



The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society

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Philadelphia Flower Show



The 2010 Philadelphia International Flower Show with the theme "Passport to the World" will be held at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, 12th & Arch Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19107-2299. The Show is open Sundays, February 28th and March 7th; 8 am to 6 pm; Monday through Friday, March 1st to March 5 from 10 am to 9:30 pm; and Saturday, March 6th from 8 am to 9:30 pm. The best viewing hours are after 4 pm. Many of the members of the Liberty Bell Chapter of The Gesneriad Society enter the Show, including Stephen Maciejewski, our April speaker. For more information use this link:

www.theflowershow.com/home/index.html

We've Got Mail!

Member Sue Rosiak who moved to Indiana over the summer sent a note that she is now settled in the Hoosier State and has joined a Garden Club, but she laments that their focus is on gardening outdoors. She is still growing plants under lights and is enjoying *Episica* 'Pink Smoke.' Sue was always an enthusiastic member of the Plant Sales team at the Annual Show and sale and will be missed this year. If you'd like to send her a note or card, her new address is Carol S. Rosiak, 2473 North Thompson Drive, Sullivan, IN 47882.

On a sadder note, we learned via Carol Callaghan and Libby Behnke that Nancy Murray's husband has been at Christiana Hospital. He was just moved from Intensive care to a step down unit, but it looks like a long recovery. If you would like to send her a card, her address is: Nancy Murray, 21 Manchester Lane, Wilmington, DE 19810

Finally, members really enjoyed Terry Celano's Pumpkin Roll at the last meeting and she agreed to share her recipe! Here it is. Enjoy!

Terry's Pumpkin Roll

Mix Together: 3 eggs
1 cup sugar

Add: 2/3 cup Pumpkin
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
3/4 cup flour

Spread on greased cookie sheet. Bake 15 minutes at 375 degrees. Leave in pan 5 minutes. Turn out on to T Towel dusted with 10X sugar. Roll up and put in freezer 15 minutes

Prepare filling:

1 8oz cream cheese
4 Tablespoons of butter or margarine
1 teaspoon of vanilla
1 cup 10X sugar
1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional)

Unroll pumpkin and spread filling, reroll and leave in refrigerator until ready to serve. Can be frozen.

Culture of Petrocosmea : My Way - Part 2

By Tim Tuttle

Editor's Note - One of the "hottest" genera in the Gesneriad Family is the genus Petrocosmea. Tim Tuttle, a plant enthusiast from Pittsburgh, PA who specializes in the genus gave a wonderful presentation on "Knowing and Growing the Genus Petrocosmea at the Silver Spring, MD Convention last summer, and his method of growing these plants was very helpful. Here is the second part of his article.

Watering:

I have grown Petrocosmeas which watered on reservoirs, by bottom watering, top watering, and using capillary matting. Today, I am still using all four methods and they all seem to work fine. I use the capillary matting for most of my plants however, for several reasons. First, it allows me to water a large number of plants at once, saving time. This is a big deal for me since I often work 50 or more hours a week. With the matting in nursery trays, I have several plastic domes which I use to cover the trays.

The barely damp matting keeps the humidity high in the plant room and with the domes, it gets near 100%. If I am growing plants for hybridizing, I use this method exclusively for those plants, since I want the humidity to be very high to ensure better success

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with hybridizing. To make the mats, I purchase very cheap acrylic blankets from the dollar store. They usually run about 3 to 4 bucks each. I measure them to fit the nursery trays and cut them out to twice the width of the tray so that I can fold them over to create a double layer of matting in the bottom of the nursery trays. For an 11 x 22" tray, I would cut out a section of blanket that is 22 x 22". When these become stained with algae, I stick the mat in the washing machine with some detergent and bleach and they come out sparkling clean again. NOTE that they are 100% acrylic. Any natural fibers like cotton or wool would rot quickly. I sit the plants on top of these mats, water until the mats are saturated, but not with water standing above them, and that's it.

The plants will stay barely moist for a week or so. I allow the mats to dry a bit between watering and then rewet them. I usually DO NOT add fertilizer to the water I saturate the mats with. I prefer to fertilize my plants one at a time, so that I pick up each plant, inspect and groom it, and then fertilize it and I replace it.

When using the top watering or bottom water, I add a bit of fertilizer to the water and fertilize each time I water. I allow soil to dry out between watering. When using reservoirs and wicks, I keep the reservoirs filled with very dilute fertilizer water and allow the reservoir to dry out so that the plants do not remain constantly wet.

For small seedlings or plantlets, I may use a syringe with a small tip so that I can water without drowning or dislodging the little plants. This method works well for tiny little seedlings that have just been potted up from the seed pot. They are often very tiny. Another method that works here is to bottom water.



Pterocaulis parryorum

Pterocaulis HT2 *Pterocaulis sericea*
Pterocaulis spp. Yumebutai *Pterocaulis* 'Sho'n'Bread'
Paul Kroll's at the 2009 TGS Convention Collection

Fertilizer:

As with my soil mix, I am not too rigid in my fertilization techniques. I use a variety of fertilizers but with all of them, I use them in very dilute amounts. I generally use 1/8 teaspoon fertilizer per gallon of water. The fertilizer I use most often is Dyna Gro. I also use Miracle Gro, Miracle Gro Tomato fertilizer, and Schultz. I find no difference in any of them; however, I feel that a variety is better than staying with one alone, since they are all variable in the amounts and types of nutrients they contain. I use these for seedlings and for mature plants. I fertilize about once a month all year round. I leach plants at least twice a year to remove salt buildup. I begin to fertilize seedlings almost as soon as they germinate.

Pests and Disease Control:

While I am pretty casual about most aspects of *Pterocaulis* culture, this is one area where I am pretty disciplined. I rarely have ever had a problem with either pests or disease in *Pterocaulis*s. The only pests I have seen on them are mealy bug and thrips. Prevention is always the best control. I isolate new plant material by sealing it in a Ziploc bag for a couple of months minimum. Among my collection, if a plant looks suspect, I isolate it, and often take clean leaves and root those, while immediately discarding the suspect plant. No one plant is worth losing the whole collection.

To control pests, I add Bonide systemic granules when I pot plants. I sprinkle a few granules into the pot as I add soil. This lasts for six months. Doing this, I find I never need to apply a second application because that plant and the soil are clean and I am strict about isolating new material coming in. On two occasions over the last several years, I have reapplied the Bonide granules to existing plants when I was concerned for a thrips infestation. I rarely have even seen thrips on *Pterocaulis*s, but I HAVE seen them, so I know it is possible. If I see thrips, I remove all blossoms and add Bonide granules.

The last point is to keep the area clean. Remove spent flowers and leaves and any other debris. When I remove blossoms for a possible thrips attack, I am sure to remove them from the house immediately. I seal them in a plastic bag and take them out to the trash bin ASAP. I remove the matting and wash with bleach at least twice a year. I wipe down surfaces with Clorox wipes occasionally and spray a bit of Lysol from time to time. I wash and bleach used pots before reusing them.

Air circulation helps too. Again, this is a tip from the natural habitat of the plants. In nature, there are breezes and air flow. Keeping the air moving in the growing space is an excellent way to prevent mildew and molds. I keep a couple of small oscillating fans on the low or medium setting in the room at all times, day and night, summer and winter. For the plants under domes, I remove the domes while I am in the room with the plants and replace them when I finish. That allows fresh air to move around the plants. When using the fans, do not have the fans directed so that the air blows directly on the plants constantly. A gentle sweeping breeze is excellent. Direct air flow can dehydrate the plants quickly.

Temperature:

Once again, we have hints from the habitat of *Petrocosmea* to give insight into what *Petrocosmeas* need. The elevation at which the plants are found suggests they like things on the cooler end of the range for tropical plants. In my basement, the temperatures regularly get down to the high 30's in the winter. I have documented temperatures at 38 degrees F several times. The plants were happy and healthy. I saw no ill effects from these temperatures.

While growing *Petrocosmeas* in Tennessee the temperatures in the spare bedroom where the plants grew regularly got into the low 80's during the warmest months of summer. I would keep the plants on the floor and lowest shelves of the plant stand and on the matting. I also kept the fans running and increased the speed a bit. The extra humidity and the increased air movement seemed to keep the plants happy.

Propagation:

Petrocosmea can be propagated from seeds, division, offsets, or leaf cuttings. I have used all of these methods with equal success. The most common method used is usually leaf cuttings. Even the tiniest of leaves will produce plantlets if given the right conditions. As with culture, *Petrocosmea* leaves like moisture in the air, with good air circulation around the roots. So, a heavy rooting medium contributes to rot. A lighter medium works best. I usually use chopped milled long fiber sphagnum moss mixed 1:1 with perlite, barely moistened. The moss contains some iodine, which may help prevent rot. But, it is its ability to hold the slightest amount of moisture without being saturated that seems to work so well for rooting *Petrocosmeas*. I have also used one to one mixtures of perlite and vermiculite and my regular potting medium with success, although I have to watch more closely for rot. I always root the leaves

enclosed in either a Ziploc bag or inside one of the transparent plastic craft or shoe boxes from Wal-Mart. I buy them in large quantities for under a dollar each. I can stack them on top of each other under the lights and the plants still get enough light to root well.

I find that a shorter petiole on the mother leaf works best. I trim the stem on the leaf to about 1 cm or 1/3 inch before inserting it into the rooting medium at a 45 degree angle. Leaves root all year long, but form plants more quickly in spring and summer. Once I see plantlets forming, I water with diluted fertilizer.

Offsets, once removed, are treated just like leaf cuttings until they form roots. Some species like *rosettifolia* offset freely. *P. species 'China 2005'* also forms lots of offsets. These can be removed and rooted easily.

I treat *Petrocosmea* seeds like every other gesneriad seed with one exception. *Petrocosmea* seeds have failed to germinate for me on three occasions, when I kept them warm. In each case, the same lot of seeds, when replanted and kept cool, germinated well. One other grower has reported this same observation when she kept the newly planted seeds warm. Seeds generally germinate in about 2 - 3 weeks from planting.

General Tips:

A few random tips:

When growing *Petrocosmeas*, do NOT brush the leaves. *Petrocosmea* leaves mar easily and even the lightest brush will often scratch or mark the m. To remove dust, I routinely shower the plants with lukewarm water using the nozzle at the kitchen sink with a gentle stream. I also "blow" on the leaves forcefully with my mouth to remove debris on a show plant, etc. Also, using another hairy leaf such as an African violet leaf as a "brush" can help to clean leaves of dust or debris. But, NO BRUSHES!

When attempting to grow *Petrocosmeas* in the warmer or drier climates, I recommend using capillary matting and increasing air movement while keeping the plants as low to the floor as possible. I've heard from a couple of people who were never able to grow *Petrocosmeas* in these conditions that this helped dramatically.

When separating small plantlets from the base of a mother leaf for propagation, allow the plantlets to get quite large first. I leave them until they are much larger than most would expect. This allows the plants to

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Upcoming DAVS Meetings...

Tuesday, February 9, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.

**The Brandywine Room at Rockland Manor, 1519
Rockland Road, Wilmington, DE 19803.**

Hostess: Mary Schaeffer

Program: “Gesneriads in the Garden” – Many

Gesneriads he grow successfully outdoors including hardy types that winter outdoors like *Haberlea*, *Titanotrichum*, *Ramonda*, *Sinningia* and *Hemiboea*. Others thrive in planters outdoors from late spring to early autumn and can be used to add interest to decks and patios. This may be the easiest (and least expensive way) to extend your collection without the need for additional lights stands or crowded windowsills. Following the presentation there will be a demonstration on planting a planter, which will be a door prize for a lucky member. There also will be a complimentary *Sinningia tubiflora* plant for everyone to pot and enjoy at home. This is one of the really fragrant gesneriads...and it's hardy, too! A plant sale will conclude the evening. If you have surplus plants to share bring them. Don't forget to bring plants for the Little Show or Show and Tell!

Tuesday, March 9, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.

**The Brandywine Room at Rockland Manor, 1519
Rockland Road, Wilmington, DE 19803.**

Hostess: Diane Abramson

Program: “Getting Ready for Show” - This will be the last meeting prior to the Society's Annual Show and Sale at Boscov's on March 26-28, 2010. Committee Chairman will be asked to report the status of their Committee. A plant sale will conclude the evening

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grow more quickly once potted up than if they are removed as small plantlets.

If you experience molding of the planting medium when sowing *Petrocosmea* seeds, a light spraying of Lysol, so that the mist settles onto the medium works. DO NOT spray it directly into the pot. Spray it over the pot so that the mist falls onto and into the pot. I hold the can about a 12" over the pot and spray at an angle in the direction of the pot but not directly into the pot. This does not seem to harm the seeds or seedlings if the mist is lightly applied.

I have written this in an effort to share what I have learned about my favorite genus of gesneriads. My hope is that you will find something in this paper helpful. Should you have further questions, please feel free to email me at Plantman87@hotmail.com. Put the word “*Petrocosmea*” in the subject line.

Tim Tuttle

Check out our new Website at

<http://gesneriadsociety.org/chapters/DAVS/>

Save the dates!

Going Green with Gesneriads!

**The National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society's
Annual Show and Sale**

Saturday March 13, 2010: 1 pm - 5 pm

Sunday March 14, 2010: 9 am - 4 pm

at the U.S. National Arboretum

The National Arboretum is located in the northeast section of Washington, DC. There are two entrances: one at 3501 New York Avenue, NE, and the other at 24th & R Streets, NE, off of Bladensburg Road.

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