The judges may deduct points if the stake and/or ties are noticeable.

Stolons: This isn't a contest to see who can grow the most stolons on *Episcias*. Unless you are using a trellis or topiary, there are times when too many stolons cause a messy, stringy-looking entry. A few months before the show, select stolons to be removed and do not allow more to grow unless you need better shape/symmetry. A pleasing appearance would be one to three main plants and two or three primary stolons on each that are not one-sided. Secondary stolons, if also symmetrically balanced, may be visually pleasing, but seriously consider if more stolons aren't detracting. My experience is that a bonus for removing stolons on *Episcias* early enough in the growing cycle is increased blossom count.

Top Dressing: The week before the show you might consider a neutral-colored top dressing, especially in cases where soil is visible and the white perlite detracts. Dark top dressing is sometimes used to highlight an interesting tuber. Some use black pebbles, sphagnum, charcoal, or pure peat as a top dressing. Sphagnum is acidic, so after the show remove it for gesneriads that are sensitive to low pH such as *Streptocarpus*, otherwise the roots will grow into it and you'll find leaves turning yellow.

Maturity: Fully developed show specimens are desirable as show plants and score higher under "Cultural Perfection" than immature plants. With multiples of the same hybrid or species in one pot, it is important that the maturity of each be nearly the same so that all are blooming as equally as possible. When it comes to determining point scores for "Bloom," the flowers should be well distributed. For example, if you have three plants in one pot, and two of them have an abundance of flowers and the third plant has no flowers or just a few buds with color, the flowers are not evenly distributed and points are likely to be deducted. Consider removing the immature plant if it can be done without damaging the other plants. Do keep in mind

that berries, showy bracts/calyces, and buds with color count as blooms.

Leaf Trimming: Any gesneriad leaf is allowed trimming, although I've not observed that done on Saintpaulias. The cut shape must mimic the natural leaf. Often on *Streptocarpus*, the leaf tips or sides are damaged, but not enough to justify removing the whole leaf. Use craft scissors (remember pinking shears?) to create notched edges if that's what the other leaves have. Right before entering a plant, and after I've trimmed the leaf, I use the juice from an African violet petiole or pure Aloe vera to rub on the wound to help prevent browning.

Cleanliness: Bring scissors, a soft brush, and a pair of tweezers to groom your plants. The score sheet category "Condition" includes the cleanliness of the leaves and pot. As a judge, I find myself disappointed for the exhibitor when they lose points for something they could have easily corrected right before entering the plant. Make it part of the final routine to clean the leaves, remove spent blossoms, and trim any peduncles after cutting off spent flowers.

Fruit: It is an educational experience to see fruit, berries, capsules, or seedpods on species gesneriads at a show. When colorful or decorative they count towards "Bloom" as well as "Ornamental Value." If they are not decorative, but you have a goal of sending seed to the Gesneriad Society's Seed Fund, I suggest you write that on a white, 3" x 5" educational card/label and submit it with your entry. The panel of judges may consider an abundance of non-decorative fruit to be a distraction and points may be deducted. Go to the Society's web site and take a look at photos of past entries that won a "Best Gesneriad Exhibiting Fruit" special award.

Educational Card/Label: Although any entry can include a 3" x 5" white card to give information, some classes require it. Read the Show Schedule carefully for guidance on educational cards/labels and follow the requirements for card sizes and color (always white) as well as necessary or suggested information. The goal is to educate the judges, exhibitors, and public about the entry.

Enter a show plant: We are often more critical of our plants than the judges are about them. I'd be rich if I had a dime for every time I heard a person who earned an award say they nearly left that plant at home because they didn't think it was "good enough." Volunteer to clerk, if you are not a judge. You will learn so much from listening to the judges evaluate an entry.

Upcoming DAVS Meetings...

Tuesday, December 10, 2013 – 6:30 p.m.

Note earlier time! Holiday Dinner and Auction in the Brandywine Room at Rockland Place 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803. Don't forget to bring plants, handicrafts, surprise box or something special from you kitchen for the auction! If you didn't sign up yet, contact Quentin Schlieder at (302) 653-6449 or by e-mail at qcsjr@comcast.net

Tuesday, January 14, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

MiniWorkshop – Getting Plants Ready for Show/
Libby Behnke

Program: “Gesneriads from Viet Nam” Just back from his trip to Viet Nam and armed with lots of pictures, Stephen Maciejewski will update us on his trip looking for Gesneriads in the wilds of Viet Nam. Members are encouraged to bring violet leaves for a leaf exchange. Show and Tell and Plant/Supply Sale will be held.

Tuesday, February 11, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Hosts: Snacks - Mary Schaeffer
Beverages – Bill Dillon

Raffle Prizes – Geno Iubatti/Bobbie LaFashia

Program: “What to do with Your Plants When You Go Vacation” Stephanie Griffith will enlighten us on how to make sure our plants survive when we go on vacation. Each member is encouraged to bring one plant for a plant exchange. We'll draw names to see who selects first. Little Show and Plant/Supply Sale will be held.

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Bits & Pieces...

☞ Apparently Lynn Cook's interest has pushed renewed production of these popular bubble bowls, especially useful for growing plants which benefit from high humidity!



Lynn wanted to share this source with other members who may have wanted these bubble bowls which have been nearly impossible to locate recently. The

company was not making the terrariums for several years, but are making them again. She notes that you can access the site at Gizmos-gadgets.com. Once on the Gizmos and Gadgets website, go to 'Niche Products' in the menu bar, then click on the globe terrarium at the bottom middle of the page. The 3 sizes, small (8" diameter), medium (10" diameter), and large (14" diameter) will come up, with prices and a way to order. Be sure to use the hyphen in the URL. Gizmos and Gadgets is a different site.

☞ New member Jim Roberts has advised that National Capital Gesneriad Society wants to host a Gesneriad Judging School. They have April 19, 2014 as a tentative date with Paul Kroll as the instructor. There will be two levels of school - Student for first timers and Advanced. The school will be held at his home in Marriottsville, MD. If you are interested, contact Jim at Vice President: Jim Roberts (410) 227-2324 or by e-mail at jim.roberts@wildblue.net as soon as possible since the school is likely to fill quickly

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