



Newsletter

of the
**Toronto African Violet and
Gesneriad Society**

We're not strangers - only friends you have not met!

Vol. 1 - No. 9

<http://tavgs.ca/>

November 2018

"How sad would be November if we had no knowledge of the spring!"
~Edwin Way Teale, Circle of the Seasons, 1953

President's Message

This month's program is one for which I have a special affinity, because when I was at the Somerset Farm Institute, an Agricultural College, I had my first exposure to streptocarpus growing in the alpine house. I became fascinated with them, and that led me eventually to the Toronto African Violet and Gesneriad Society. That little exposure years ago has led me to making many good friends and learning about Gesneriads.

I hope many of you will turn out to hear Irina Firer talk on streptocarpus, so that we can get fresh ideas, and learn something new.

It is time to, if not already, for us to think about taking cuttings and repotting for the show.

I should practice more than I preach.

While have been away I have had the chance to visit the Edinburgh botanical gardens where there is a very impressive collection of Gesneriads. Every one to whom I have spoken have remarked on the collection they have there. Another little hidden gem was Dublin Botanical gardens where we came across some hidden gems scattered around the greenhouses and outside, Ramondas etc.

I hope you can all come out at the next meeting and support Irina.

Paul



S. 'Jolly Wit's End' flowers - Robert Hall

You're invited to attend the next meeting on Sunday, November 11, 2018 at the Toronto Botanical Garden 777 Lawrence Avenue East at 2:00 P.M. Garden Hall Please bring a guest



The program will include "Streptocarpus Workshop" Speaker: Irina Firer also Mini Show, Sales Table Raffle, Show & Tell

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**Playback
by
The Listener**

It was a beautiful Fall day for our Oct 14th meeting. Twenty-five members attended. Parking was a problem as the nice weather prompted many people to come to the gardens.

Sue Smith attended to the affairs of the Society, as Paul Lee was on a vacation, I believe to Iceland.

Doris Brownlie located a misplaced envelope that contained a few Spring Show Award Certificates and they were presented to Sue Smith and Robert Hall by Doris. Congratulations to Sue and Robert.

Stan Sudol had a camera problem with the flashy thing not working properly. It was a challenge to provide photos for this newsletter.

We had a nice mini show which Robert and Doris judged and provided some excellent critique and suggestions.

The break included a raffle organized by Arthur Jenkins. There were many plants and soils that were won. Thanks to Arthur and those who contributed items.

The program was a Saintpaulia workshop by Karin Brockmueller. Julie Thompson and Bev Williams also contributed. I don't think any subject was missed, all questions answered, and a multitude of tips were offered. Thank you for a wonderful presentation, we all learned something.



Program for the November 11 meeting is Streptocarpus with Irina Firer.

Mini Show
October 14, 2018

Judges: Robert Hall
Doris Brownlie

TGS Judging Rules

Class 1

1st *Sinningia* 'Lil Georgie'

Emma Bygott

AVSA Judging Rules

Class 1

1st S. 'Rob's Sasparilla'

Bill Simpson



Class 2

1st *Sinningia* 'Kevin Garnett' **BIS**

Emma Bygott

1st S. 'Jolly Wit's End' **BIS**

Robert Hall



Best in Show
S. 'Jolly Wit's End'
Robert Hall

Best in Show
***Sinningia* 'Kevin Garnett'**
Emma Bygott

One of Robert Hall's Award Certificates was for Best Novice in the African Violet Show and the plant shown in the mini show is the same plant.

Sinningia 'Kevin Garnett', 2009, IR091098, Tim Tuttle, PA. (*S.* 'Tropical Twilight' x *S.* 'Playful Porpoise'). Cross made Sept. 2000, planted Nov. 2000 and first flowered Sept. 2001. Fertile but reproducible only vegetatively.



Sinningia 'Kevin Garnett' flower
Emma Bygott

Class 3

1st *Episcia* 'Jim's Pineapple'

Don Gates



Members Update

A warm welcome to
our new member

Jeanette Ezeard
York



Membership Renewal for 2019 has begun.

As in past years, if you wish to pay for membership in The Gesneriad Society, the Judging Interest Group, or the Gesneriad Hybridizers Association, or AVSA, NYSAVS you may submit payment through TAVGS together with your TAVGS membership. In this case, the deadline for payment is **December 1, 2018**, which means you should do it at the November 11 meeting.

The Poppy

Each November, over thirteen million poppies blossom in Canada. They blossom on the jackets, dresses and hats of nearly half the Canadian population and they have blossomed for over 90 years, since 1921. The poppy is the symbol that individuals use to show that they remember those who were killed in the wars and peace keeping operations that Canada has been involved in.



*Remembrance
Day
November 11*

A couple of Grow to Show Calendars for your consideration.

BRIAN CONNOR'S SCHEDULE FOR GROWING TO SHOW

Brian Connor has exhibited prize-winning plants at many African Violet Society Shows including the Baltimore African Violet Club, the Mid Atlantic African Violet Society, The Gesneriad Society's and the African Violet Society of America's national shows and was kind enough to forward his schedule for forcing not only *Saintpaulias*, but also *Sinningia* and *Streptocarpus*. Remember, if you keep you home cooler that 70° F. you may need to adjust the schedule for your growing conditions.

Reprinted with permission from The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society Volume XIV, No. 7 - March 2012, Quentin Schlieder, editor.

Plant Type	12 Weeks _/_/	10 Weeks _/_/	8 Weeks _/_/	7 Weeks _/_/	6 Weeks _/_/	5 Weeks _/_/	4 Weeks _/_/	Finish Date _/_/
African Violets	-Repot If needed -Disbud -Feed 20-20-20 -12H light -Groom	-Disbud -Feed 12-36-14 -14H lt -Groom, Remove Suckers	-Disbud REMOVE ALL BUD possible -Feed 12-36-14, Give one shot of Super Bloom (P=50) -14 H Lt	-Disbud what is past leaves -Feed 20-20-20 -14 H Lt -Bathe -Groom, Remove Suckers -14 H	-Disbud Only what is past leaves! Then no more! -Feed 20-20-20 -Groom, Remove Suckers -14 H	-Look for buds -Feed 20-20-20 -14 H	-Look for buds (75%) -Feed 12-36-14 Or shot Of Super Bloom (P=50) -Final bath	-Final Weeks go back to feed 20-20-20 -Groom Like Never before
Streptocarpus	-Repot If needed -Disbud -Feed 20-20-20 -12H light -Groom	-Disbud -Feed 12-36-14 (or other Rel. Hi P) -14H lt -Groom	-Disbud -Feed 12-36-14 -14H lt Give one shot of Super Bloom (P=50, Optional) -Groom	-Disbud -Feed 20-20-20 -14 H Lt -Bathe -Groom	-Disbud -Feed 20-20-20 -14 H Lt -Bathe -Groom	-If cool, Stop disbud! -If warm, stop at 4.5 wk -Feed 20-20-20 -14 H	-Feed 12-36-14 Or shot Of Super Bloom (P=50, optional) -Final bath -Groom	-Final Weeks go back to feed 20-20-20 -Groom Like Never before
Mini-Sinningia	-Repot Into Show pot, 2-2.5" -Remove Lowest 2-4 leaves -Pot so leaves barely above rim -Cover Tuber -Feed 20-20-20	-Disbud -Feed 12-36-14 -Turn plant Every 2-3 days From now on -14 H lt	-Stop Disbud -Feed 12-36-14 -Decide if 3' pot needed is if it is a big mini -14 H lt -Groom	-Feed 20-20-20 -14 H -Groom	-Feed 20-20-20 -14 H lt -Groom	-Feed 20-20-20 -14 H -Groom	-Feed a Shot of 12-36-14 Nothing stronger -14 H -Groom	-Final Weeks go back to feed 20-20-20 -Groom Like Never before

Saintpaulia Grow to Show Calendar

Date Sunday 2019	Weeks Until Show	Fertilizer	Light	Plant Care
Jan 20	12	Foliar feed once in addition to regular fertilizing program	Maintain at minimum 10 hours per day	Remove leaves as necessary. Pot down necks or pot up
Jan 27	11	Maintain regular fertilizing program	Maintain	Continue to repot and groom
Feb 3	10	Start "bloom booster" fertilizer (5-50-17 or 12-55-6) formula	Put one new tube in each light fixture, if needed	Completely disbud all plants, except perhaps minis and trailers
Feb 10	9	Continue "bloom booster" formula	Increase light time by 1 hour	Disbud heavily variegated varieties and double varieties for the last time. Continue to disbud all other varieties.
Feb 17	8	Continue "bloom booster" formula Foliar feed again	Increase light time by 1 hour	Disbud doubles and lightly variegated varieties for the last time. Continue to disbud semi-double stars and singles. Check for suckers.
Feb 24	7	Change to 12-36-14 or 15-30-15 fertilizer for remaining weeks	Increase light time by 1 hour	Disbud semi-doubles for the last time
Mar 3	6	Maintain	Maintain	Disbud singles for the last time. Check for suckers. Wash foliage.
Mar 10	5	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Mar 17	4	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Mar 24	3	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Mar 31	2	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Apr 7	1	Maintain	Maintain	Remove spent blossoms, peduncles and pedicel stubs. Check for suckers. Brush away soil particles, etc. Pot down necks or pot up only if necessary.
Apr 14	0	Showtime! Good Luck!		

Streptocarpus

by Brian Connor

*Reprinted from The National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society
Newsletter - Petal Tones September 2018, Newsletter Editor: Donna Beverin*

People often tell beginners to grow Streptocarpus or some other gesneriad “just like African violets (AVs).” Well there are many similarities but there are some differences. Good bright light is essential if you want flowers. Streps, like AVs, can reward you with blossoms at any time. If culture is good, some hybrids will bloom much of the year under artificial light, although plants may take a break and slow down for 6-12 weeks in winter (sometimes a briefer period in summer also). Most cultural problems are associated with watering once the proper light is found.

LIGHT: Streptocarpus requires light similar to but better than AVs. For natural light that means an EAST or WEST window. A SOUTH window may be too strong and require sheer curtains or the plants can be placed several feet back from the window. A NORTH window is usually not sufficient, but I once had a NORTHEAST window on the 5th floor of an apartment building where my Streps thrived. Windows can vary and may be obstructed by trees or buildings, so you will have to experiment to find that happy spot for your plants.

I have started supplementing natural light with a few hours of light from a single T-5 fluorescent bulb. The light is on a couple of hours BEFORE or AFTER the window is bright with sunlight. This ensures that plants get some good light on cloudy days.

Many excellent growers rely completely on artificial light. Two T-8 fluorescent bulbs that are on for 11-12 hours can grow healthy, blooming Streps. T-5 fluorescent lights can also be excellent for Streptocarpus, although I find T-5 excessive and too strong for standard African violets. There are two simple ways to control artificial light: 1. Length of time the lights are on 2. Distance the plants are placed from lights. I have heard of people using 3-4 tube T-8 fluorescent lights instead of 2, but I have found this too much light for my Streps, although it may be a good set-up for high light gesneriads like some of the Sinningia species. One experienced Strep grower that I know uses two T-12's and moves the plants closer to the lights and increases the time the lights are on before flower shows. Many people are experimenting successfully with LED lights, which are more environmentally friendly than fluorescent tubes. LED lights can be used as ribbon strips that are attached to shelves or retro-fit tubes that are placed in T-8 or T-5 fluorescent light fixtures. This is a topic in itself, but here is one interesting “How to” article: <http://renovatedfaith.com/.../grow-african-violets-with-led/>

TEMPERATURE: Streptocarpus prefer normal household temperatures, 18- 27degrees C (65-80 degrees F.) A 5-10 degree drop in temperature at night can be beneficial, but is not required. Constant temperatures above 30 C (85 F) are detrimental. Streptocarpus can survive quite well at temperatures down to 10 C (50 F) (and even lower). The plants will slow down and stop growing at temperature extremes outside their preferred range. At high or very low temperatures, please water very carefully.

WATER: Watering is where most people run into trouble with their plants. Streps like very light, even moisture but hate soggy soil and “wet feet” even more so than AVs. If you are watering by hand, let the soil surface go dry. The soil should not be bone dry before the plant drinks again. However, if in doubt, it is better to wait a day. Most of the time Streps recover from a severe wilt. They will not recover from consistent over watering or inconsistent watering (over watering then under watering multiple times). Paradoxically, Streps lend themselves beautifully to self-watering methods with one important consideration. The soil mix MUST be very well aerated. If wicking, using capillary matting, Oyama pots, etc., one MUST use a soil mix with a very high percentage of drainage material (typically perlite).

SOIL MIX: As suggested above, the soil mix is dependent on how you water. If watering by hand, the classic 1:1:1 mix (1 part each sphagnum peat, perlite, vermiculite) is a good choice. Some people no longer use vermiculite so an easy variation would be 2 parts PRO-MIX or PRO-MIX HP with one part perlite. Other soil mixes, for instance coir based, can also be substituted for the PRO-MIX, if you like. Depending on pH of water and soil, some add dolomite lime to the soil. A small amount of animal manure (the odorless kind) can benefit established plants, with the organic material not more than 3-5% of the soil mix.

NOTE: A few Russian/Ukrainian hybrids do not like the addition of the organics and are referred to as Salt Sensitive. Some growers have used good quality long fiber sphagnum moss for Salt Sensitive Streps.

If wick watering, using self-watering pots (Oyama or ceramic) or capillary matting, I find it preferable to use a soil mix with at least 50% perlite. Here is my current “Streptocarpus Wicking/Oyama” soil mix: 2 parts Pro-Mix or Milled Sphagnum Moss, 2 parts small perlite, 2 parts medium perlite, 1 part horticultural charcoal. It sounds crazy, but it is only about 30% peat or sphagnum and 70% drainage material (mostly perlite). With

a soil mix this light and lean, a very dilute fertilizer must be added to the water reservoirs, at about 1/8 strength. I am currently growing in OYAMA pots mostly.

FERTILIZER: Strength of fertilizer will depend on how you water and how often you wish to feed your plants. If you are hand watering, you could fertilize at every watering at 1/8 strength (some dilute closer to 1/4 strength). If you fertilize much less frequently, you can concentrate the fertilizer some, but not more than 1/4 to half strength. When wick watering or using Oyama pots, add dilute fertilizer at 1/8 strength to the water. This is important because the soil is very lean and the plants need a source of N, P, K as well as Calcium, Magnesium and trace elements.

Decide on a couple of good fertilizers and rotate them. Dyna-Gro Foliage-Pro (9-3-6) is an excellent, reliable fertilizer for Streptocarpus. Honestly, many AV or orchid fertilizers can be used. Better Gro Orchid Plus (20-14-13) is very good and widely available at garden centers. I have used Miracle Gro Tomato fertilizer (18-18-21) and Fox Farm Grow Big (6-4-4) in the past successfully. Algoflash Orchid (4-6-6) has been reported as a good foliar spray for seedlings/young plants. In the past 7-8 years most growers suggest it is best to avoid regular use of high phosphorous fertilizers. Over 10 years ago when I first started collecting Streps; I did use a 10-30-20 and then Better Gro Orchid Better-Bloom 11-35-15 on rare occasions before flower shows. My plants did not die and I did notice an increase in blooms with just 1 or 2 applications. However, older leaves became pale and yellowed. Constant use of high phosphorous fertilizers with P over 30 to bloom boost will cost you leaves eventually! If you insist on using them to prepare for a flower show, be sparing (use once or at most twice), leach the soil regularly and re-pot the plant in fresh soil mix after the flower show. Do NOT ever use the Super Bloom Boosters with P over 50 such as 10-52-10 [I have a story to share at my talk about this], etc.

Reverse Osmosis (RO) water and rain water have no salts, so RO specific fertilizer should be used with these water sources. Jacks Orchid RO Water Soluble powder 12-3-15-7-2 (the 7 is Calcium and the 2 is Magnesium) is one example.

A small minority of Russian/Ukrainian hybrids are sensitive to fertilizer salts and organics or manure-based fertilizers should be avoided within this sub-group of Russian/Ukrainian hybrids. DS Aphrodisiac is a notorious example.

REPOTTING: Streps like being root bound. Healthy Streps like to be re-potted and groomed. When grooming, remove the oldest leaf/leaves that will never bloom again to stimulate new growth. Many Streps can be grown with more than one crown, but too many crowns can deplete the strength of the plant. You may need to remove some crowns occasionally or divide and re-pot the plant. The Dimetris Group (DS) has an informative table of their hybrids that includes recommendations for the number of crowns (rosettes) for each hybrid: <http://streptocarpus-dimetris.com/catalog-en/index.php>

In a perfect world most actively growing Streps could be re-potted 3 times a year. My horticultural reality is sometimes not ideal and two times a year will suffice. Re-potting at least once a year is a necessity, otherwise the soil pH will likely go awry. My bad horticultural twin on 1-2 occasions has allowed a plant to go 2 years or more without re-potting. In such case, the older leaves may start to develop yellow haloes, showing a failure to absorb Nitrogen properly. So, repot those Streptocarpus in fresh soil mix on occasion!!

PESTS: I have not had too much trouble with insects and Streps, but foliar and root mealy bugs, thrips and mites are the most likely threats. I have never seen aphids, white fly or scale on Streptocarpus. I know aphids are possible. Treat early and isolate new or infected plants. Neem oil spray is generally a good first line of chemical defense. Foliar mealy bugs can be picked off or sprayed with insecticidal soaps or Neem if the infestation is early. I have used Imidacloprid or Marathon for soil mealy bugs, but I am trying to avoid insecticides. There is a lot of literature on how to get rid of thrips, too much to discuss in depth here. First disbud all plants (Ouch!!!), then treat. Mites are often sprayed with Avid, but Neem is worth a try. Sometimes you may have to consider discarding an infected plant (Ouch!!!). Neem can inhibit fungus or powdery mildew as well. Immunox or Copper sprays can be used for serious fungal infection. Again, you may have to consider discarding a badly infected plant. A plant with suspected viral infection should be trashed.

NEW HYBRIDS: Many remarkable Streptocarpus plants have emerged in the last 5-10 years from Russia, Ukraine, Poland and elsewhere. The new hybridizers keep coming. Some of the plants are amazing, but they are not always equally floriferous and must be evaluated. I am completely infatuated with the flashy new creations, but the old, tried and true hybrids with simpler flowers should not be neglected. By making good choices, you can create a beautiful display of flowering plants with just a few Streps, consisting of new and old hybrids, depending on your personal preference.

