

Gesneri-Eds

Volume 34

The Newsletter of the Tennessee Gesneriad Society

Issue 2

Next meeting
Sunday, Feb 13
2:00
Cheekwood's
Botanic Hall
Refreshments:
Julie
POTM: cold-hardy
gesneriads

A Message from the President

Well, the soggy middle Tennessee winter has settled in with a vengeance this year, wet and quite chilly especially frustrating for those of us who try to do outdoors things as well as inside gardening. However, because the weather has perhaps slowed down some activities doesn't mean that we're armchair gardeners, as pleasant as that sounds. There are still lots of activities going on, lots of things to be done. And if one wants to rest for a few minutes, one can simply sit and watch the *Chirita* buds swell almost as exciting as cutting an apple and watching it go brown, except that the apple goes brown a lot quicker than the buds swell (yes, they really will burst into glorious bloom, but not for a good while yet!)

Here at the greenhouses we're doing our best to get everything cleaned and make a bit more space in the aisles, as our annual open house happens in less than two weeks now. It is a Valentine's Day event, refreshments et al. From 2:30 - 4:00 on Monday the 14th, and you are welcome to come on up if you're in the neighborhood. Some gesners are



sure to be showing off, I hope I'll likely have a table of bloomers out in the main hall, along with other tables set up with plants as stations for kids from the Vanderbilt University Child Care Center who will be coming to visit that morning (might as well pack it all in on one day, hmmm?)

On the home front, I must confess to have been playing with orchids more this month than with gesners. However, I have finally gotten a few long overdue for repotting looking pristine and tidy in new pots. And there is some interest in a couple of "weed" seeds that came in with a few plants I received from Ecuagenera via Michael Riley it's too early to tell if they're anything to keep or not, but they certainly are acting like little epiphyte seedlings that could be gesners, so I'm not pulling them out yet. The weather has put a damper on the construction of the greenhouse window out my home office window, sad to say though I do have enough other plants already to keep me busy. Some early risers from at least a semi-dormant state are starting to grow nice to see the

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From the (co-) editor

Julie Mavity-Hudson

We continue to have a fairly warm winter here, which makes the heating bills more pleasant, though I keep waiting for it to catch up with us. It has been fairly dreary, though, and less sun means fewer flowers in the greenhouse. There is some activity under lights, though, including a flower on *Sinningia* 'Island Silver' which is quite a nice plant I am growing for the first time.

Another fun project here at my house is the sprouting of my cross of *Kohleria* 'Brimstone' onto *K.* 'Texas Rainbow'. The mother plant is the first variegated *Kohleria*, and I am hoping for some variegated babies. The seeds have sprouted but are far too small to tell if they are variegated yet. I also have seedlings of *Chirita gemella* from selfings of my own plant. It will be interesting to see if there is any

variation in the seedlings as I believe most of the plants grown now are clones rather than seedlings. In many plants there is a fair amount of variation seen in plants grown in the wild.

Our program this month will be presented by yours truly. I will give a talk about how to photograph your plants. I will discuss using both film and digital cameras, including simple and not so simple cameras. Anyone can take good flower pictures with just a little knowledge (and a camera, of course!)



Former VP Mike Wenzel at ABG with friend

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Co-Editor *continued from page 1*

The end of January was a very interesting time for Carol Ann and me as we went to Sarasota for an AGGS Board of Directors brainstorming session. Our trip was made with stops at the Atlanta Botanical Garden and the Leu Botanical Garden in Orlando, FL, both of them very interesting places. We were so happy to see TGS's own Mike Wenzel, our former Vice President who moved to Atlanta to work at the ABG. We had a wonderful dinner together at a Malaysian restaurant.

Our workshop in Sarasota took place at the Marie Selby Botanical Garden, which is a wonderful place to visit. The highlights included tours of the working greenhouses and of the rare book room in the library. Those of you on Gesneriphiles have already seen a funny picture of Carol Ann and me taking pictures. We will present a slide show of some of those pictures we took after the program. Hopefully you will find something of interest to you in either the photography program or the slide show from our trip, so be sure and join us.

I would like to make a correction from my notes last month. Due to a wandering mind I typed in *Chirita minor* when I meant *Petrocosmea minor*. Sorry about that, and thanks to Richard for bringing it to my attention. Please feel free to correct me when I goof - sometimes my mind gets ahead of my fingers and there's no telling what I will type.

I learned a valuable lesson about rooting african violet leaves this month. I couldn't figure out why the very special leaves I got from Diane a month ago didn't seem to be rooting, so I finally dug one up. They were starting to rot with no rooting! My media was just a little too wet (I had it in the same box with seeds which I tend to keep a bit wetter) and even though it was on a seedling heat mat it still was not good. I am hoping I have salvaged most of them if I am lucky by cutting them up, but only time will tell.

I would also like to thank Jonathan for hosting our last two meetings, one the holiday party at his house and the other at the Vanderbilt Greenhouse. The holiday party was very nice, with good company, good food and tours of Jonathan's very cool terrariums. It was so interesting to see his tiny colorful frogs. If you missed it, better be sure to save the date this year as it will be the last time the traditional President's party will be held at the Ertelt home since Jonathan's term as President will be over. The meeting last month at the Vanderbilt Greenhouse was a very interesting and pleasant one. We had our business meeting in the very comfortable lobby in the recently built Medical Research Building III, better known as MRBIII, which is very near the greenhouse. We then adjourned to the Greenhouse facility and got a most fascinating tour, which included explanations of the hi-tech climate controls. There are a number of

separate houses, including research and teaching houses, each with its own climate control. Jonathan had brought out some of the most outstanding plants and gave information on each one. We then went into the teaching house, which is packed with an incredible number of amazing plants, including gesneriads, orchids, bromeliads and many others. A good time was had by all.

This month you will find the second in my "Meet the Members" series, the very fascinating story of our new member Patsy Harbison's life with gesneriads. She has had a most interesting life and known some of the most prominent gesneriad growers in the world. Be sure and check it out. I need a volunteer for next month; if you don't volunteer, watch out! You may be drafted!

See you at the meeting.

Julie

How I Started Growing Gesneriads

By Patsy Harbison

When I was living on my own, I started growing general houseplants - pothos, ficus, African violets etc. I moved from Mt. Kisco NY to Concord, CA in 1975. Being new to the area and not knowing many people, I decided to take a few classes at DVC, the local community college. I think the class title was "House and container plants," taught by Georgia Thom and Bartley Schwarz. It was a fantastic class with an emphasis on gesneriads. I was hooked! Bartley and Georgia had commercial greenhouses in Concord and I spent so much time there collecting cuttings, plants et cetera that they finally offered me a part-time job! Bartley brought me to my first San Francisco Gesneriad meeting. I immediately joined and met some wonderful people. Dave and Eileen Masterson were active at that time; they gave me some really unique cuttings. I went to the New York convention with Bartley and Jon Dixon. Bartley introduced his *Aeschynanthus* 'Big Apple' at the convention. In 1981, I took a contract with USAID to go to Maseru, Lesotho for two years and I had to leave behind my gesneriad collection. I gave most to the San Francisco raffle table. While I was in Lesotho I saw a classified in the South African Home and Garden Magazine asking if anyone was interested in gesneriads. Of course I called the phone number and met Chris Kunhardt. I spent many exciting times hiking around his property looking at *Streptocarpus*! I was back in the bay area in 1983 and started going to meetings and collecting again. I met my husband in 1985 and his job took us to the Philippines in 1987-1992, so I gave away my collection again. While in the Philippines, I had some gesneriads and many orchids. Mt. Pinatubo exploded and the ash destroyed most of my plants. When we were back in CA, we knew that we would be going to someplace overseas so I did not even try to collect any plants. We went to Naples, Italy from 1995-2001. Since we had an FPO mailing address I was able to start collecting again. Dennis had a massive stroke in June 2001 and we were medevac-ed to the VA Hospital in

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Growth, even if a bit earlier than I'd expected or planned for. But aren't plants always that way?!

This month's meeting we will be focusing (pun intended) on how we see our plants when we look at them through a camera lens and how we can best capture them as a print or a slide, or an image to be shared via the internet. Julie will be leading us through the hows and whys of photographing some of our favorite and surely most cooperative subjects. Even if you don't own a camera or don't plan on photographing your plants, the meeting should be a good one perhaps to give you a different way of viewing your collection. Sunday the 13th at 2 be there! Good Growing.

Jonathan

How I Started *continued from page 3*

Virginia. Our friend watched our house, pets et cetera in Italy but the plants did not survive. In December 2001 we went back to Italy to pack out our household stuff and bring the pets to the states. We moved into our house here in Mosheim, TN in April 2001. After we were unpacked and settled in I started collecting gesneriads again. I joined Gesneriphiles and the Tennessee Gesneriad Society. I finally went to my first meeting on Jan. 10, 2005. At the meeting I was able to put faces to names, meet some new people and had a wonderful tour of the Vanderbilt greenhouses. ☺

2005 Meeting Dates and Programs

- Feb. 13-** Photo Technology by Julie
- March 3-6** -Nashville Lawn and Garden Show
- April 10-** Propagation Workshop-Carol Ann and Julie
- May 15-** Diane Fischer on Growing African Violets
- June 12-** Hybridizing Workshop by Richard
- July 17-** AGGS Convention Report
- Aug. 14-** Preparing Plants for Show by Tim Tuttle
- Sept. 11-** Floral Design by Molly
- Oct. 21-23-** TGS Show and Sale at Cheekwood
- Nov. 13-** Gesneriad Slide Show
- Dec.-** Christmas Party



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