





Newsletter

*Of the
Toronto African Violet and
Gesneriad Society*

We're not strangers – only friends you have not met

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 *“There are those who try to bottle the old year for safekeeping but at midnight the cork always pops”*
~ Terri Guillemets, “Memories old & New,” 2005 

President’s Message



I want to wish everyone a nice holiday season and Happy New Year. The New Year’s wish is especially heartfelt because it’s been a different and difficult year for all of us with Covid and I’m hopeful 2021 will be much better.

The pandemic is still a major concern and until things improve, and it’s deemed safe to meet in person again, we’ll continue to have our monthly meetings via Zoom. With the current circumstances, the decision was made to cancel our 2021 spring show. We would have to start the planning for the show now so had to make the decision. We are hopeful, and will think positive thoughts, things will improve and that we can have our September sale and are keeping that on the schedule with the hope it will be able to happen. We’ll keep you informed.

So, for now we’ll meet virtually and please join our Zoom meetings. They aren’t the same as in person I know but in spite of that we are able to, and do, share our experiences, have show and tell, and learn from the programs we do. Plus it is a great way to keep us connected. I hope to see you at the meetings.

Our January meeting has an interesting topic and definitely one to answer any questions you may have. Hope to see you then.

Happy Growing in 2021!

Julie

**You’re invited to attend the next
Zoom meeting
On Sunday, January 10, 2021
at your home
at 2 P.M.
Please bring a guest**



**The program will include
“Surgery is Needed”
Panel of experts
Also
Show and Tell**

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Playback by The Listener

Our December 13, 2020 Zoom meeting was attended by 14 people, pictures of all on the following page. There was show and tell and chatter. As you see Stan Sudol and Judy Zinni had Christmas trees in the background. Judy also showed her son's Christmas village. Louise Cheung had a tropical background with palm trees waving beside her.

You can eat and drink at a Zoom meeting, but it is nothing like the normal social meetings, eating all the tasty dishes TAVGS members create. There is always more food than can be eaten, especially desserts. In person meetings are the best, and once the number of cases of people with this dreadful virus drop, we all have our shots, and in person meetings are allowed again we must make up for this unfortunate Covid-19 imposed interlude with lots of eating and plant exchanges.

Stan Sudol organized the Zoom meeting and Julie Thompson attended to Society affairs.

Sue Smith suggested the following YouTube video by Dale Martins of The Gesneriad Society. It is 23.3 minutes with ads which can be skipped. You may find it helpful.

<https://youtu.be/hPxHYNw-a8Y>

Most of you know Karin Brockmueller, Secretary, grower and hybridizer of violets and maker of many ingenious violet holders. Karin's husband, Ian Bradshaw, passed away November 18th. We offer Karin our sincere condolences at this very sad time for her. She is currently changing residence, and we look forward to seeing her and her plants again in future. Our very best wishes Karin.

The next meeting, again on Zoom, is on January 10th, 2021 at 2 p.m. It is called "Surgery is needed" and questions will be answered by a panel of experts.

Find out best practices to remove suckers, extra leaves and long necks, how to deal with crown rot and more.

The TAVGS Calendar for 2021 can be found on the website, <http://tavgs.ca>, under the tabs Resources and PDF as Meetings Calendar.



DS Aliye Parusa
Alla Kotova



Funambule
Alla Kotova



Ness Satin Rose
Alla Kotova

Plants above grown in the last two years. These small past photos by Alla Kotova are for encouragement and motivation in 2021.

**TAVGS HOLIDAY MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2020**



Beverley Williams



Bruce Williams



Jackie Mills



Sue Smith



Diane Pagé



Pierre Laforest



Louise Cheung



Judy Zinni



Julie Thompson



Emma Bygott



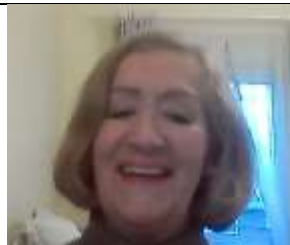
Mila Popovich



Stan Sudol



Sonia Brock



Gillian Smith



TAVGS Members who attended the Zoom meeting on December 13, 2020.

A larger copy of this collage is on the TAVGS website.

All photos on this page and of President Julie Thompson on front page by Stan Sudol.

WHY ARE POTS ROUND MORE OFTEN THAN SQUARE?

Story and Photos by Gillian E. Smith

Why are most plant pots round and not square? A Guardian newspaper (U.K.) reader recently asked this question, wondering why, since square pots could be pushed together to save space, they were not more widely used.

Our member Paul Lee says there's more soil in a square than a round pot. He says the squares are much more efficient in space utilization and you can use a three and a half inch square compared to a four inch round and have the same soil volume.



Round Pot

Rosemarinus officinalis



Square Pot

Rosemarinus officinalis

Tradition seems to be the major reason for more round pots, but there are other reasons:

- Originally pots were formed from long sausage-shapes of clay, and later turned on a wheel, so the shape had to be round;
- Round is structurally stronger than square against a sideways impact, especially important if the material of the plant pot is brittle. This is the same as cups, glasses, bottles, pipes, cans and even airplanes;
- Round pots are easier to clean – no corners to scour;
- The space between round pots allows for a cool and damp environment for beetles, worms and other crawling and slithering beasts, a Guardian reader said (Bob and Dee Stewart find red-backed salamanders under pots in their greenhouses in Massachusetts too);
- There is a theory upheld by many that soil circulates in a slow-moving, granular vortex which makes distribution of nutrients easier. The movement is clockwise in the northern hemisphere and anti-clockwise in the southern hemisphere (this would only work in larger pots where plants are left undisturbed for some time – if frequent repotting occurs the vortex effects will be negated). Paul Lee believes the root direction is a response to gravity called geotropism. This makes roots go down and when they cannot go down they go around. He thinks the reason the roots circle clockwise here is because of the way the earth turns;
- We use round pots because, with African violets, a round pot means that the plant grows round, says Doris Brownlie;

WHY ARE POTS ROUND MORE OFTEN THAN SQUARE? ...Continued

- In a square pot nutrients can get scattered into pockets at each corner, so the vortex is slowed down and it is harder for plants to take up those nutrients (again this is only a problem if plants are left undisturbed);
- Square pots are better for large plants and small trees, which will get less pot-bound from the roots going round and round;



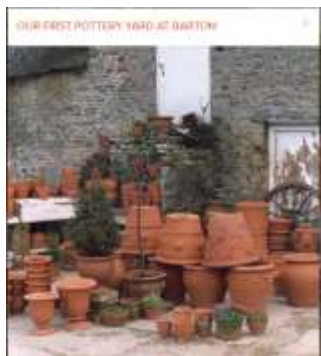
ROOTS

Roots of a two-year old *Rosemarinus officinalis* in a six inch pot. Roots have gone down and then round in a clockwise direction.

Many members grow plants strictly for show and sale. Many members also have no outdoor space, and grow indoors only. In both these cases and for ease of transit obviously plastic pots are the only kind to use. One member recently recommended transparent pots so that she can see what the roots are up to—it seems plants do not have the same privacy rights as humans. Translucent and transparent pots are used by some but advantages versus disadvantages of those are not yet clear.

In some parts of the world, mainly with warmer temperatures than Ontario, plants which are treasures are kept for many years in terra cotta pots - often ornamented so that the pot is beautiful as well as the plant. Paul Lee says he understands that terracotta pots are better at growing plants because there is a symbiosis between the clay from the earth and the plants from the earth.

I kept a *Sinningia* ‘Apricot Bouquet’ in a Whichford Pot for three years. The plant thrived outside in Toronto in summer, and attracted hummingbirds, but did not like my inside space in winter. I still have two Whichford Pottery pots which are at least 15 years old. They are created to withstand frost in the U.K. I haven’t tested them in winter in Toronto. A Toronto potter tried to make frost-resistant pots, but they were too heavy to be used. We have to bring terra cotta pots inside during the cold months in Toronto.



Whichford Pots in Warwickshire, U.K. creates terra cotta pots.

www.whichfordpottery.com

In 1976 Jim and Dominique Keeling established Whichford Pottery designing and making a wide range of English flowerpots using traditional hand-thrown and hand-pressed methods for discerning gardeners worldwide and it continues.

In 1985 Jim Keeling was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship as a “flower potter” in the U.K. which enabled him to study in Italy and enlarge his repertory.

Which do you think is the best shape – round or square?

WHERE TO FIND PLANTS

Story by Gillian E. Smith

In these days of cold, dark and virus we long for plants to give us hope with their growth and to provide colour and beauty. Unfortunately the current cold temperatures preclude mailing. Perhaps by late April or early May 2021 we will be able to receive plants by mail, depending on the weather.

On our website <http://tavgs.ca> under the tabs Resources and Sources you will find two of our members who normally sell plants:

SaintpauliaCa

Operated by Alla and Nick

Hamilton, Ontario

Growing and Selling violets since 2012

[Shop on Etsy](#)

On Etsy since 2020

<http://www.saintpaulia.ca/>

Toronto Violets

Operated by Lyudmyla Kashuba

Buy/For Sale

<https://torontoviolets.wordpress.com/>

Those of us who know Alla and Luda appreciate what magnificent plants they produce and how many prizes they win at shows. Alla says that in the past she has sent out plants in April and they have died of cold on their journey.

Most of you know Lisa Reynolds, who tries to find specific plants by name for members. I recently asked Lisa what to say to a member searching for miniature African Violets. Lisa recommended the commercial firm Bloomlovers.com in Quebec, but said that nobody is shipping plants anywhere at the moment – wait until the weather warms up.

Personally I would not advise buying from small convenience stores around the City. Some of the people running these stores are excellent plant growers, but these plants are more likely to have critters in them or contain diseases. Online Etsy and other sites have plants, but these are often very expensive.



Different kinds of African Violets and Gesneriads are grown from leaves, tubers, rhizomes and seeds.

If you are a member of The Gesneriad Society, one of our parent societies, you can purchase seeds from the seed fund, which accepts seeds from members, and some of their plants are quite rare. As newer members may not know, members attending conventions with sales of The Gesneriad Society and The African Violet Society of Canada are wonderful places to purchase plants. Most of our local stock in Ontario came from these groups and was then propagated and hybridized locally.

Keep hoping, keep dreaming, and perhaps in late April, if warm enough, there will be plants, leaves, tubers and rhizomes available.

**PETROCOSMEA GROWN AND PHOTOGRAPHED
BY BEVERLEY WILLIAMS (December 2020)**

		
<i>Petrocosmea martinii</i>	<i>Petrocosmea martinii</i>	<i>Petrocosmea minor</i> bloom

		
<i>Petrocosmea minor</i>	<i>Petrocosmea</i> 'Paul Kroll' bloom	<i>Petrocosmea</i> 'Paul Kroll'

**PRIMULINA AND KOHLERIA IMAGES GROWN AND PHOTOGRAPHED
BY JULIE THOMPSON**

		
<i>Primulina pseudoglandulosa</i>	<i>Primulina linearicalyx</i>	<i>Primulina linearifolia</i> variegated

		
<i>Primulina linearifolia</i>	<i>Kohleria</i> 'Red Ryder'	<i>Primulina linearifolia</i> bloom

PLEASE NOTE: The normal TAVGS 2021 show and sale, planned for April 10 and 11, 2021, has been cancelled because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. We will recommence in-person events as soon as TAVGS Board, Toronto City and Toronto Botanical Gardens deem safe.