



Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

(articles and photos selected from Chapter newsletters, our journal GESNERIADS, and original sources)

Volume 4, Number 1

January 2013



Welcome to the fourth year of **Gleanings!** This issue includes Ruth Coulson's adventures in hybridizing for peloric *Sinningias*, Jaco Truter's discussion of *Streptocarpus aylae*, and Paul Kroll's observations on growing *Gasteranthus*.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings!**

Mel Grice, Editor



Patrick Forgey contributed these photos of *Sinningia schiffneri*. He acquired this plant as a small potted cutting at the 2012 Gesneriad Society Convention in Seattle. Patrick lives near Seattle, Washington, USA and is a member of the Puget Sound Gesneriad Society.



Adventures in Hybridizing for Peloric Sinningias

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Around twenty years ago a group to which I belong held a Gesneriad Display in a big lath-covered fernery at a large nursery in the west of Sydney. It turned out to be a weekend of the hottest conditions for many years.

It was noticeable that large soft flowers were most damaged by the hot dry conditions. Large-flowered *Achimenes* and *Sinningia speciosa* flowers suffered most. *Sinningias* like *Sinningia cardinalis* and its different forms, *Sinningia iarae* and *Sinningia glazioviana*, suffered very little damage. I decided right then not to grow too many varieties of *S. speciosa* but to concentrate on those that proved themselves tougher and more resilient. We were already growing *S. cardinalis* 'Skydiver' and *S. cardinalis* 'George Kalmbacher'. I wondered whether it was possible to breed from these to get plants with larger and more open flowers that might not rival the size of *S. speciosa* varieties, but would at least be up-facing and display their centers and markings.

I worked on that sporadically for a while, but since 2000 have done quite a lot of hybridizing. I am not sure I would have started on this path had I realized just how many generations would be needed. I am now up to cross number 176 and still going. Although I have mainly concentrated on *Sinningia* species like *S. cardinalis*, *S. iarae*, *S. glazioviana* and so on and my own hybrids from them, from time to time I cross out to other species to introduce new characteristics. Such a cross was to *Sinningia globulosa*. I like the idea of this very hairy plant.

The initial plants from crossing a peloric *Sinningia* with *S. globulosa* were all zygomorphic and all orange shades from pale apricot to quite dark. All the plants were mighty plants. *Sinningia globulosa* is beautiful with its strong stems, bright flowers and hairs covering all. I find it needs plenty of light, preferring some hours per day of direct sun, to keep its stems sturdy. These initial hybrids needed at least as much sun but still grew very large. I finally retained only a couple of them in pots. I do have quite a few around the garden where they do very well indeed.



Sinningia globulosa

I selfed one of the plants and in this next generation I found most of the seedlings resembled the initial cross, but there were a couple that were peloric. Only one has been kept. I called that one 'Fuzzy Bear' because it does show a lot of the hairiness of *Sinningia globulosa* when the shoots are young. This is less evident when the plant is mature. The flowers are poor in one respect. They are only about 25 mm. long. They are plentiful though and they last well. The chief attraction is the color. The outside is a pale pinkish apricot, but the face of the flower is a very bright, almost fluorescent-looking hot pink. This has proved a very difficult color to capture in photography.

A more recent step has been to cross this with a pink calyx double *Sinningia*, one parent of which was *Sinningia eumorpha* 'Saltao'. A calyx double flower in hot pink on a hairy plant, perhaps? Of the seeds planted



Sinningia 'Fuzzy Bear' — the seed parent



Unnamed calyx double — the pollen parent

virtually all germinated. I was a little dismayed by the number that I seemed to have since they were likely to be very large plants too, given the size and strength of *S. globulosa*, and the fact that *S. eumorpha* grows big strong leaves. The majority of the seedlings were community planted in large troughs and bowls outdoors where there is full sun for six to seven hours per day, as I expected they might be gluttons for sunshine like *S. globulosa*. Grown in these conditions the plants have surprised me by not being overly huge (this first season at least).

I am likely to discard most of what I have grown out so far as



Sinningia 150-3

they are neither calyx double nor fully peloric, although some of the coloring is excellent. In fact I got only one calyx double plant from those that have so far flowered. It is not fully peloric, but I am keeping it for the time being.

This result is a bit disappointing, but I am happy to say that there is one seedling that I think is a winner. It has fully peloric flowers that just turn out to be slightly larger than I have achieved before. They are twice the length of those on 'Fuzzy Bear'. The color is a medium to light pink with dark raspberry/magenta markings on the face of the bloom. This coloring is a little less common since the majority of flowers in this

part of the genus *Sinningia* are red to orange. I was also pleased to see that it is fairly compact, although as the growing season has progressed it had become a little taller but still quite acceptable. For now it is just known as 150-3, and will need to prove itself next season. I am propagating it, selfing it, and using it in a couple of further crosses.

If I have any seed left of the cross that produced it, as I am sure I have, I will plant a little more to see if I can find that very special calyx double



Typical of the other seedlings from the cross — pretty, but not what was wanted.

The only calyx double yet to appear amongst these seedlings.



Convention 2013

The Gesneriad Society's
57th Annual Convention
Hyatt Regency Toronto
370 King Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
July 2 - July 6
Hosted by the
Toronto Gesneriad Society

REGISTER NOW

Flower Show and Plant Sales
Open to the Public and FREE
Friday, July 5 – 9 AM to 5 PM (sales)
2 PM to 5 PM (show)
Saturday, July 6 – 8:30 AM to 12 Noon (sales)
8:30 AM to 3 PM (show)

Streptocarpus aylae — another treasure from the Pondoland area of South Africa

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Isando, South Africa

Streptocarpus aylae is another newly described species (described in the same paper as *Streptocarpus actinoflorus*), this time from the Pondoland area of the Transkei, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The Pondoland area of endemism is particularly rich in unique *Streptocarpus* species. *Streptocarpus lilliputana*, *Streptocarpus porphyrostachys*, *Streptocarpus trabeculatus*, etc., are all well-known representatives from this area.



This gem has so far been found in two small colonies in adjacent river gorges of the Mkambati Nature Reserve, growing amongst plants of *Streptocarpus modestus*, to which it morphologically bears some resemblance. The flowers, however, are markedly different. The large (up to 70mm) purple, campanulate flowers have no throat markings or nectary lines, but do carry a unique, large, cruciform-shaped yellow bar on the floor of the corolla tube. This is quite a unique marking in the genus, only being found in representatives of the *Streptocarpus cyaneus*-complex in

Mpumalanga Province. The only other campanulate Southern African species are the much smaller flowered *Streptocarpus galpinii* and another as yet undescribed white unifoliate species from Swaziland.



Gasteranthus

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This genus is a challenging one for me, not to grow, but to bloom. I am currently growing several species of *Gasteranthus*: *Gasteranthus atratus*, *Gasteranthus diverticularis*, *Gasteranthus calcaratus* subspecies *calceolus*, *Gasteranthus tenellus* and *Gasteranthus villosus*. The last two are still quite young plants as I received them as cuttings late in 2011.

Although my plant room (all under lights) is quite humid, I continue to grow the *Gasteranthus* plants completely enclosed in terrarium conditions. They are grown in a light soil mix; watered and fertilized the same as all my gesneriads: once a week, with one-quarter strength fertilizer (rotated among 4 or 5 brands) the water adjusted to a pH of approximately 6.8 with distilled vinegar. I also add a drop of Superthrive to each gallon of water. Once a month, I add one-quarter of a teaspoon Epsom salts per gallon along with the fertilizer. This seems to keep the foliage green by making the fertilizer available and not "locked up" in the growing medium. The *Gasteranthus* species I have require low light and I grow them on the floor of the plant room, next to the shelves with four T-12 tubes.

Of those I am growing, only two are possible candidates for the ornamental foliage classes at shows: *Gasteranthus atratus* and *Gasteranthus diverticularis*. This latter one was collected in the late spring of 2007 on a gesneriad research group expedition to Ecuador led by John L. Clark. Plants there were found growing near a stream flowing down a mountain and described as follows: ". . . a very interesting *Gasteranthus* species that had whorled leaves and an orange blossom with a pronounced pouch with irregular margins on the lower region of the corolla. It was a very exciting find."

I obtained a tiny plant as the successful bidder while attending the Gesneriad Society's convention in 2008. It has not yet bloomed for me, probably because I keep taking cuttings to share. The leaves have interesting silvery markings which make it attractive even when out of bloom.

Gasteranthus atratus has attractive bullate leaves that, when mature, are bronze colored and shiny. Younger shoots are green. The blooms on this plant are trumpet-shaped and very yellow. I have bloomed this one and exhibited it at several shows with two or three blooms on it. Once, it was in contention for best-in-show, but one of the judging panel members dismissed it with the comment, "not enough bloom". At that time most of us had not seen this plant in bloom at all! Bill Price's spectacular entry of *Gasteranthus atratus* at the Vancouver convention will forever remain in our minds as absolutely breathtaking. I do feel that we must, as judges, beware of considering that plant as a "benchmark", since we may never again see one that glorious and with so many open blooms.

I received small plantlets of *Gasteranthus* subspecies *calceolus* a few years ago. I believe they had been grown from seed. John L. Clark, the collector of this particular species, tells me that it was collected in Zamora-Chinchipec in Ecuador. It is restricted to the Eastern Andes and is a relatively recent taxonomic name published by Dr. Larry Skog. It has been a very slow grower over the past three years. I have not yet been able to get this plant to bloom. This plant has medium to dark green bullate leaves and no significant markings.

The article on the preceding page appeared originally in APPRAISAL, The Newsletter of the Judges Interest Group, Vol. 33, No. 43, September 2012, Mel Grice, editor.

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Bill Price's spectacular entry of *Gasteranthus atratus*

Photos courtesy of Mel Grice



Gasteranthus villosus
Nancy Kast



Gasteranthus tenellus
Nancy Kast



Gasteranthus diverticularis
Bill Price



Gasteranthus bilsaensis
Nancy Kast

Gasteranthus delphinioides
Nancy Kast



From the editor —

I can't believe that this is the beginning of the fourth year of publication for **Gleanings**. It seems like only yesterday I started work on the first issue. Please take photos to send me that can be shared in future issues.

Please continue sending articles. If you have suggestions, comments, or items for possible inclusion in future issues, please feel free to contact me at editor.gleanings@gesneriadsociety.org.

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