

The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society

Volume XII, No. 3
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Our Meetings Have Moved!!!

Please note that beginning with our next meeting on Tuesday evening, the meetings of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society will be held in the Brandywine Room at Rockland Manor, 1519 Rockland Road, Wilmington, DE 19803. Directions are provided on page 4.

Growing Gesneriads for Show

by Carol Hamelink

Reprinted with permission of the author from the March 2009 issue of Petal Tones, the newsletter of the National Capital Chapter of the Gesneriad Society. I am including this article as part of our getting ready for the show special edition. Remember, she wrote the article with the July Convention in mind, so adjust timing accordingly. There also is a useful calendar in the two year pocket calendar distributed at our September meeting. While we do not have any more calendars, if you did not get a calendar and would like a copy of the schedule developed by Brian Connor, please let me know. Quentin Schlieder, Editor

Now is the time to go through your plant stands and evaluate what you are growing with an eye toward identifying potential show plants. With 4 months to go until the show, there is still time to make changes that will lead to better plants with show potential.

The various genera are quite different in their preparations for show. In general, to stimulate blooming you can increase the temperature of the room and/or increase the lighting. Now is a good time to replace one bulb in your light fixtures. This will give more lumens to your plants. As the show gets nearer, you can also increase the time you have the lights on.

Sinningias are among some of the easiest to deal with. This is the time to remove the old growing stems and allow new growth to start. This is also a good time to give the tubers a new clean pot. While I'm at it, I like to take off some of the old roots and examine the tubers. Sometimes you'll have more than one in a pot and will want to separate them. Of course there is some risk involved – sometimes tubers don't start up again right away.



Close up of a Sinningia sp. 'Florianopolis' tuber, with old stems removed.

Be sure to root the growing tips you've cut off as insurance. If the tuber grows, now you've got a starter plant for the sales table. I put both the tubers and the cutting in a humid environment, under a dome for a couple of weeks to try to encourage them. With spring coming, most of the tubers seem to know this and restart quite readily.

When the growth is big enough to easily see, I take the sprouted tubers out from the dome and move them into the plant stand. Be sure to watch them carefully for the first couple of days for signs of wilting or wicks that aren't drawing. To keep the new growth compact, elevate the tuber so that it is close to the light source, adjusting the pot's distance to the light as it grows.



Miniature Sinningia tubers with one growth each.

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Miniature Sinningias often look best with a single growth stem allowed to grow and flower. As secondary shoots appear, they can be harvested for show plants as well.

Kohlerias are among my favorite gesneriads. This is also a good time to restart them for the midsummer show.



Kohleria 'Gunsmoke' grown by Carol Hamelink at last Spring's Baltimore AVSA Show.

If your Kohleria is already mature and blooming, chances are it will be overgrown and done flowering by midsummer. Now is the time to take it apart and start any rhizomes you find. You can also cut down the growing tips and restart them as cuttings. Since gesneriads are notoriously hard to time for show (especially the blooms), I try to start a couple of pots at different stages, hoping that one of them will end up being just right for show. The others will be sale plants.



Three sizes of Kohleria hirsuta. Hopefully one will be just right in time for the show.

When you start from rhizomes, they will not all start at once so you may have to revisit the pots after all the rhizomes are up and space them out, grouping

like sized ones together. Tip cuttings will need to be started either under a dome for several weeks until roots can form, or they can be started to root in water on a shelf. Once roots begin they will still need to be put in a humid environment for a couple of weeks. Give them a slight tug to test if rooted before removing from the humid environment. These will need to be watched daily for signs of wilting. I usually bring them out for a few hours a day to harden them off.

Chiritas can also be hard to get to bloom on time for show. Luckily the ones with variegation in the leaves can be entered in non-blooming categories. To tune up potential plants for show, I remove any leaves that have brown tips if they are not necessary to complete the rosette shape. If this leads to a bit of a neck, repot the plant. Your choices are to either go to a slightly larger pot, or root prune and go back into the same size pot.

In general, Chiritas like to be underpotted, so I usually end up slicing off the bottom ½ to one inch of the root ball and going back into the same size pot with new soil on top to cover the neck. Depending on how much root is removed, these may or may not need a humid environment afterward: just be sure to keep an eye on them.



Best Gesneriad - Chirita 'Hisako' (Carol Hamelink) in the Baltimore AVSA Spring Show

Episcias, may require 6 months to make a beautiful show plant. But, if you've got them and they need tuning up, you may as well go for it now. You might get lucky, as some grow faster than others. Episcias seem to be very sensitive to the onset of spring and often exhibit vigorous growth as temperatures start to warm. Start several similar sized stolons in a pot and cover them for a week or so. They root very quickly. Remember to remove any new stolons until your base plant has filled in.

GROW TO SHOW CALENDAR

Interested in preparing your African violets to enter in a show? Check out the guidelines in the Grow to Show Calendar, first outlined by Pauline Bartholomew in her book, "Growing to Show: How to Grow Prize Winning African Violets" and here reprinted from the Baystate AVS website which you can find on the web at <http://www.baystateafricanviolet.org/avinfo/links.html>. I have inserted dates (*marked in red* in the first column) based on our show on April 3, 4 and 5, 2009.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weeks to Show</i>	<i>Fertilizer</i>	<i>Light</i>	<i>Plant Care</i>
<i>1/10/09</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>Foliar feed once in addition to regular fertilizer program</i>	<i>Maintain a minimum of 10 hours per day</i>	<i>Remove damaged, baby or other leaves which would fault plant and pot down necks or up</i>
<i>1/17/09</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>Maintain regular fertilizer program</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Continue to repot and groom</i>
<i>1/24/09</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Start "bloom booster" fertilizer, 5-50-17 or 12-55-6 formula.</i>	<i>Put one new tube in each light fixture under which you are growing show plants</i>	<i>Completely disbud all plants, except maybe minis and trailers</i>
<i>1/31/09</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>Continue "bloom booster" fertilizer</i>	<i>Increase light time by one hour</i>	<i>Disbud heavily variegated varieties and double varieties for the last time</i>
<i>2/7/09</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Continue "bloom booster" fertilizer, foliar feed again</i>	<i>Increase light time by one hour</i>	<i>Disbud doubles and lightly variegated varieties for the last time</i>
<i>2/14/09</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Change to 12-36-14 or 15-30-15 fertilizer formula for the remaining weeks to the show</i>	<i>Increase light time by one hour</i>	<i>Disbud semi-doubles for the last time</i>
<i>2/21/09</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Disbud singles for the last time. Check for suckers and wash foliage carefully</i>
<i>2/28/09</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>
<i>3/7/09</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>
<i>3/14/09</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>
<i>3/21/09</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>
<i>3/28/09</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>Remove spent blossoms, peduncles and pedicel stubs. Check for suckers. Brush away soil particles, etc. pt down necks or pat up if necessary</i>

Directions to Rockland Manor

Thanks to the efforts of Barb Borleske and Pat Barbarita, we are moving to a larger meeting space which will accommodate the growth of the Society. Beginning with the November meeting, we will be meeting at Rockland Manor in the Brandywine Room. Here are the directions:

From the south (via Delaware Tpke N / John F Kennedy Memorial Hwy / I-95 / US-202 N)

1. At exit 8, take ramp right for SR-261 North / Foulk Road toward West Chester 1.3 mile
2. Bear left onto SR-261 South / Foulk Rd 0.2 mile
3. Bear right onto SR-141 South / Powder Mill Rd 0.5 mile
4. Turn left onto Childrens Dr 0.1 mile
5. Turn right immediately into Rockland Place

From the north (via Delaware Tpke S / John F Kennedy Memorial Hwy / I-95)

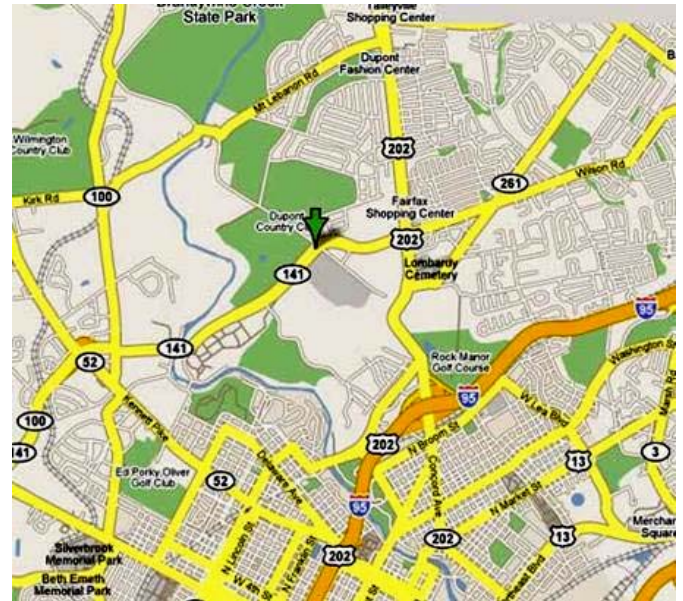
1. At exit 8B, take ramp right for SR-261 North / Foulk Road toward Wilmington 0.9 mile
2. Bear left onto SR-261 South / Foulk Rd 0.2 mile
3. Bear right onto SR-141 South / Powder Mill Rd 0.5 mile
4. Turn left onto Childrens Dr 0.1 mile
5. Turn right onto Rockland Rd Arrive at 1519 Rockland Rd,
6. Arrive at 1519 Rockland Rd.

From the north (via Concord Pike / US-202 S)

1. Turn right onto SR-141 / Powder Mill Rd 0.4 mile
2. Keep straight onto Childrens Dr 0.1 mile
3. Turn right onto Rockland Rd.
4. Arrive at 1519 Rockland Rd

From the south (via Centre Rd / SR-141 N)

1. Turn right onto Childrens Dr 0.1 mile
2. Turn right onto Rockland Rd.
3. Arrive at 1519 Rockland Rd.



Upcoming DAVS Meeting-Tuesday, November 10, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.

Where? The Brandywine Room at Rockland Manor, 1519 Rockland Road, Wilmington, DE 19803

Host: *Quentin Schlieder*

“How to select the best Gesneriad cultivar? What degree of sophistication matters to you?” Gary Hunter will present the program on how to decide what characteristics of a Gesneriad are important to look for. If you like, bring a plant along and we will dissect it. (With words not scissors!). Following his presentation we will have a workshop on watering with capillary matting. 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!

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c/o Quentin Schlieder, Editor
36 South Main Street
Smyrna, DE 19977-1431

First Class Mail

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