



Petal Tones

The newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of
The Gesneriad Society

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President's Message

Greetings everyone!

I hope all is well. Hard to believe it's already frost season here. Our banana plant out in the garden is showing some blackened leaves already, suggesting we have already had a mild frost in Laurel. That means it's time to bring in the last of the gesneriads from the porch and dig the *Achimenes* rhizomes for next year. I've got a hanging pot of *Aeschynanthus splendidus* that is just beginning to bloom. What a surprise, I thought it liked warm weather and needed to almost be in a greenhouse to get heavy blooming. But it's obviously fairly cold tolerant as well.

When you bring plants in for the winter, be sure to isolate them from the rest of your plants as they will almost certainly be bringing in some insects you'd rather not let loose in your collection. The woman two doors down from me at work always gets a fresh crop of aphids when she brings in her Hibiscus. Even if they appear to be without critters when you bring them in, as soon as they warm up the insect life multiplies and soon becomes apparent.

As for *Achimenes*, this year I had enough rhizomes to put in a whole planter box of 'Coral Sunset'. I should have enough rhizomes to do hanging baskets of this mixed with 'Purple King' next year (as well as sharing them at the holiday party next month). After I dig them, I store them dry, but covered. Don't forget to check on them early, because they always start earlier than I expect and can get leggy if left growing in their storage cups. See you all next month.

*Happy growing,
Carol*



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Aeschynanthus splendidus.



Convention 2009 T-Shirts

Members wanting t-shirts for the 2009 Convention can place orders now. Details included in the email distributing this newsletter – or contact Nell Hennessy:

nell.hennessy@fiduciarycounselors.com

The deadline for this early order is November 20, 2008.

In this issue....

Local Interest: National Bonsai and Penjing Museum
Report from the October Meeting: Dog Show
Sinningia bulbosa: Just How Important is Good Culture?

Aeschynanthus longicaulis – Looking Closely

Upcoming Events:

Next Meeting: Saturday Dec. 13, 2008, at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. Holiday Party; slides from 2008 Denver Convention. Doors open: 10:30 am. New members welcome. (Yes, there will be a raffle.)

2009: expect monthly meetings through July.

Part of our local interest series:

National Bonsai and Penjing Museum

<http://www.usna.usda.gov/>

by *Kyoko Imai*

The National Bonsai and Penjing Museum is located at the National Arboretum, right next to the Administration Building where the National Capital Chapter of The Gesneriad Society holds its meetings.

The collection was conceived in 1972, and the first plants arrived in the form of 53 specimens donated by the Nippon Bonsai Association of Japan. A collection of Chinese penjing was donated in 1986, and the collection currently contains some 150 plants including American bonsai specimens.

The age of some of the specimens is astounding. For example, this *Pinus parviflora* 'Miyajima' (Japanese White Pine) has been in training since 1625.



Much younger is this *Pinus densiflora* (Japanese red pine), in training "only" since 1795:



Here are a few more examples. *Juniperus chinensis* var. *sargentii*, in training since 1905:



Juniperus californica, in training since 1964:



Another *Juniperus californica*, in training since 1968:



The National Bonsai and Penjing Museum has a number of pavilions housing the collection, including one for non-hardy plants. The grounds by the pavilions are also landscaped, featuring Asian plants as well as plantings sharing the aesthetic of the bonsai and penjing collection.

This is the entrance to the Chinese pavilion:



Cycad revoluta inside the Chinese pavilion:



Report from the October Meeting: The Dog Show by Kyoko Imai

If you missed the October meeting, you missed some high entertainment! We had numerous entries in the Dog Show - a table full of defoliated, lanky, crunchy plants, seemingly on their very last legs. What a sight to behold! Seriously beautiful stuff.



Ribbons, courtesy of Jim R.!

After the Show (complete with scoring), Jim Roberts discussed the plants, explaining how to re-start, re-grow, and re-groom the entries. If I recall, there was not one plant beyond hope. Here's a sampling.

First up, a little pot of *Diastema luteola* (ined. Wiehler) looking extremely forlorn. In fact, so insignificant that I forgot to take a photo of the whole plant - there wasn't much to it except for tufts of green fuzz... With a little more time, these should be propagation material, and with luck there will be rhizomes in the pot.



Speaking of rhizomes, this *Kohleria* 'Laura' was suffering from some serious inconsistent watering. Ratty leaves, defoliation, stunted *and* lanky growth - what a mess. (Yes, it's my plant.) Again, rhizomes in the pot and in the air point to new growth in times ahead.



Columnneas and Nematanthus and other epiphytes can defoliate too. Do not despair! Many of these will re-sprout from the nodes along the stems.

Moving on to tubers, most *Sinningias* are tuberous, so lanky growth can be cut off and the tuber - once it re-sprouts - only needs better culture. The tip cutting can be rooted to form another plant. If a *Sinningia* with no tuber has lanky growth, try rooting the tip cutting, and see if the old stem will branch.



This *Sinningia sellovii* has a new sprout forming - a perfect time to cut the lanky growth.



All-in-all, an excellent session.

*** * * Wish Lists * * ***

Carol Hamelink:
Kohleria 'Silver Feather'
Chirita 'Betty'

Carol Gates:
Streptocarpus pole-evansii
Streptocarpus liliputana
Streptocarpus galpinii

Streptocarpus saxorum and the other *Streptocarpellas* can be rejuvenated by pruning. The old stems will branch and the cuttings can be rooted. More light and more consistent watering should do wonders.

***Sinningia bulbosa*:**
Just How Important is Good Culture?

At the October meeting, we were treated to a fantastic display of good vs. neglectful culture. These two pots of *Sinningia bulbosa* appear to have come from the same seed packet. Both about two years old, the sheer difference in size is – to say the least – illustrative.



Not obvious enough? Here's another comparison shot:



Did I mention these plants are about the same age?

The applause goes to Naomi Pitts. Seed was sown on November 8, 2006, so the plants are almost exactly two years old. Naomi grew her plants under lights, but put them outside in light shade during the summer. These are the first blooms.



Finally, a closer look at the tubers:



This is a good reminder to those of us who sow seed and then forget about them. (And I am definitely guilty of this habit.) Culture makes a big difference. A bit more care would go a long, long way - better light, better watering, a bit of fertilizing..... The results are dramatic.

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***Aeschynanthus longicaulis*:**

Looking Closely
by Kyoko Imai

Aeschynanthus longicaulis blooms like clockwork every year. In a few weeks, I will have bean-like seed pods hanging from this plant. Commonly grown for its foliage, most people don't care for the greenish yellow flowers (if they notice them at all). Me? I love the purple pollen, the hairy calyxes, the shiny flower buds.... Here are some close-up shots.

Anther:



Along the style:



Calyxes:



Stigma:



And a flower:



National Capital Area Chapter (NCAC), a chapter of the Gesneriad Society, Inc. "The purpose of the chapter shall be to afford a convenient and beneficial association of persons interested in gesneriads; to stimulate a widespread interest in the identification, correct nomenclature, culture, and propagation of gesneriads; and to encourage the origination and introduction of new cultivars." (NCAC bylaws, revised April 1981.)

NCAC usually meets four times a year, September through June, at 10:30 am on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome. Please refer to the latest issue of *Petal Tones*, or contact our chapter president (Carol Hamelink) or publicity and membership chair (John Boggan) for more information.

The Gesneriad Society website: www.gesneriadsociety.org **NCAC website:** www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

President:

Carol Hamelink
13707 Concord Ave.
Laurel, MD 20707
301-604-7255
hamelinkc@yahoo.com

Vice President:

Jim Roberts
2408 Henson Dr.
Marriottsville, MD 21104
(410) 549-2409
jim-roberts@hughes.net

Treasurer:

Larry Skog
611 Roberts Dr. NW
Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 281-3637
SKOGL@si.edu

Secretary:

Jim Christ
13707 Concord Ave.
Laurel, MD 20707
301-604-7255
Chrjp1@yahoo.com

Directors:

John Boggan
John Rountree
Denise Whitman

Committees:

Hospitality:

Lee Linett

Membership:

John Boggan

Programs:

Jim Roberts

Newsletter Editor:

Kyoko Imai
editor@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org
petaltones@gmail.com

Chapter Website:

Jim Hipple
webmaster@nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

Membership:

John Boggan
jkb25@cornell.edu
202-328-8145

WEBSITE

www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org

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