

the

GLOXINIAN

The Journal for Gesneriad Growers

Vol. 49, No. 2

Second Quarter 1999



Columnnea sulfurea

American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society, Inc.

A non-profit membership corporation chartered by the State of Missouri

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Gesneriad Hybridizers Association — *CrossWords*, 3 issues, \$8. Send to Dan Harris, W-6349 Country Road "O", Appleton, WI 54914.

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Gesneriad Correspondence Club — U.S. \$6.75; Canada \$8.75; Foreign \$14.00; Braille Newsletter \$5.00 per year. Write to Lois & Ron Kruger, 207 Wycoff Way West, East Brunswick, NJ 08816-5644.
Gesneriad Research Foundation — 1873 Oak St., Sarasota, FL 34236-7114. Individual, \$25; Family, \$35; Club, \$100. Visit our greenhouse and rainforest when in the area. Telephone (941) 365-2378. <whiehler@aol.com>
Gesneriphiles Internet Discussion Group — To join, send the following message: subscribe gesneriphiles <your name>:o: listproc@lists.colorado.edu from the email address you wish to receive the postings.

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<http://www.aggs.org>

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COVER

Columnnea sulfurea
(Photo by Vern Sawyer)

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President's Message

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55 Tum Suden Way, Woodside, CA 94062

A discussion on the Internet group Gesneriphiles reminded me of my first experience growing gesneriads. It seems that most people who grow gesneriads began with either African violets or Florist gloxinias (*Sinningia speciosa*). I was one of the latter. The Internet discussion was about the 'Tigrina' strain of gloxinias, and they were my first gesneriad.

In 1973 while a student at the University of California, I lucked into some free greenhouse space. The greenhouse was on an old estate that had been left to the university for the use of the Landscape Architecture Department. The greenhouse was a beautiful old structure, amply heated, and staffed by a crew of gardeners who watered the greenhouse every day. All I had to do was bring in plants, and they practically grew by themselves. Since very few of the landscape students were interested in plants, a few other students and I had the place to ourselves. I began by bringing in my houseplants which were overflowing my little apartment. Then I had the idea that I would propagate my plants and take them around to some of the plant shops. Talking on the phone with my mother who lived in Evanston, Illinois, I relayed my idea to which she responded that she had the perfect plants for me. The year before she had planted a packet of 'Tigrina' strain gloxinia seeds which she had received as a bonus with her regular order from Park Seeds. That summer she had about fifty pots of them blooming in her backyard. Little did I know she was very eager to get rid of them. So while I was thinking over her offer, a box of tubers arrived in the mail.



Sinningia speciosa 'Tigrina' variety

I barely knew what they were or what to do with them. I potted them up in flats and was amazed as they quickly sprouted and began to grow. As I moved them to individual pots, I would accidentally break off leaves which I stuck back in the flats. They rooted and quickly sprouted with new shoots. Soon I was blooming my first plants. These first efforts were hardly florist quality — they were leggy and produced only a few flowers. But the shop keepers had never seen anything like them and bought every one. Still, my flats never seemed to empty. As quickly as they sold I had more from the leaves I had put down. Eventually I began to select out a few plants to keep for myself. And then the next step was to acquire a few other varieties. The rest is history.

About ten years later I began to hybridize, and one of my first efforts was to cross the 'Tigrina' strain onto a compact variety with plain, unspotted red flowers. This plant, in turn, was a descendant of the wild form of the species known as 'Lavender Queen'. The result was a nice selection of plants with varying amounts of 'Tigrina' spotting on somewhat more compact plants with much more flexible foliage. My favorite one, a very pale pink with fine red stippling along the edges of the petals, I named for the late hybridizer and founder of the Peninsula Gesneriad Society, Ted Khoe.

At the AGGS Convention in 1989, I brought cuttings of *Sinningia* 'Ted Khoe' to distribute. For several years I didn't know whether anyone was growing this variety. Then in 1993 at the New Orleans Convention as part of the field trip, we all went to see Earl and Pansy Deroche's greenhouse. There among their great collection of gloxinias was my little hybrid. I couldn't have been more pleased.

Jon



Deroches' greenhouse in 1993

Seed Fund

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We extend thanks to Clay Anderson, Helen Bortvedt, Mary Bozoian, Norma Chenkin, Jon Dixon, Barbara Elkin, Martin Freiberg, Laura Johnson, Charles Lawn, Leong Tuck-Lock, Lars Loercher, Michael Ludwig, Julie Mavity-Hudson, Carla Ryan, Jeff Smith, Dan Tomso, Wallace Wells, Forrest Wesson, and Maureen Wilson for their generous contributions to the Fund.

Special thanks go to Marlene Beam and John Boggan for making multiple contributions.

ADDITIONS:

- *Chirita fimbrisepala* #4 (R)
- *Columnnea crassifolia* (B)
- *Columnnea gallicauda* (B)
- *Columnnea sulfurea* G3770 (B)
- *Episcia lilacina* 'Panama White' (B,F,H,L)
- *Epithema saxatile* (F,H,L)
- *Nematanthus monanthos* AC1622 (B)
- *Nematanthus* sp. aff. "Santa Teresa" (larger fls) (B)
- *Parakohleria* sp. GRF98144 (rose/pink)
- *Petrocosmea formosa* (F,R)
- *Saintpaulia teitensis* (F,R)
- *Sinningia* sp. "Waechter" (LM)
- *Sinningia* 'Krezdorn Yellow' × self (L)
- *Sinningia* 'Susan S' × self (F,P)
- denotes LIMITED quantities

DELETIONS:

- Briggsia speciosa*
- Codonanthe crassifolia* USBRG85-112
- Coryptectus speciosus*
- Kohleria warszewiczii*
- Nematanthus* sp. G3555
- Sinningia* 'Barbara Jean'
- Smithiantha cinnabarina*

(A) Alpine or cool greenhouse.	(L) Low growing; not more than 12 inches.
(B) Suitable for hanging basket.	(LM) Low to medium height.
(C) Cool temperature necessary for bloom.	(M) Medium height; 1 to 2 feet.
(D) Has dormant period, forming tubers or rhizomes.	(MT) Medium to tall.
(F) Blooms readily under fluorescent light.	(P) Petite or miniature; not more than 6 inches tall.
(G) Recommended for greenhouses; requires space.	(R) Rosette in form.
(H) Requires humidity and warmth.	(S) Requires sun to bloom.
	(T) Tall plants; generally over 3 feet.
	(U) Unifoliate or single leaf.

Seed Packets — \$1.50 each

Please

- Make checks payable to the AGGS Seed Fund in U.S. funds
- To pay by credit card, send your credit card number, expiration date, and signature, and indicate if the card is Mastercard or Visa (\$6.00 minimum)
- Remember to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope
- List alternate choices
- Include your membership number (first number on your mailing label)

Waltz Your Way to Tennessee!

Carol Ann Bonner <cabonner@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu
3705 Tibbs Drive, Nashville, TN 37211

Have you registered for Convention in Nashville yet? Time's a-wastin'! And we have so much in store for you!

Convention will start early in the morning on Wednesday, June 30, but we encourage you to come Monday or Tuesday and take some time to explore the city because once the convention starts, we're going to keep you jumping to the beat. After a day of meetings and the Judges Training School (not to be missed if you really want to know your gesneriads), the Gesneriad Hybridizers Association program will be an exciting one with Jerry Trowbridge talking about his *Columnnea* hybrids and other members showing slides of their recent crosses. With so much new material available to hybridizers, we can look forward to some truly desirable plants being presented for the first time.

Thursday bright and early we head off to Holtkamp Greenhouses, only a few minutes drive from the hotel. At Holtkamp they grow that small plant, *Saintpaulia*, but they don't do it in a small way. They are the world's largest producer of African violets with facilities in Spain, Germany, Japan, and Zimbabwe, as well as Nashville. At their Nashville location they have eight separate greenhouses with a total of thirteen acres under glass. Every week they put down 60 giant flats of leaves—1,250 leaves per flat. That's 75,000 leaves per week with an average harvest of 1-1/2 baby plants per leaf or 100,000-200,000 starter plants per week. In addition, they import more starter plants from their overseas facilities. And you thought you had a lot of repotting to do! From electronic plant sorting to robots that carry the flats into the next greenhouse, Holtkamp's is not your ordinary family-owned greenhouse business.

From there it's another short bus trip to Opryland Hotel where we'll have lunch before taking a special guided tour of this atrium-on-a-grand-scale. There are nine acres of plantings, a waterfall, a river with boats that carry passengers, and it's all indoors! That and 30 shops, 20 restaurants and lounges, 85 meeting rooms, and 2,883 guest rooms—it's not your average hotel.

Speakers at the 1999 Convention range from Christian Feuillet, tree climber and canopy observer extraordinaire to famous (or is that "infamous"?) plantsman Patrick Worley who'll regale us with his adventures growing and hybridizing kohlerias. Jonathan Ertelt will discuss terrarium building and planting, and, almost the exact opposite, gesneriads as part of the perennial border. Then Leslie Brothers of the Smithsonian will share the rewards and challenges of managing a big institutional collection. Something for everyone!

Saturday afternoon we again board the buses for a drive through one of Nashville's loveliest neighborhoods to Cheekwood Botanical Gardens which has undergone major renovation. After a guided tour and a peek at their new growing houses, we'll bring our journey to an end at Traveller's Rest, the antebellum home of John Overton, a prominent citizen of early Nashville. You can stroll around the grounds for a few moments of peace at this ancient

Indian burial site, but then come on back to the barn where the band will be warming up and the servers will be dishing out the barbecue. Practice your Irish step dancing to the Celtic music of "The Jump Gypsies" or invent a few steps of your own, or just have a soda or a beer and clap along. It's sure to be a rousing finale to the week and the 1999 AGGS Convention. Join us!

Nashville Convention Waltz

(to the tune of "Tennessee Waltz")

First I'll fill out, then I'll mail in my con-vention regis-
 tra-tion, And by May twen-ty eight I've called Lee-wit.
 To sign up for Judging School the deadline day is June the
 ninth, and I'll learn to judge great flow-er shows.
 For com-mer-cial dis-plays, ad-ver-tis-ing, and pro-mo-tions,
 and ar-tis-tic ar-rangements I make.
 Here the waltz is the last day so no-ti-
 ty the pro-per per-son. Oh, Nash-ville, I'm
 head-in' your way!

"Tennessee Waltz" (Redd Stewart/Pee Wee King)
 ©1948 Renewed 1975 Acuff-Rose Music, Inc. (BMI) (Used with Permission)
 The above lyrics by one of many anonymous would-be songwriters in Nashville.

Mark These Dates on Your Calendar!

- April 1 Deadline for early registration and concomitant early admission to plant sales.
- May 28 Convention registration deadline. All registrations received after this date will be on a space-available basis and will be charged an additional late fee of \$25.

Hotel registration deadline.
- June 9 Registration deadline for Judging School. Contact Ben Paternoster, 14 Coptor Court, Huntington, NY 11743-2335.

Registration deadline for reserving artistic entry niches. Contact Rosemary Dobson, 3 Shilton Road, Scarborough, Ontario, M1S 2J4, Canada. (Phone 416-293-9036)

Registration deadline for reserving commercial and educational display spaces. Contact Michael Riley, 101 W. 104th St., New York, NY 10025. (Phone 212-666-2395)

COME OUT AND PLAY.



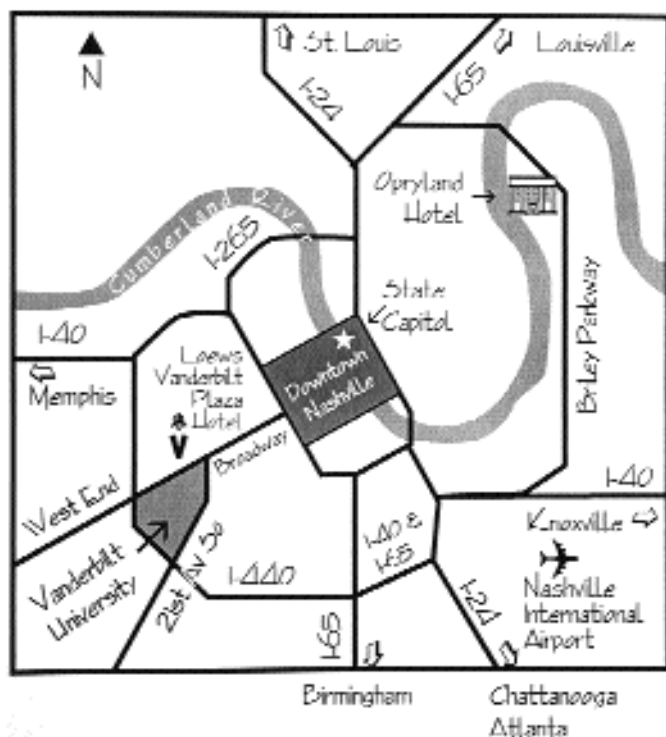
Think AGGS Auction ...

... when potting your gesneriads, cleaning up the attic, shopping and browsing, packing for Convention. Start looking for donations that are gesneriad and/or horticulturally related to send or bring to Convention, especially live plant material, to benefit the Frances Batcheller Endowment Fund.

Support AGGS — First Donate, Then Bid!

NASHVILLE

MUSIC CITY USA



Gesneriads, The Internet and You

David Turley <dturley@pobox.com>
6118 Windsor Dr., Fredericksburg, VA 22407

My how time flies! I just came across a folder of papers from the Chicago Convention that I hadn't even unpacked yet, and here I am writing about plans for the Nashville gathering. I hope you have already visited the AGGS Web site and reviewed the information about the annual AGGS gathering. We have links to Nashville tourist information, as well as the convention schedules. If you haven't already done so, you can avoid tearing pages from your copy of *THE GLOXINIAN* by using the form on the Web site to register. (I won't make you feel guilty for not having already registered.)

As I write this in early January, I have just finished going through an extraordinary collection of streptocarpus photographs donated to AGGS by Toshijiro Okuto. By the time you read this, they will be posted on the AGGS Web site for your viewing pleasure. Be sure to take a look.

As usual, I'd like to share some of the messages from the AGGS Gesneriad Message Corner at <<http://www.aggs.org/forum/forum.html>>. I find the discussion there very educational and always interesting. As Colleen and I take a break from growing a lot of plants, it's nice to read about what other people are growing. These excerpts are for those of you without Internet access, and for those of you who may have missed the posts.

We'll start with a question from **Tony**, who wondered how to continue his successful propagation of his "Florist Gloxinia":

"I propagated this leaf and it has created a small tuber with roots, the size of a walnut. Now, what do I do with it?"

Experienced sinningia grower **Al Wojcik** responded:

"Propagating a sinningia (old name "gloxinia") from a leaf is notoriously slow. But it sounds like your leaf is off to a good start. As long as the original leaf is healthy, leave it alone. When the leaf begins to dry up, remove it and leave the tuber in the pot. Let the pot/tuber get dry, but watch it carefully so it doesn't get TOO dry. Eventually (weeks, months or longer) the tuber will send up a new shoot."

Jon Dixon also contributed:

"Your tuber is large enough to sprout. I would pot it up, water and feed. It should sprout under lights in a warm room. Many years ago I grew florist gloxinias from leaves. In a heated greenhouse they quickly sprouted and grew to bloom. I am guessing but I think it took 6-9 months for a blooming plant from a leaf grown in flats."

John Jackson posted a question that brought many useful responses:

"Hello, I have a 4-tier light stand which I use for growing. Right now I have some basic gesneriads (African violets and streps) and a few orchids under them. I want to expand my use of the stand and have a more diverse area with different gesneriads; what are some less run of the mill plants well suited for light culture?"

Al Wojcik got the answers started:

"Here are some that do well for me under lights: chiritas, smithianthas, small sinningias (with a little more humidity), columnneas (especially 'Early Bird' which I swear will bloom in a dark closet!), small kohlerias, and a whole lot of others."

Monte Watler included a fair warning:

"You have such a range from which to choose. Here are a few suggestions: Definitely some sinningias, standards as well as micros (*S. pusilla*, 'White Sprite', 'Bright Eyes', 'Star Eyes'); columnneas ('Early Bird' can be grown quite compactly), kohlerias, petrocosmeas, chiritas, smithianthas, *Aeschynanthus hildebrandii* (upright), episcias, pink form ('Pink Dreams') and 'Silver Skies', eucodonias. Look for the more compact types or you, like the rest of us, will soon be running out of space."

John Boggan listed his favorites:

"Just about all gesneriads will do well under fluorescent lights; the problem is selecting the smaller ones that won't outgrow your space."

"Some of the smaller chiritas will do well under lights, and are almost identical to African violets in culture, except they like to be kept a bit drier and like extra lime in their soil (they love hard tap water!). Try *C. longgangensis*, *C. spadiceiformis*, or the relatively new 'Diane Marie'. You can't beat the smaller kohlerias for unusually patterned and brilliantly colored flowers. Try 'Flirt', a small-growing trailer with bright pink flowers and attractive foliage. And for foliage, you just can't beat any of the episcias. You can remove the stolons to keep them more compact. *Aeschynanthus hildebrandii* can grow into a small shrub, but blooms at a very small size and can be kept small by pruning."



Less run-of-the-mill plants for growing under lights include petrocosmeas.
Left to right: *Petrocosmea kerrii*, *P. formosa*, *P. parryorum*.

AGGS President **Jon Dixon** also had suggestions:

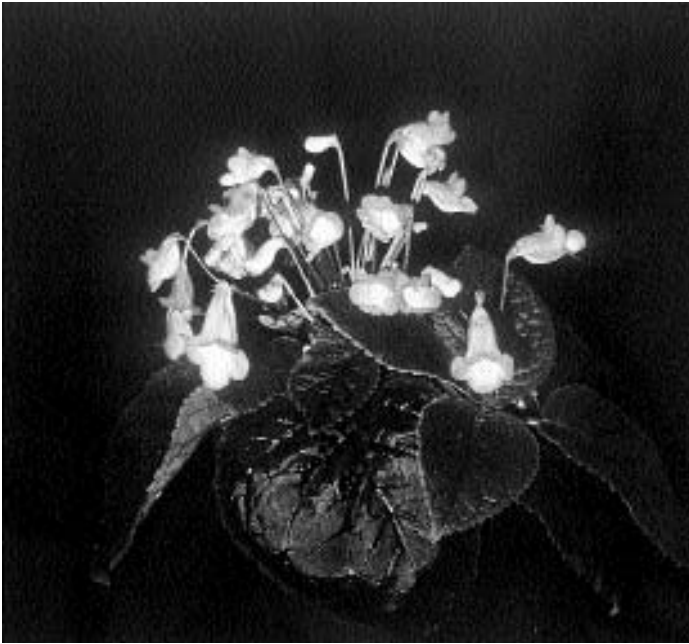
"A better question is what gesneriads are not suited for light culture! The answer is very few. The AGGS Seed Fund is a good source for hundreds of great plants. A little dwarf species with small but cute white flowers is *Phinaea ecuadorana*. *Kohleria* 'Punch' and 'Strawberry Fields' both have beautiful red-spotted flowers and are compact growers. *Achimenes*, although dormant in winter, at other times do well under lights. *A. admirabilis* is a dwarf variety. \times *Achimenantha* 'Dutch Treat' is also small. A new *Sinningia* species that is compact and easy to bloom with bright red orange flowers is *S. leopoldii*, and *S. villosa* with yellow flowers and glossy foliage is also very nice. All of the nautilocalyx are good light garden subjects, but seed is more difficult to produce so they are mostly available only from mail order sources. *N. pemphidius* is a dwarf foliage plant with very dark glossy crinkly leaves and white flowers. *N. porphyrotrichus* has variegated green leaves and red flowers. *Episcia fimbriata* has beautiful but short-lived blue and white flowers over a long season. When out of bloom, the foliage is a beautiful plush green. If African violet hybrids don't interest you, consider the species saintpaulias which have a charm all their own—more like the true violets of gardens. Right now I like *S. difficilis* with large blue flowers. *S. shumensis* is a lovely dwarf.



Saintpaulia shumensis

Growers often ask for advice when trying new plants, as in this query from **Twyla**:

"I have recently acquired a "new" gesneriad (new to me!) named \times *Smithicodonia*. It's a beauty! Profuse flowering, at least 24 gorgeous tubular blossoms all in bloom at one point. I have two questions regarding this plant, please: First, how may it be propagated? Second, can anyone inform me regarding the cultural conditions this plant prefers? Length of light exposure, humidity, prefers damp soil or likes to dry out, etc., etc.?"



×*Smithicodonia* 'Behavin'

Again **Jon Dixon** helped out:

"Twyla, your plant is a hybrid of a variety of *Eucodonia* and a variety of *Smithiantha*. It should have had a varietal name as well. One very popular hybrid is called ×*Smithicodonia* 'Behavin'. This group is closely related to *Achimenes*. They are easy, rewarding houseplants that will bloom for months from summer to fall, but they become completely dormant in winter and will die down to underground rhizomes which look like little white segmented worms. From these worms the plant will sprout again in the spring (sometimes not until late spring). Keep the plant growing for now with even moisture, feeding and good light and warmth, such as under lights or in a bright window. You will eventually see the plant stop blooming and the leaves will stop growing. Then the plant will slowly deteriorate as it is growing its underground rhizomes. When it begins to look poor, reduce the watering to let the rhizomes develop without rotting. During winter keep the soil lightly moist to just barely dry (not bone dry). In the spring, begin to water and watch for the new growth to sprout from the soil. Then you can water more consistently as the plant will not want to dry out at all during its growing season. Feed regularly and your plant will respond with many new shoots and many more rhizomes as the end of the season. With good feeding and bright light, your plant will also produce many more flowers. Many growers also wick their plants to make watering more consistent and less time consuming."



Aeschynanthus parvifolius

Sarah was worried about a new plant she received:

"I recently received a marvelous lipstick plant as a gift but now it is suffering a slow death! Its upper leaves are turning yellow and falling off at a rapid rate. I understand that it needs lots of light and humidity, and while it is getting plenty of light, my apartment isn't all that humid. The kitchen and bathroom aren't options because they get little or no light. Does anyone know if the falling leaves would be caused simply by lack of humidity, or is there something I'm not considering?"

Al Wojcik stepped in with some comforting words:

"Your plant is probably just adapting to your growing conditions by dropping leaves. It most likely came from a commercial greenhouse and now it faces harsher conditions. If the leaves continue to fall off, just trim the stems back to about an inch or so from the soil line. The stems will send out new growth which will be more adapted to your environment. Keep up the bright light and you'll get blooms."

Finding information about specific plants continues to be a popular use of the forum. **Sonia** asked:

"Can anyone give me some information on the plant *Streptocarpus dunnii*? Any information at all would be greatly appreciated."

Expert streptocarpus grower and hybridizer **Chris Rose** helped out on this one:

"One of two subgenus *Streptocarpus* with red flowers. Unifoliolate, monocarpic. Flowers tubular with stigma protruding. Leaf grey-green, orangey underneath. Squeezing flowers will leave orange stain on fingers from dunnione pigment. Clones in circulation probably very inbred. Can only

propagate from seed. Quite a few of my initial batch of seedlings came up pure white and died. Mine have taken two years to reach flowering size but the best has been in bloom since the first week of February (1998) and is still going. Masses of closely packed flowers on shortish, upright stems. Seems a bit finicky—I lost several up to third-size, once beyond that they seem to survive OK. Do not overpot, and use well-drained compost.

"History: one of the first few species in cultivation and used at Kew Gardens, England, at very outset of strep breeding along with just 3-4 other initial species. Its genes account for the 'red' in all 'red' streps today (though virtually all have too much purple in them)."

I look forward to seeing you all in Nashville in July. The Internet is a great way of keeping in touch, but nothing beats face-to-face conversation! Be sure to visit the AGGS Web site at <<http://www.aggs.org>> for all the latest news on convention. We'll also be having our fourth annual online auction to benefit the Frances Batcheller Endowment Fund. As usual, I look forward to your email at <webmaster@aggs.org>.



Sinningia leopoldii grown by Maryjane Evans.
Photo by John Evans.

The Basics: Introduction

Peter Shalit <ps83@cornell.edu>
1312 East Denny Way, Seattle, WA 98122

In the gesneriad world there is something for everyone. Part of the appeal of gesneriads is their incredible diversity. Variety of form, color, showiness, ease of growth—there is a huge range in the family. A person can start out by growing some easy-to-grow, showy gesneriads with very little in the way of expertise or technical support, and quickly get hooked on growing these plants.

Fortunately, it is impossible to get bored in this hobby. After mastering some cultural basics, the gesneriad grower can seek more and more challenges and new experiences, such as attempting one of the harder-to-grow species, or one that isn't quite as showy but just as lovable. There is always more to learn, more species and hybrids to explore, new methods of growing and propagating to try, new projects such as hybridizing, tissue culture, and collecting in the wild.

Some AGGS members have expressed a desire to have more basic, beginner-oriented cultural information in *THE GLOXINIAN*. Perhaps there has not been enough of such basic material included lately. For that reason, we have decided to devote a portion of each issue to material that will be of interest to beginning growers.

Those of us who have been growing gesneriads for a long time need to remember that many people are just getting started. Beginners require basic cultural information so we're going to try to print some basic information in every issue of TG. That is what this section of the magazine is for—to help beginning growers experience the joy of successfully growing a gesneriad.

Gesneriads, like people, have basic requirements: light, temperature, humidity, water, a container, nutrients, growing medium. We plan to have articles on each of these topics. Other aspects of gesneriad growing, such as pests, grooming, and propagation, will be covered eventually. Articles about individual gesneriads that are especially good for beginners will also be welcome along the way.

I would like to invite any and all experienced gesneriad growers to write a short piece aimed at beginners. Ideally, a number of experienced AGGS growers will write about what works for them—from a basic perspective. If you've written articles for your local chapter newsletter, or if you've researched a topic for a talk to your chapter or local garden club, let me know. I'd love to help you turn your material into an article for TG. If there is a gesneriad that you think is particularly easy to grow, one that you gave your aunt or your grandson and they actually got it to bloom, let me know about that, too.

Novices are definitely welcome to contribute articles. If you're a beginning grower and have just experienced your first success in growing a gesneriad, tell us about it. If you've had trouble, we'd like to hear about that, too. If you're an experienced grower, and you've gotten a non-gesneriad friend to succeed in growing a gesneriad, let us know how that worked.

Together we can help educate new gesneriad growers and introduce more of them to our hobby and to our appreciation of this wonderful family of plants.

I'm looking forward to receiving a wealth of material for this column from a number of AGGS members. Please contact me at the email or postal address listed above.



American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society, Inc.

43rd Annual Convention, 1999
June 30 to July 3, Nashville, Tennessee

Call for 1999 Annual Membership Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the members of the American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society will be held on Friday, July 2, at 12:00 noon for the purpose of transacting business which may properly come before the meeting.

Call for 1999 Board of Directors Meetings

The Board of Directors meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 29, at 1:00 P.M., for the purpose of transacting business which may properly come before the meeting. A special Board meeting will be held on Friday, July 2, at 3:30 P.M. A meeting of the new Board will be held on Sunday, July 4 at 9:00 A.M.

Peter Shalit
Recording Secretary

Nominating Committee Report

The following members have agreed to have their names put in nomination as directors for a three-year term ending in 2002:

John Boggan	District of Columbia
Helen Bortvedt	Washington
Robert Connelly	Michigan
Arleen Dewell	Vancouver, Canada
JoAnne Martinez	Florida
Bob Nicholson	Illinois
Pat Richards	Kansas

AGGS Nominating Committee
M. J. Tyler, Chair
Bob Connelly
Paul Kroll

Nominee for "Best Gesneriad to Recruit With"

M. J. Tyler <tyler2@olypen.com>
P.O. Box 1598, Port Angeles, WA 98362-0194

If you want to entice other folks into getting hooked on gesneriads, one of the best plants to do this with is *Streptocarpus* 'Concord Blue'. With its little blue butterflies dancing over the top of lush, tidy foliage, it is often love at first sight for a new grower. The plant is tolerant of a wide range of conditions, forgiving of neglect and almost continuously in bloom.

I purchased my current "stock plant" almost four years ago at a local nursery as a hanging basket for about \$8. When we moved to the Olympic Peninsula in 1994, I did not bring any gesneriads (except a few packets of seed), and I was just delighted to spot this plant and happily brought it home. It was the beginning of building a collection again and has remained faithful through many trials and tribulations. Other plants could not tolerate our sun-room with its alternating Arctic and Saharan climates and wildly fluctuating amounts of light. This one just goes on and on. It gets a bit leggy in the winter, but continues to bloom.

It is easy to propagate from cuttings which root quickly, and some begin to bloom while putting down roots. It only takes about 6 weeks to have a batch of plants ready for an upcoming club sale (gesneriad or otherwise). This is one gesneriad you can feel good about selling to just anyone, too. Tell them to keep it evenly moist but not wet—though it bounces back promptly if you should let it wilt. You can explain to them that even if I let mine get out of hand, it can be cut back severely with no ill effects; I put down the cuttings, and it fills in quite quickly. I have probably produced 100 plants over the past four years. They always sell promptly, and I often get good reports back from customers that this is one plant they have success with!



The "butterfly" flowers of *Streptocarpus* 'Concord Blue'.



Streptocarpus 'Concord Blue' at Selby Botanical Gardens.
Photo from the collection of Margaret Waguespack.

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Gesneriads in Puerto Rico: Further Adventures of the Tenderfoot Explorer

Wallace Wells <wwells@idt.net>
PO Box 1977, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10011

I was determined during my holiday trip to Puerto Rico, land of large cities, interstate highways, and endless Burger King restaurants, to do something botanical and not just lounge around on the beach broiling like a rotisserie chicken under my Coppertone lotion. I decided to rent a car and do some exploring.

I began by asking for advice via the Gesneriphiles email list. Patrick Worley immediately informed me of Dr. Laurence E. Skog's publication on the genus *Gesneria*¹, a genus concentrated in the area. Unfortunately it was out of print. I was still in luck because Jon Dixon and Maryjane Evans, who had traveled and observed gesneriads there, also responded and offered advice. Eventually I relied on their advice on practically a daily basis via email exchanges sent from my hotel room.

The trip to the Caribbean National Forest, the only tropical rainforest in the U. S. National Forest system, was a quick 45 minutes from San Juan. Route 190 passes south from the coast and ascends in elevation via a twisting and turning route along roadsides lush with vegetation that affords many spectacular vistas of tropical forest valleys. La Coca falls on the route is a picture perfect place to stop along the way. Near the summit of the mountain, El Yunque ("The Anvil"), the Mt. Britton Trail became my first forest exploration and gesneriad hit. Literally a sidewalk through the lush hillside, the



¹A Study of The Tribe Gesnerieae with a Revision of *Gesneria*, Laurence E. Skog, Smithsonian Contributions to Botany, Number 29, 1976.



Gesneria viridiflora ssp. *sintenisii*.

sturdy cement path offered a bit of luxury to a hike. Next to a stream I encountered *Gesneria viridiflora* ssp. *sintenisii*, my first wild gesneriad sighting.

Maryjane had forewarned me as to the unusual aspect of this plant. It is actually a shrub with woody, pencil-thick stems about three or four feet tall, completely bare except for a cluster of leathery leaves at the tips. The inflorescence consisted of a six-inch red-brown peduncle, a calyx with stiff spiky sepals and light green flowers that were about an inch long. Gazing at this strapping specimen in the foggy upland tropical forest understory, I knew I had seen something special—a plant that no one would ever bring to a flower show.

Another day I made a couple of strikes on my trip to the Rio Camuy Caves and the nearby Arecibo Observatory. A popular attraction both to locals and to visitors, Rio Camuy Cave Park is attractively landscaped with tropical plantings and a visitor's center with a theatre, restaurant and gift shop. The tour began with a film about the history of the caves followed by a tram ride down a steep road to the cave entrance. Along the way, the road cut was covered with hundreds of specimens of *Gesneria cuneifolia* sporting their eye-catching orange flowers. At the cave entrance, a limestone stalactite formation was studded with specimens of *G. cuneifolia* with pretty orange-red flowers thriving on the verge of total darkness. Traversing a series of spectacular underground chambers, our tour party re-emerged into a vast sinkhole open to the sky over a hundred feet above. Everywhere about the dim damp floor of the sinkhole these beauties again appeared in perfect contentment.



Gesneria cuneifolia (above) and *Gesneria citrina* (below) growing on limestone walls near the Arecibo Observatory. Photos by Jeanne Katzenstein.



Leaving the Cave Park for the short jump to Arecibo Observatory, the world's largest radio/radar telescope, I was keen-eyed along the drive to spot any habitat that might host gesneriads. Searching for a mossy road bank is one good idea, since shade and moisture provide suitable conditions for them. At one such locality I found another colony of *Gesneria cuneifolia*, this time with yellow and orange flowers.

The Observatory's visitor center must be scaled via a steep path from its parking lot and the air-conditioning inside was a welcome relief after the effort. Having feasted eyes on the gigantic electronic spectacle and the wondrous exhibits inside the center, I descended again to the car, only to make a serendipitous discovery on the way. I had stopped to admire some curious orchids growing from dry stony outcrops along the road cut, which was through chalky limestone rock. I was surprised to find that anything, much less an orchid could grow in such hostile conditions. Suddenly, my attention was drawn to some nearby yellow flowers on long wispy peduncles. Drawing closer, I realized that I had made my next gesneriad discovery.

Gesneria pedunculosa was growing in the shady humus-filled recesses of this type of craggy inhospitable stone. A large, two-to-three foot woody shrub, its flowers are born on peduncles so long that they are in perpetual



Gesneria pedunculosa.

motion, catching even the mildest whisper of a breeze. The stamens and pistil are well exerted (projecting beyond the corolla) by more than the length of the corolla itself. Handling the flowers gives ones fingers a dusting with pollen, so wind is seemingly an important factor in the reproductive cycle. Likewise, handling the ripe seed capsules even gingerly caused them to burst open with seeds.

Once again I had the satisfaction of seeing something that would only be enjoyed in the wild. In spite of my lack of experience and preparation, I felt satisfied in the uniqueness of the specimens that I had seen and surprised at the ease of my discoveries (with a little help from the internet and friends!).



Coming Events

April 10–11 — New Jersey — African Violet Club of Morris County annual AVSA show and plant sale "Violet Smorgasbord" at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, 53 East Hanover Avenue, Morristown. Saturday 1:30 to 5:00 pm; Sunday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Contact Jill Fischer (908-464-4417) or Roy Goebel (973-361-7689).

April 24–25 — New York — African Violet Society of Rochester 50th annual judged show and sale "50 Golden Years" at Perinton Square Mall, 6720 Pittsford-Palmyra Road (Routes 250 & 31), Perinton. Saturday 2:00 to 6:00 pm; Sunday 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Free admission; handicapped accessible. Contact Irwin Wagman (716-381-6384 or <IrwinWag@aol.com>).

April 24–25 — Washington — Puget Sound Gesneriad Society & Seattle African Violet Society combined show "Victorian Tea Party" at the Center for Urban Horticulture, 3501 NE 41st St., Seattle. Saturday

noon to 5:00 pm and Sunday noon to 4:00 pm. Contact Jean Chin (206-725-6494).

May 1–2 — California — San Joaquin AVS annual judged show/sale at Sherwood Mall, 5308 Pacific Ave., Stockton. Saturday 10:00 am to 6:30 pm; Sunday 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Contact Doris Weaver (209-465-2214).

May 7-8 — Alberta, Canada — Stampede City African Violet Society 23rd annual show and sale "A Violet Concerto" at Market Mall Shopping Centre, 3625 Shaganappi Trail, N.W., Calgary. Friday 10:00 am to 9:00 pm; Saturday 9:30 am to 4:00 pm. Contact Winston Goretsky (403-241-8300 or <goretsky@cadvision.com>).

May 23 — New York — Long Island Chapter of AGGS flower show and plant sale at Clark Botanical Gardens, Albertson, Long Island. Sunday from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm. Admission to show and gardens free. Contact Ben Paternoster (516-549-6788 or <BenPaternoster@worldnet.att.net>).

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Compiled by Judy Becker

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Having been an African violet judge and teacher for a while, I felt it was time to learn about the other side of the family. How would you ever "teach" and not give information on the whole family? It just happened that one of the members of Delta is also a gesneriad teacher, and it just so happened that she was having a class. I attended to learn, but ended up becoming an AGGS judge. Yes, I did take the test and passed, too. And, yes, I have about as many of "the other" gesneriads now as saintpaulias.

I am a member of two affiliates here in Sacramento, California. One is the Capital City African Violet Society, an Affiliate of AVSA, and the other is the Delta Gesneriad and African Violet Society, a dual affiliated club with both AVSA and AGGS. Up until recently, Delta was the only dual club in the United States.

At showtime, we stage both an African violet show and a gesneriad show in the same room at the same time. We have AGGS judges using the competitive system for the gesneriads, and AVSA judges using the merit system for the violets.

Our first show was an instant success. Most of the public had never seen "the other" gesneriads, and if they had, they didn't know what they were looking at. You can't imagine the look on some of their faces when they saw *Pearcea hypocyrtiflora* in bloom for the first time. I must admit that the tiny orange balloons are a sight to see. Then there are the strange flowers of *Chirita eburnea*. The list of surprises is too long to print.

Each year, seed is ordered from the AGGS Seed Fund by our club. I start them and then they are passed out as babies. We order anything that we have never heard of before. At the moment we are growing our way through the genus *Chirita*. The challenge of growing something you have never heard of and making it bloom is thrilling.

Our 1998 show was rather small as we had a very hot summer. Summer temperatures here are usually in the upper nineties with very little humidity. This year in August we broke a few records with temperatures over 100°F for 16 days straight with lots of humidity. El Nino gave us something to think about. Yes, we thought about a nice, cool fall!

Temperatures in the greenhouse rose up to over 100°F. It was very hard to keep it cool because of the heat and humidity outside. I use an evaporative water system to cool the greenhouse. If it is hot and muggy outside, the cooler just can't keep up. In my opinion, gesneriads handle the heat better than the African violets.

One thing our part of California needs is more gesneriad judges. Knowledge is the one thing that makes growing these wonderful plants easy. If someone is having a gesneriad judging school in your area, attend and learn about the whole family. It's well worth your time.

Paliavana prasinata

Barbara Elkin <jabar@foothill.net>
2855 Gayle Lane, Auburn, CA 95602

Being a trusting soul and taking everything at face value, you won't believe my experience with a six-foot tree in the greenhouse.

I have been growing my "tree" for over five years, and it has never bloomed in that five years, UP UNTIL NOW. I purchased the seed from the AGGS Seed Fund as the description classified it as medium tall. As I said before, I'm a trusting soul and felt that it would grow to somewhere around three feet. It also claimed it needed direct sun to bloom. When it matured and I felt it should bloom, it was moved out into a flower bed. It didn't bloom there either. I had to bring the thing in before winter as our winter nights sometime drop down into the upper twenties. After all, I had a few years invested in this plant. Now, mind you, it was growing all the time. By the end of its third year, it was topped and the top set down to start over. Still the thing didn't bloom. At this time it is over six feet tall and pushing the shade cloth off the ceiling of the greenhouse. Off the bench and onto the floor for more head space it went. By now, it's also top heavy, so it's tied to the greenhouse door. We don't use that door much anyway and the other entrance opens into the dining room. Yes, my greenhouse is part of my home.

After placing it on the floor, I noticed it was in bud. Great day, I am finally going to see it bloom! Then I notice I've lost the name. A few emails later I have a name. I was also told that there were only a few species of *Paliavana* in cultivation and please set seed on it. Another told me to cross it with a sinningia. My answer to that is "Who would want a six-foot sinningia?" I tried anyway with a large-growing sinningia. I went daily to pollinate my giant. It was very discouraging to see the capsules fall off one by one. Then it dawned on me to cross in the other direction—the paliavana onto the sinningia. It's too early to say it was a success but there are swollen ovaries on both. The paliavana was selfed and the sinningia (also grown from seed that came from John Boggan) is the seed parent. I will endeavor to set more seed as it is still in bloom. I believe the secret to blooming my monster is HEAT, not the sun. We had a heat wave and the 100 degrees in the greenhouse did the trick.

After harvesting my seed, once again the plant will be topped to a more reasonable size. I will look forward to blooming it out again. There doesn't seem to be much literature on my paliavana other than it is thought to be pollinated by bats, comes from Brazil and has a fragrance at night. (However, I noticed no fragrance.) The growth pattern is single stem with opposing medium green leaves. The flowers are almost bell-shaped with a longer bottom lip. They are light green with reddish-bronze spots on the outside. Inside the bell it is even a lighter green with spots. The leaves are large, tend to be very fragile, and fall off with just a small bump. I tried to root them with no success.

Most of the fun in growing the "other" gesneriads is growing them from seed. Our Delta chapter buys a lot of seed. I start them and then pass them out to the members when they are big enough to handle. Our aim is to grow something you know nothing about and make it bloom. We try to make it fun and challenging at the same time.



Paliavana prasinata.
Photo from the collection of Dr. Margaret H. Stone.

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The following registrations should be added to the Registered Gesneriads List Found in Appendix C of the 1990 Gesneriad Register:

<i>Columnnea</i> 'Arthur Treacher'	IR98519	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Betty Hutton'	IR98520	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Dee Dee'	IR98521	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Dee Light'	IR98522	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Glenda Farrell'	IR98523	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Greta Garbo'	IR98524	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Hermoine Gingold'	IR98525	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Ida Lupino'	IR98526	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Jean Arthur'	IR98527	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Jeanette MacDonald'	IR98528	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Joan Blondell'	IR98529	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Judy Holliday'	IR98530	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Lucille Ball'	IR98531	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Princess Di'	IR98532	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Red Skelton'	IR98533	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Rosalind Russell'	IR98534	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Rudolph Valentino'	IR98535	Jerry Trowbridge
<i>Columnnea</i> 'Star Light'	IR98536	Jerry Trowbridge

The descriptions are as follows:

***Columnnea* 'Arthur Treacher'**, 1998, IR98519, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. 'Turandot'* × *C. zebranelia*). Cross made 11/95, planted 2/96 and first bloomed 12/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to spreading, up to 2 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green, blotched red below, 4" long x 1-1/2" wide, elliptic with entire margin, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, green, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 2-3/4" long, red with yellow at base, 1-2 per axil, blooming fall through spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, November 1998.

***Columnnea* 'Betty Hutton'**, 1998, IR98520, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. nicaraguensis* × *C. 'Dee Light'*). Cross made 1/96, planted 4/96 and first bloomed 2/97. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to trailing, fast growing, 2-3 ft. long. Leaves hairy, green with wine red below, 4" long x 1-1/2" wide, elliptic with entire margins, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, wine-colored, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 2-7/8" long, yellow-translucent, 1-2 per axil, blooming fall through spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

***Columnnea* 'Dee Dee'**, 1998, IR98521, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. nicaraguensis* × *C. hirsuta* v. *fawcettii*). Cross made 12/94, planted 4/95 and first bloomed 4/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching

to trailing, up to 2 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green, light red below, 3-1/2" long x 1-3/4" wide, lanceolate to elliptic with serrate edges, acuminate tip and oblique base. Calyx red, leafy 1-1/4" long. Corolla hooded, 2-1/4" long, scarlet red, 1-3 per axil, several times a year. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, November 1998.

Columnnea 'Dee Light', 1998, IR98522, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. raymondii* × *C. sulfurea*). Cross made 2/94, planted 5/94 and first bloomed 4/95. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to trailing, 2-3 ft. long. Leaves hairy, green, wine red below, 4-3/4" long x 1-1/2" wide, elliptic with entire margin, acuminate tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, green, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 3-1/2" long, yellow throat, red galea, 1-2 per axil, blooming winter-spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

Columnnea 'Glenda Farrell', 1998, IR98523, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. nicaraguensis* × *C. sulfurea*). Cross made 11/94, planted 2/95 and first bloomed 1/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to trailing, up to 3 ft. long. Leaves hairy, green with wine reverse, 5" long x 2" wide, elliptic with slightly crenate margins, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, wine-colored, 1" long. Corolla hooded, 3" long, yellow, 1-2 per axil, blooming fall through spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, November 1998.

Columnnea 'Greta Garbo', 1998, IR98524, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. 'Sylvia'* × *C. nicaraguensis*). Cross made 12/95, planted 4/96 and first bloomed 3/97. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing to arching, up to 2 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green with wine edge, 2-1/4" long x 3/4" wide, linear to elliptic with entire margin and oblique base. Calyx green, leafy, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 2-1/2" long, red, 1-2 per axil, blooming spring through fall. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March, 1999.

Columnnea 'Hermione Gingold', 1998, IR98525, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. 'Sylvia'* × *C. nicaraguensis*). Cross made 12/95, planted 4/96 and first bloomed 3/97. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing to arching, to 2 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green, 3" long x 3/4" wide, linear with entire margin, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx green, leafy, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 2-1/2" long, red with white throat, 1-2 per axil, blooming winter through summer. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

Columnnea 'Ida Lupino', 1998, IR98526, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. 'Aflame'* × *C. flaccida*). Cross made 1/95, planted 4/95 and first bloomed 3/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing, to 8 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green with a red edge, purple cast below, 2-1/4" long x 3/4" wide, lanceolate with entire margin, acuminate tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, red and green, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, red-orange, 3-1/4" long, 1-2 per axil, blooming twice a year. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, November 1998.

Columnnea 'Jean Arthur', 1998, IR98527, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. nicaraguensis* × *C. sulfurea*). Cross made 11/94, planted 2/95 and first bloomed 1/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to trailing, 2-3 ft. long. Leaves hairy, green with wine underside, 4-3/4" long x 1-1/2" wide, elliptic with slightly crenate margins, acute tip and oblique base.



Columnea 'Rosalind Russell'



Columnea 'Red Skelton'



Columnea 'Dee Light'



Columnea 'Greta Garbo'



Columnea 'Hermione Gingold'



Columnea 'Dee Dee'



Columnea 'Arthur Treacher'



Columnea 'Glenda Farrell'



Columnea 'Joan Blondell'

Calyx wine-colored, leafy, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 3" long, red with yellow throat, 1-2 per axil, blooming fall through spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, November 1998.

***Columnnea* 'Jeanette MacDonald'**, 1998, IR98528, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C.* 'Turandot' × *C. zebranella*). Cross made 11/95, planted 2/96 and first bloomed 12/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to trailing, 1-2 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green streaked wine below, 4 7/8" long, 1-1/2" wide, elliptic with entire margin, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, green, 7/8" long. Corolla hooded, 2-1/2" long, wine red with 3 yellow stripes, 2 per axil, blooming fall through spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, November 1998.

***Columnnea* 'Joan Blondell'**, 1998, IR98529, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C.* 'Sylvia' × *C. nicaraguensis*). Cross made 12/95, planted 4/96 and first bloomed 3/97. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing to arching, to 2 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green, 3" long x 3/4" wide, linear with entire margin, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, green, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 2-1/2" long, yellow with wine red edges, 1-2 per axil, blooming spring through fall. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

***Columnnea* 'Judy Holliday'**, 1998, IR98530, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C.* 'Star Light' × *C. nicaraguensis*). Cross made 11/95, planted 3/96 and first bloomed 4/97. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to trailing, 2-3 ft. long. Leaves hairy, green, wine red below, 3-1/2" long x 1-1/4" wide, elliptic with entire margin, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, wine colored, 5/8" long. Corolla hooded, 2-3/4" long, yellow with red tinges, 2 per axil, blooming twice a year. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

***Columnnea* 'Lucille Ball'**, 1998, IR98531, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C.* 'Flamingo' × *C. schiedeana*). Cross made 8/95, planted 12/95 and first bloomed 11/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing to arching, 6-8 ft. long. Leaves hairy, green, wine red below, 3-3/4" long x 1-1/8" wide, linear-elliptic with acute tip and oblique base. Calyx wine-colored, leafy, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 3" long, red, with 1-2 flowers per axil, blooming summer through winter. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

***Columnnea* 'Princess Di'**, 1998, IR98532, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. nicaraguensis* × *C. zebranella*). Cross made 11/95, planted 2/96 and first bloomed 11/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing to arching, 2-3 ft. long. Leaves smooth, green, scarlet below, 5-1/4" long x 2" wide, elliptic with entire to serrate margin, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, scarlet, 7/8" long. Corolla hooded, 3" long, scarlet with yellow spot in throat, 1-2 per axil, blooming fall through spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

***Columnnea* 'Red Skelton'**, 1998, IR98533, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C.* 'Turandot' × *C. gloriosa*). Cross made 12/94, planted 4/95 and first bloomed 3/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing, to 8 ft. long. Leaves hairy, green with wine overcast, red edges, 1-1/2" x 3/4", elliptic with entire to serrate edges, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx green, leafy, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 3" long, red with hint of yellow in bottom of throat, 1-2 per axil. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

***Columnnea* 'Rosalind Russell'**, 1998, IR98534, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C.* 'Dee Light' × *C. nicaraguensis*). Cross made 11/95, planted 3/96 and first bloomed 4/97. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems arching to trailing, 2-3' long. Leaves smooth, green, wine-colored below, 4" long x 1" wide, elliptic with entire margins, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, green and red, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 3" long, red with yellow throat, 1-2 per axil. Available from Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.

***Columnnea* 'Rudolph Valentino'**, 1998, IR98535, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C.* 'Turandot' × *C. schiedeana*). Cross made 11/95, planted 2/96, first flowered 12/96. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing, 5-7' long. Leaves green, red veined below, 3" long x 1" wide, elliptic with crenate margin, acute tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, green, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 2-7/8" long, red with yellow stripes, 1-2 per axil, blooming fall through spring. Available from Gesneriad Research Foundation, November 1998.

***Columnnea* 'Star Light'**, 1998, IR98536, Jerry Trowbridge, Florida, (*C. sulfurea* × *C. raymondii*). Cross made 2/94, planted 5/94 and first bloomed 4/95. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively. Stems trailing to arching, 2-3' long. Leaves hairy, green, sometimes red below, 4-1/2" long x 1-1/2" wide, elliptic with entire margins, acuminate tip and oblique base. Calyx leafy, green, 3/4" long. Corolla hooded, 3-1/4" long, yellow with red edges, 2 per axil, blooming winter-spring. Available through Gesneriad Research Foundation, March 1999.



Columnnea 'Judy Holliday'



Columnnea 'Rudolph Valentino'

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Just Imagine!

Note: Jerry Trowbridge will be the guest speaker at the GHA meeting being held on June 30 in Nashville. He will be showing slides (and plants?) of many of his recently registered *Columnea* hybrids as well as discussing new directions in hybridizing.

Jerry Trowbridge <jtrow9@aol.com>
181 25th Ave. E, Bradenton, FL 34208

I started growing gesneriads in the mid 1970s, and I was perfectly content to simply grow them for the fun of it. Then we started to attend occasional shows, and I added the term "show quality" to my reasons for growing gesneriads.

The next step in my "growing" evolution was that fateful day when during an innocent conversation someone said to me, "Yes, I've seen pictures of that plant, but you can't grow it here in Florida." My wife, Dee, swears that at that point she saw my brains fall out on the floor. Since we were still in an apartment at the time, that started an endless stream of grow lights, humidifiers, super grow lights, fertilizers that "will make rocks bloom", REALLY super grow lights, chemicals that would sterilize a small town in Indiana, etc., etc.

Then, of course, I decided that we had to buy a house and property so that I could build a greenhouse. It still makes perfectly good sense to me.

Finally, in 1995, I noticed something. (Dee had given up on THAT ever since the "brains" incident.) There were many *Columnea* species that had never been used for hybridizing. The reason that some hadn't been used was obvious: they simply didn't have any traits that you would want to pass on to a hybrid. Others obviously did, and that started me thinking again ... just imagine!



Jerry Trowbridge grows *Columnea sulfurea* outdoors most of the year.



Columnnea raymondii has been used the past few years in Jerry's hybridizing program in addition to *Columnnea sulfurea* and other lesser-known species.

Just imagine if you will, a hybrid that appears to be a striped red *Columnnea gloriosa* or a heavily striped yellow *gloriosa* or a columnea with red and white flowers instead of the typical red and yellow flowers. Just imagine a columnea that grows into a specimen basket that is five feet across, with red-backed leaves and huge C.R.C. (Crayola Crayon) "Razzmatazz" colored flowers. That would be a showstopper!

All of these and approximately twenty more different *Columnnea* hybrids will soon be available. Others are still under evaluation and will soon be undergoing the "weeding-out" process. Some will be released for sale, but others will be used as parents, leading to a specific goal such as a white-flowered *gloriosa* type hybrid.

Just imagine!



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Round Robin News

Suzie Larouche <suzielaro@sympatico.ca>
20 Carlton Street, app. 1521, Toronto ON Canada M5B 2H5

Here I am, finally in Toronto after what seems to have been a very long time arranging the move and packing. (As I write this, I am unpacking and still in cartons up to my ears.) The city truly rolled out the snow carpet for my arrival. There was even more snow here when I drove in than I had seen in Québec in a while. It made me feel right at home immediately.

Out of necessity, I didn't do much with round robins for several weeks, but I am back in the saddle now. My apologies to those of you to who did not get a timely response to your enquiries. You have probably gotten one by now.

I have received suggestions about starting new robins on miniature sinningias and commercial growing. Any takers? I would also welcome any volunteers to direct those robins as I can't take care of all of them; also, those of you who want those robins are so much more qualified than I am to participate in them.

Hope to see many of you at the Round Robins meeting at the Nashville Convention.



Any takers for a new round robin on miniature sinningias?

Our customers say it best...

June 18, 1998

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I use Dyna-Gro on all of my gesneriads and violets, as well as other plants. In fact, I use rain water and I mix up about 30 gallons at a time.

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I didn't know Dyna-Gro existed until the makers of Dyna-Gro sent two cases of their 7-9-5 Grow formula and brochures as awards at our recent Florida Council show.

Thanks Dyna-Gro!

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Anodiscus xanthophyllus

Marlene Beam

1736 S. Oakland St., Aurora, CO 80012

The genera *Anodiscus* and *Rhytidophyllum* share lesser-known status, and perhaps in their native habitat they are hardy "weeds". These genera bear little similarity other than being large New World gesneriads with a "weedy" classification. Both stimulated the progressive development of a grower who had lesser-known knowledge about these curious plants.

Frances Batcheller, who furnished the botanical specifics for this writing, stated that *Anodiscus* means lacking a disc; *xanthophyllus*, the only species thus far recorded in this genus, means yellowish leaves. This taxon grows on the western slopes of the rain-forested mountains in Peru. Small white flowers displayed on terminal spikes resemble a white-flowering *Kohleria spicata*.

The 1997 GRF study group discovered *Anodiscus xanthophyllus* growing north in Ecuador along the roadsides (THE GLOXINIAN, 47:3 p16).



Anodiscus xanthophyllus with a six-foot tall flower spike growing along a roadside in Ecuador.



The pure white flowers of *Anodiscus xanthophyllus* grown by Marlene Beam.
Photo by Rubín Jiménez.

Further north in Colorado, *A. xanthophyllus* was prolific and blooming under two cool white tubes. Its prolonged residence in Colorado, an unnatural habitat, spanned four years without bloom. Fungus gnats visited under the plastic cover. Culture was guess work. Botanical facts were a mystery. Busywork stalled inquiry until flowering awakened attention. And, the subsequent spreading of seed germinated lesser-known knowledge. Seed in the Convention packets led to questions asked by Convention goers and GRF explorers.

Its Ecuadorian debut pictured in THE GLOXINIAN (47:3 p22) was coincidental and revealing. The tall, one-foot homegrown plant seemed a mere sample when compared to the size pictured in its natural habitat. In her letter, Frances Batcheller described *A. xanthophyllus* as a "tall" vigorous grower while some GRF explorers termed it "weedy".

Sizable plants which do not bloom for years are not the kind most light-stand growers desire. But, light-stand growers can control and shape. *A. xanthophyllus* was regularly pruned since it rapidly outgrew any plastic or glass container. Eventually it was potted in an eight-inch pot and draped with plastic. Being strangled in this manner, it did not become quite as "weedy" as seen in nature. Pruning not only sized, but it fostered branching and yielded a new harvest of cuttings. This harvest readily rooted with the luxury of almost 100% humidity. Who thought lesser-knowns were so fragile that pruning would destroy? Propagation of leaf cuttings was not successful; and, with multiplication undesired, was not pursued.

The excitement of flowering a lesser known did not fade with misshaped bloom spikes. Unlike the pictured Ecuadorian plant, blooms on the home-grown specimen reached outward rather than skyward. This unintentional distortion was a fruitful lesson that a plastic shield is unnatural, restrictive and compressed.

Leaf color cannot be compared to nature. Under the light tubes and plastic, the springtime foliage is a bright green. The xanthophyll (yellow pigment found with the chlorophyll) is most noticeable in the fall when the leaf color becomes an olive green. The spikes have a yellow-green hue.

There is no alteration in the whiteness of the blooms. Botanically speaking, the ovate calyx has five short lobes. The stamens are short and the stigmas are broad. The capsule has a curved tapered rostrum. *A. xanthophyllus* is also called a felt-hairy plant. In a close-up look at the plant, hairs on the stem and blooms are a distinctive feature.

Although in bloom, exhibition of this home-grown *A. xanthophyllus* would be tricky. Hopes of showing this plant at Convention '97 vanished as it quickly browned outside its plastic shield during photographic sessions. While the plant bloomed constantly for three months, the rapidly falling short-lived blooms would litter the table and hinder a showy presentation. The blooms, however, yielded capsules with an incredibly vast amount of seed.

The root system is perplexing. The terminal end of the stem is very thick and woody. After four years, post blooming and several washings, fibrous appearing roots are found by this rookie of the lesser known. The publication "How to Know and Grow Gesneriads" (AGGS 1980) lists *Anodiscus* under gesneriads with fibrous roots.

In her resource material, however, Frances Batcheller found *A. xanthophyllus* to be rhizomatous. Likewise, it is listed on the Internet as rhizomatous. Is the terminal end akin to the distorted spikes? Does uprooting out of its natural location prevent or stunt the formation of rhizomes? Could it be the pruning? Does the lack of dormancy affect it? Kohlerias bear rhizomes in one season when pruned and homegrown. Perhaps this genus needs more maturity to form rhizomes.

Frances Batcheller raised a growing possibility when she suggested that this plant be crossed with a kohleria. Although an intergeneric cross could yield a showier, not-so-weedy plant, it is a definite challenge for a rookie hybridizer. However, knowledge is cultivated from challenges and can reap ever-growing lesser-known experiences. Persistence seeds.

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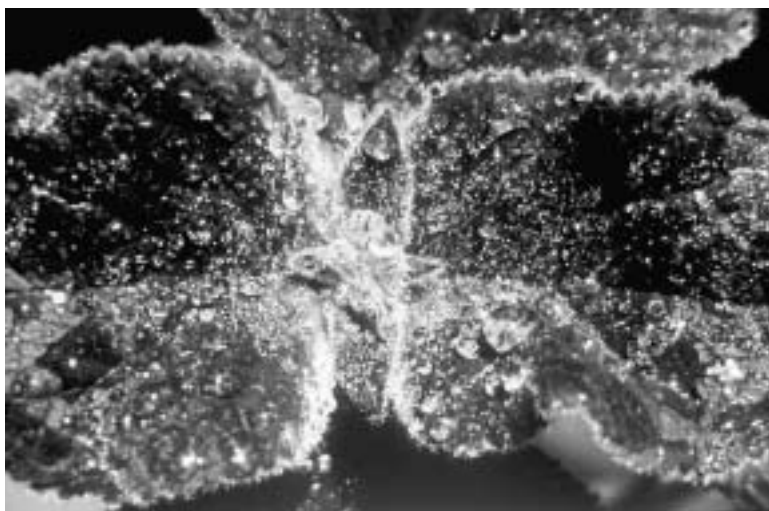
Getting Serious about Humidity

Carol Ann Bonner <cabonner@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu>
3705 Tibbs Drive, Nashville, TN 37211

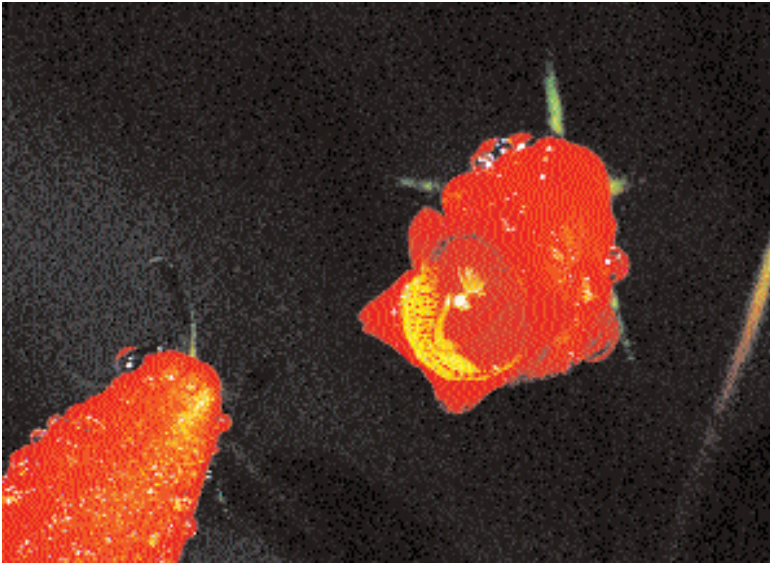
Part of the initial appeal of the most commercially successful gesneriad, the *Saintpaulia* or African violet, is due to the fact that it grows and blooms in the conditions most of us maintain in our homes: moderate temperatures, at the windowsills moderately bright light, and moderate levels of humidity.

When we attempt to raise gesneriads more fastidious in their requirements for humidity, we try to alter our growing conditions by grouping the plants on mats or other substrates that are kept moist, perhaps by running a room humidifier, or by surrendering and growing them in a terrarium. These adjustments are sufficient for many, perhaps most gesneriads in cultivation. But look at plants in a terrarium—aren't they vigorous and easy to grow, and isn't one of the major problems keeping them from outgrowing their space? This is the difference between "sufficient" humidity and sumptuous humidity. When I wanted to increase the humidity in my greenhouse, I went for sumptuous.

There are various misting systems available for greenhouses. Those which maintain a particular, set level of humidity can be rather pricey, in the \$200 range and up, depending on the size of the greenhouse. I chose the more affordable route with a four-times-a-day automatic watering timer (about \$35) and an ultra fine Fogg-It brand misting nozzle (\$8) for my hose. During the summer, it was set to fog for fifteen minutes at a time; during the winter, it was set to fog for ten minutes which will probably be lowered to seven or five for our long mid-winter grey spells. An oscillating fan disperses the fog to all parts of my small 10' x 16' (3m x 5m) greenhouse. Everything stays wet. On cloudy days I hardly ever have to water.



Simningia insularis foliage glistening with mist.



Gloxinia sylvatica sporting miniature crystal spheres,
grown and photographed by Carol Ann Bonner.

When I walk into the greenhouse shortly after a misting cycle (wearing shoes with thick rubber soles because the concrete floor floods), I have the opportunity to experience my gesneriads in an aspect of their beauty too few of us see. Their hairy leaves are graced with thousands of jewels of water, sometimes welling into pearls at the tips or midribs. New leaves emerging from a tuber, looking much like blossoms themselves, are like tiny hands offering miniature crystal spheres as gifts.

It's glorious! But it's so wet! Why don't things rot?!? Well, I guess it's because I'm growing primarily cloud forest plants that are adapted to similar conditions. Also, the air is constantly moving. I don't grow begonias in there because of their susceptibility to mildew, and if my *Gloxinia perennis* weren't dormant, I wouldn't grow it in there either because it also will succumb to mildew. Plants that are sensitive to overwatering, like chiritas, are potted in my usual heavy-on-the-long-fibered-sphagnum-moss mix in clay pots. I mostly keep fallen leaves picked up, and I watch for snails and slugs who are as happy in that environment as the plants are.

In what way is this relevant to your growing conditions? Obviously, if you have a greenhouse, you might try adding even a jerry-rigged misting system like mine to see if you like what it does for your plants. If you're growing under lights in the house, hosing the room down four times a day is probably not a realistic option for you. But a good cool-mist room humidifier (about \$50) is, and it might just be the extra push your plants need to go from "sufficient" to sumptuous.

American Gloxinia & Gesneriad Society, Inc.

Financial Statement — January 1, 1998 to December 31, 1998

GENERAL FUND (Combined Receipts, Checking and Savings)

Membership	
Renewals – 1 Year	11,097.00
Renewals – 3 Years	4,260.00
New – 1 Year	5,923.00
New – 3 Years	640.00
Sustaining	155.00
Promotions	
Publicity Promotions	1,452.56
Ads in The Gloxinian	1,951.55
Sales of Literature & Supplies	913.86
Slide Programs & Library	695.00
Seed Fund Sales	7,335.90
Judging Publications & Income	1,523.00
Donations	
Fund for Progress	6,646.40
Color Photo Sponsorships	2,691.33

TOTAL – Combined Balances	\$45,284.60
(Checking \$32,213.06 / Savings \$13,071.54)	

GENERAL FUND

Checking Account – Beginning Balance: January 1, 1998	21,528.53
Add from Combined Balances above	32,213.06
Other Income	
From Endowment Fund	881.11
From Called CD (Principal Reinvested in Mutual Fund)	557.88
Chapter's Insurance Remittances	850.00
Convention Repayments, Insert & Insurance	1,545.00
Miscellaneous	1,306.06
Convention, for Remittances	29,402.46
Research, for Dr. Russo's Grant Remittance	2,200.00

TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$90,484.10
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DISBURSEMENTS

Publication of THE GLOXINIAN	(30,132.43)
Other Publications	(2,186.94)
Membership Processing	(1,991.91)
Publicity Promotions	(886.21)
Operating Expenses	(6,520.14)
Convention Remittances	(29,402.46)
Convention Advances - and 1999 (775.00)	(1,275.00)
Grant to Dr. Ethan B. Russo	(2,200.00)
TOTAL Disbursements	(74,595.09)

TOTAL ON HAND, Checking – December 31, 1998	15,889.01
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GENERAL FUND Other Items:

Mutual Fund	14,086.05
Savings Account (see below)	24,228.89

TOTAL – GENERAL FUND	\$54,203.95
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GENERAL FUND – Savings

Beginning Balance, adjusted		10,281.29
Interest		764.44
Miscellaneous		413.41
Convention Repayment		500.00
Less Credit Card Fees	(801.79)	
Net Increase, 1998		<u>13,071.54</u>
Savings Balance – December 31, 1998		24,228.89

ELVIN MC DONALD RESEARCH FUND

Balance – January 1, 1998		2,483.76
Donations		520.00
Interest - Savings		79.61
Grant to Dr. Ethan B. Russo, M.D.	(2,200.00)	
Ending Balance – December 31, 1998		<u>\$883.37</u>

INTERNATIONAL GESNERIAD REGISTER FUND

Balance – January 1, 1998		10,371.32
Sale of Registers		298.00
Savings Interest		187.32
Balance – Savings, December 31, 1998	5,195.23	
Interest on Certificate of Deposit		327.39
Balance, Certificate of Deposit	5,988.80	
Combined Savings and Certificate Balance – December 31, 1998		<u>\$11,184.03</u>

FRANCES BATCHELLER ENDOWMENT FUND

Balance Combined – January 1, 1998		95,251.81
Change in Value – Mutual Funds as of 12/31/98		
Fidelity – Asset Manager	5,768.39	
Safeco	753.71	
Life Memberships	3,450.00	
Donations	513.00	
Convention Auction	5,444.00	
Internet Auction	398.00	
Interest Earned		
Wa Fed Certificate of Deposit #1	1,464.07	
Wa Fed Certificate of Deposit #2	201.96	
Savings Account	310.25	
Miscellaneous Income	111.52	
Balances, December 31, 1998		
Savings	8,310.23	
Certificate #1	34,066.22	
Certificate #2	3,714.85	
Fidelity MP	41,612.22	
Safeco MF	25,963.19	
Combined Balances, Frances Batcheller Endowment Fund		<u>\$113,666.71</u>

Diastema latiflorum

Hans Wiehler <hwiehler@aol.com>

Gesneriad Research Foundation, 1873 Oak St., Sarasota, FL 34236

The purpose of this article is to inform gesneriad growers with light gardens, window sills and terrariums that we now have a new, miniature gesneriad with good horticultural potential. As yet it is in limited cultivation, but soon there will be plenty of seeds and rhizomes.



A young plant of *Diastema latiflorum* grown by Maryjane Evans.
Photo by John Evans.

Its name is simple and uncomplicated: *Diastema latiflorum* (the *Diastema* with a "broad or wide" flower, or better, "with a large flower face"). I was requested to write an article for TG—an introduction to this tiny gesneriad as a new plant that more gesneriad enthusiasts should be growing. Maryjane Evans had it successfully flowering in a 3" community pot which contained seven plantlets with an astonishing total of 40 to 50 flowers.

The plantlets average 3-5 cm in diameter (but can reach up to 8 cm) and about 3-6 cm high. Revealing that *Diastema latiflorum* comes from a mixed population, the leaves differ from plant to plant: either plain medium green, or dark green, or with a silvery veination. The leaf edges are crenate-serrate. The campanulate flowers arise from 3-5 cm long flower stalks, one per leaf axil. The calyx is small and green. The white corolla tube is 1 cm long, and the pale blue or lavender corolla face is 1 cm wide. The plant habit and flowering aspect reminds one of the popular *Sinningia pusilla*.

Seed production is fairly prolific and easy. At the GRF research greenhouse, no human effort was necessary, and the flowers just went on selfing themselves. (Maryjane pollinates her plants with a #1 brush.) About 20 days later, the plump inferior seed pods opened up by one superior slit, flattening out the whole fairly fleshy capsule and exposing the miniscule dark brown seed. The asexual reproduction is likewise prolific. The perennial plants survive a dry season by producing underground brownish-pink rhizomes, 1-4 cm long.

Diastema latiflorum was brought into cultivation by the 1996 GRF Expedition to Bolivia. Descending the steep and very dangerous road on the Andean Mountain range from the capital city of La Paz, we found it in the province of Yungas along the road from Caranavi to Guanay at an altitude of about 450 m, in a secondary rainforest area, on vertical, damp-moss-covered cliffs or road cuts, in a horizontal situation in plain dirt and leaf mulch under shady trees, and on moist banks by creeks, in filtered sunlight. In cultivation this small gesneriad appears to flourish in typical loose epiphytic soil kept damp. It flowered in Bolivia in mid April, but here north of the equator, it flowers from September through November.

Diastema latiflorum was first described by Henry H. Rusby at the New York Botanical Garden in 1896 (in the *Torrey Bot. Club, Memoirs* Vol. 6:96), after he had received a herbarium specimen from Miguel Bang from Bolivia. Bang collected his tiny plantlets near the GRF collection site in Yungas, "between Tipuani and Guanay", in the year 1892. He did not travel in rented vans as we did, but did his botanizing by foot or on a horse. His



Maryjane Evans finding *Diastema latiflorum* on a hillside in Bolivia.

road was probably equally dangerous and steep as ours. (Two weeks before we started the GRF Expedition, the New York Times pronounced this road down from La Paz "the most dangerous road in the world".) A hundred years after Bang, the GRF has made this gesneriad gem available to horticulture. We don't know what the best cultural conditions are for this miniature Bolivian gesneriad with pale blue flowers. Now that you know its history, give it a try. Experiment—and share it with others. *Diastema latiflorum* is currently in the Seed Fund.



AGGS Chapter Newsletters

Laura Johnson <bluejay@netperson.net>
15832 Winterpark Dr., Macomb MI 48044-3881

It is my privilege to be appointed as your new AGGS Newsletter Chair. Isla Montgomery has done a fantastic job for many years, and I hope to emulate her fine work.

The AGGS Newsletter Chair has several responsibilities, but the most important is to stimulate and support the publication of newsletters within local chapters. Newsletters are a vital part of a successful chapter, not just a printed reminder of the next meeting date. They help to unify membership with their regular contact and encourage the "team-effort" attitude that is so important. One of the ways the Newsletter Chair supports chapter newsletters is by publishing a special newsletter called *Newsviews*. This publication is intended to help supply all chapter editors with ideas, help and material for their chapter newsletters. *Newsviews* is mailed to chapter presidents if a chapter does not publish a newsletter. In this way, each AGGS chapter member has access to a copy, published three times a year in February, June and October.

If you are an AGGS chapter president or newsletter editor, you should be receiving *Newsviews* already. If not, then contact me so I can add you to the mailing list. Newsletter editors please note: You should now send your newsletters to my address.

For those of you familiar with *Newsviews*, I encourage you to send me your suggestions. Tell me what you need help with, and I'll see what I can do. I'll be publishing *Newsviews* via my computer and plan to utilize computer and internet resources to enhance its content. But don't fret... I won't forget those of you that still use a typewriter!

A well-designed newsletter can be a great way to reach out to interested people, to develop new members, and to solidify a membership base. As Newsletter Chair, I hope to help all AGGS chapters achieve these goals via their newsletters.

The 3G's Columnea Project: *Colorful Columnea*

The initial portion of the Columnea Project, *Colorful Columnea*, by the Gloxinia Gesneriad Growers of Denver is ready for sale.

The 32-page book has 18 color pages, each with a description, and 17 pages with two 3.5" x 5" photographs. Eleven species, two varieties, and six fancy-named hybrids are described. *Colorful Columnea* features an overview as to where columneas grow and how that relates to their general culture. There is an eight-page glossary with some line drawings, and a technical description of *Columnea* in the narrow sense, excluding *Dalbergaria*, *Pentadenia*, and *Trichantha*.

Copies can be purchased for \$20.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping (total \$25.00 check payable to The Gloxinia Gesneriad Growers) by writing to: Bonita Hutcheson (Treasurer), 3166 South Clay Street, Sheridan, CO 80110-1925.

Miriam L. Denham, Chair

Application for Membership — *American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society*

WELCOME – membership in our international society includes quarterly issues of THE GLOXINIAN – *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 AGGS Chapters, Flower Shows, Publications, Research, Slide Programs and Seed Fund. Membership begins upon receipt of dues.

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