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*Sinningia 'Amizade'*

# The Perfect Hybrid

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My first cutting of a *Sinningia* hybrid simply labeled, "*kautskyi* × *hirsuta*" arrived in May of 1998. It came from Monte Watler, one of the founding members of the Toronto Gesneriad Society. Along with it came a feeling of impending doom! My growing history with both of this hybrid's parents up to that point had been less than stellar. *Sinningia hirsuta* grew for me for awhile, but never prospered or bloomed. It appeared to resent my warm growing conditions. I had better luck with *Sinningia kautskyi* but despaired over its rather sad-looking growth habit and spotty flowering. Quite by accident, I discovered that *Sinningia kautskyi* much preferred the warmer, humid environment inside a covered container. Very much the temperamental, hot-house flower, this one! Much to my relief, it soon became evident that my little hybrid cutting seemed to be thriving in my conditions. A few months later while repotting, I was delighted to find a small tuber. Having a tuber meant that I could grow this lovely gem indefinitely... a constant reminder with each growth cycle of my dear friend Monte. I waited anxiously for about two or three months for that tuber to sprout, and as luck would have it, it did! I soon joined the "*Sinningia kautskyi* × *hirsuta* Fan Club" and heartily agreed that this pretty little plant deserved to be known by its very own name.

Soon thereafter, I heard the story of how this hybrid came into being. Two growers, one in the United States and the other in Brazil, independently of one another made interspecific crosses with *Sinningia hirsuta* and *Sinningia kautskyi*. Dave Zaitlin, then living in Wisconsin, grew his species parents from seed he had obtained from the AGGS Seed Fund. He used both species as seed and pollen parents and made his crosses in the early 1990's. At approximately the same time, or perhaps a year or two earlier, Mauro Peixoto in São Paulo crossed the same two *Sinningia* species. Both gentlemen raised F1 hybrids that were virtually identical in appearance, regardless of which species provided pollen or served as the seed parent. Then they did what all good hybridizers do... they shared their new hybrid cross with other growers to determine how the plants would behave in different environments under varied growing conditions. As all the rave reviews began to pour in, Mauro and Dave realized that they both had made the same cross on opposite sides of the world at virtually the same time. Jointly they decided to name their new hybrid, *Sinningia* 'Amizade'. In Portuguese, the word "amizade" means friendship – a name truly symbolic of the spirit of sharing and caring that all gesneriad enthusiasts the world over impart.

*Sinningia* 'Amizade' grows very happily under four tubes in my warm environment, wicked, with average humidity (50-55%). Because I wick about 90% of my collection, I use a very porous potting mixture. It consists of 1/3 commercially packaged seedling mix (very finely milled long-fibre sphagnum peat moss with small amounts of fine vermiculite and perlite added), 1/3 medium-grade vermiculite, and 1/3 medium-grade perlite. When I repot, I add slow-release fertilizer pellets, either 14-14-14 or 19-6-12, to the potting mixture in each individual pot. I follow the directions on quantity of fertilizer per pot size recommended by the manufacturer. I don't as a rule add more water-soluble fertilizer to my wicking reservoirs, but I have on occa-

sion done so with no apparent ill effects. *Sinningia* 'Amizade' is very thirsty when actively growing and flowering. It will regularly drink the contents of an 8-ounce reservoir dry every day.

The dormant tuber of the plant awarded at Convention was placed, in late February of 2005, in the wicked 5" bulb pan in which it was shown. I kept the potting mixture on the dry side and didn't activate the wicks until vigorous growth from the tuber was well underway. That occurred with this plant in mid to late April. *Sinningia* 'Amizade' breaks dormancy with many little shoots all coming up at the same time. I have often been asked how many tubers I put in one pot, likely because of this freely branching habit. I grow *S.* 'Amizade' with only one tuber per pot, and the only thing I do to manipulate its shape is some very early pruning out of the smaller, weaker shoots. This helps to create a form that is more pleasing to the eye rather than that crowded look you get when too many shoots fight for space in the pot. By early June the plant's basic form had been achieved, and the first flowers began to open by mid-month. Left to its own devices, the same plant would bloom steadily for the next five to six months!

*Sinningia* 'Amizade' easily attains one of the goals that every hybridizer dreams about. It combines all the positive, desirable qualities of both parents and, in so doing, eclipses each of them with respect to floriferousness, ease of culture, and propagation. Kudos to Dave and to Mauro for your perspicacity in creating for us The Perfect Hybrid!



Arleen Dewell with her  
Best in Show plant of  
*Sinningia* 'Amizade'



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