



The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society

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Member Discovers New Species of Columnea

Members may recall Stephen Maciejewski presentation in April 2010 about his a fantastic 12 days in South American jungles on the 2009 Gesneriad Research Expedition to Ecuador. Among his beautiful photos were several of a new species of *Columnea* he found growing along a road.



Stephen and his new species of Columnea

His discovery has now been published as *Columnea Lucifer* in Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas 5(1). The full text with photographs can be found at this link:

[http://brit.org/sites/default/files/public/BRIT%20Pres/s/JBRIT5\(1\)/081-85 Clark ColumneaLucifer JBRIT5\(1\)81-85 11.pdf](http://brit.org/sites/default/files/public/BRIT%20Pres/s/JBRIT5(1)/081-85%20Clark%20ColumneaLucifer%20JBRIT5(1)81-85%2011.pdf)

As John L. Clark describes in the Abstract: “Recent expeditions to the northwestern slopes of the Ecuadorian Andes and revisionary work of *Columnea* (Gesneriaceae) have resulted in the discovery of a new plant species. The new species, *Columnea lucifer*, is distinguished from other congeners by the presence of dense villous indument on the stems, bright white calyces with red lobes, and elongate tubular yellow corollas with red lobes. *Columnea lucifer* is only known from the type locality in a wet forest of northwestern Ecuador. The group participant who discovered this species is Stephen Maciejewski, an avid and passionate horticulturalist from Philadelphia”

Understanding the African Violet Species

Mary Schaeffer presented a most informative program last month on the discovery, origin, habitat and conservation, culture and showing of the species comprising the genus *Saintpaulia*.

She noted that the genus *Saintpaulia* was named after Baron Walter von Saint Paul-Illaire (1860–1910), the district commissioner of Tanga province who discovered the plant in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) in Africa in 1892 and sent seeds back to his father, an amateur botanist in Germany.

Two British plant enthusiasts, Sir John Kirk and Reverend W.E. Taylor, had earlier collected and submitted specimens to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in 1884 and 1887 respectively, but the quality of specimens was insufficient to permit scientific description at that time. The genus *Saintpaulia*, and original species *S. ionantha*, were scientifically described by J. C. Wendland in 1893.

All *Saintpaulia* species require shaded growing conditions in their natural habitat. They are usually lithophytic, that is they grow on gneiss or granite rocks or steep cliffs along rivers and brooks, or as ground herbs in the forest. They commonly grow on the shallow soils on rocks or in pockets of humus caught in rock outcrops. They have also been observed growing epiphytically on tree trunks. Mary advised this gives some guidance on their successful growth in cultivation.

Species found on the coastal plains are usually confined to limestone outcrops in small patches of remnant coastal rain forests or in steep limestone gorges along rivers, usually under deep shade of forest canopy. The plants are sensitive to drought and competition from other plants so it normally grow on substrates where few other plants are able to survive. The plants growing together with *Saintpaulia* include mosses, epiphytic and epilithic orchids and ferns, including Maidenhair and Spleenworts.

For many years it was estimated that there were about twenty species of the genus *Saintpaulia*. However,

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recent DNA studies resulted in an entirely new classification adopted in January 2009 which resulted in 9 species, 8 subspecies with 2 varieties and 66 clones as follows:

1. *S. inconspicua*

2. *S. pusilla*

3. *S. shumensis*

shumensis

shumensis Mather EE

shumensis Uppsala 3048

4. *S. teitensis*

5. *S. ionantha*

5a. subspecies *grandifolia*

grandifolia No 237

grandifolia No 299

grandifolia Uppsala 3486

5b. subspecies *grotei*

amaniensis

confusa

confusa Mather Brother Paddy

confusa Mather E

confusa Uppsala 3395

difficilis

difficilis Mather No 2

difficilis Uppsala 3396

grotei

grotei Amazon

grotei Cornell G149

grotei Mather No 7

grotei Mather No 21

grotei Mather V

grotei Protzen or Uppsala 3091

grotei Silvert

grotei sport

magungensis

magungensis Uppsala 3082

magungensis Uppsala 3086

magungensis var. *minim*

5c. subspecies *ionantha*

1. variety *ionantha*

ionantha

ionantha Amazon

ionantha 930919

kewensis

Pangani Falls

Sigi Falls

tongwensis

tongwensis Uppsala 3097

white *ionantha* ou Mather

No 20

2. variety *diplotricha*

diplotricha Parker

diplotricha Punter No 0

diplotricha Punter No 6

diplotricha Punter No 7

diplotricha Uppsala 3084

diplotricha Uppsala 3085

Kolehmainen



Saintpaulia ionantha growing on a moss covered rock in the Amani Nature Reserve, East Usambara Mountains

5d. subspecies *mafiensis*

5e. subspecies *occidentalis*

magungensis var. *occidentalis*

magungensis var.

occidentalis Mather No 12

5f. subspecies *orbicularis*

orbicularis

orbicularis var. *purpurea*

5g. subspecies *pendula*

intermedia

pendula

pendula Cornell G304

pendula Uppsala 3087

pendula Uppsala 3089

pendula Uppsala 3090

pendula var. *kizarae*

5h. subspecies *velutina*

velutina

velutina Amazon

velutina lite

velutina Uppsala 3166

6. *S. brevopilosa*

brevopilosa Mather No 10

brevopilosa Uppsala 3044

brevopilosa Grussel or Nguru Mountain

7. *S. nitida*

8. *S. rupicola*

rupicola
rupicola Mather No 5
rupicola Uppsala 3167
Cha Simba
Kacharoni or Robertson
Macharia
Mwachi

9. *S. goetzeana*

Mary focused on culture of the species in the home noting that the care a little different than modern hybrids, and each species a little different from the next. However, there are some general guidelines to growing most of them successfully.

She noted that they generally require less light than hybrids and recommended placing them near the ends of tubes or use older tubes illuminated for 8-10 hours. In natural light north or east facing windowsills are preferable.

The species are more susceptible to wet feet but you don't want the growing medium to dry out completely. She recommended a mix providing good drainage. The addition of half an inch to a full inch of perlite in the bottom of the pot is one way to assure that the medium does not stay saturated. Since most are epiphytes or lithophytes growing on moss covered tree trunks or rocks or in crevices they tend to have shallow root systems. Mary did recommend repotting as frequently as hybrid African violets

The species seem to prefer 70-80 degrees; except for some like *S. goetzeana* is seldom seen and seldom flowered. Its unusual and beautiful two-toned flowers are carried on a plant that, in nature, is a "creeping herb on mossy rock surfaces in deep shade in upland rainforests" This species requires very cool conditions of temperatures down to 40 degrees F. for at least two months to set flower buds, These are not conditions easily reproduced in cultivation. Kenji Hirose brought to subscribers to Gesneriphiles attention the following YouTube® video about this species at the Hyogo Flower Center in Japan:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-Wbz4WvhcU>

Usually, species are smaller than standards so the 1 to 3 rule about size of plant in relation to the size of the pot does not apply; so the pots should be smaller but plant should look balanced. Pan pots are great for the species that behave like trailers.

This article is based on information prepared by Mary S. Schaeffer to accompany talk on growing Saintpaulia species presented to the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society on September 13, 2011.

Gesneriaceae of South China

Edited by Wei Yi-Gang

-A book review of a new acquisition in the Chapter's Library by Elizabeth Varley, former Curator for Gesneriads at Longwood Gardens and DAVS Library Co-Chair

The most striking aspect of this wonderful new work from China is the quality of the photographs, followed closely by the quantity. The book covers 855 of the species of southern China and over 655 of the known species of China as a whole. Many, if not most, of these species are new to us in the United States.

The descriptions are good, and the amount of other information is helpful. Each listing also contains: distribution & habitat, chromosome number, population status, endangered status, proposed IUCN category, introduction to cultivation with a ranking of very easy to very difficult, propagation guide, and cultivation guide. (I have included a temperature conversion guide for those who would like to see temperatures in Fahrenheit.) The preface is a must read to understand more about the area and the topography which is quite different from others area of the world where this family is found. There is an extensive list of references for the serious scholar, and two appendices showing the taxonomy of the Chinese genera, the first by Wang (1990) and the second by Weber (2004).

One or two minor quibbles, I still have not discovered the order in which the plants are presented, so to the casual viewer they are randomly arranged. I feel sure that they are in grouped together by tribe, but that is not clear to me, nor how the order of the tribe listings is arranged. The other issue is the lack of an index. To look up a specific plant one has to use the table of contents.

Welcome New DAVS Members

Claudia Bradley Jan 2
180 Welsh Tract Rd
Newark DE 19702
366-8976 Spb180@aol.com

Valann Budischak 8/14
138 Cambridge Rd
Landenberg PA 19350
610-274-2033 dnlainc@comcast.net

Stacey Tomaszewski 8/22
746 Idlewyld Dr
Middletown, DE 19709
376-7476 StaceyT@aquafin.net

Upcoming DAVS Meetings...

Tuesday, October 11, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

**Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd,
Wilmington, DE 19803**

Hostesses: Snacks - Mary Schaeffer
Beverages – Libby Behnke

Program: “Cape Primrose 101” Brian Connor is an award winning grower of African Violets and Cape Primroses, botanically known as *Streptocarpus*, in the Baltimore AVSA and the National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society. He is Vice President of that Chapter and also is co-chair of the Flower Show at the Gesneriad Society’s Convention in Philadelphia. Following Brian’s presentation, there will be a *Streptocarpus* leaf section prop shop. A plant sale will conclude the evening. If you have surplus plants to share, bring them. Don’t forget to bring plants for the Little Show or Show and Tell!

Tuesday, November 8, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

**Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd,
Wilmington, DE 19803**

Hosts: Snacks - Diane Abramson
Beverages – Geno Iubatti

Program: “*Aeschynanthus*” - Found in southern and southeastern Asia, the islands of Indonesia, New Guinea, and the Philippines *Aeschynanthus* is a genus of about 185 species of tropical trailing epiphytes with brightly colored flowers that are pollinated by sunbirds. Join us and discover the many wonderful houseplants which belong to this genus and how to grow them! A cutting workshop will follow the presentation.

The Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society Newsletter

c/o Quentin Schlieder, Editor
36 South Main Street
Smyrna, DE 19977-1431

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Upcoming Shows and Sales...

October 15, 2011 (Noon – 6 p.m.)

The African Violet Society of Philadelphia will present "Fashionable Violets" in Cathedral Hall at Cathedral Village Retirement Community, 600 East Cathedral Road, Philadelphia, PA 19128 (near Andorra Shopping Center). Contact Judith Smith at smithja@mail.med.upenn.edu for more information.

October 15, 2011 (8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.)

The Baltimore African Violet and Gesneriad Club's Annual Fall Sale at The Shops at Kenilworth, 800 Kenilworth Drive, Towson, MD 21204. Hundreds of beautiful sale plants including violets, other gesneriads, and unusual houseplants, supplies, leaves, cuttings, soil mix, plant rings, self-watering pots and much more. Experienced growers will be there to answer your growing questions.

Contact Shirley Huffman at bshuffman2@aol.com

November 10th to 12th, 2011

2011 MAAVS Convention, the Crowne Plaza Hotel Timonium, Maryland. Theme is “Violets in Birdland.” Chapter trip is planned for Friday, November 11, 2011. The Show and Sale open to the public at 1 p.m. For more information: http://maavs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=82&Itemid=85

October DAVS Meeting Notes...

We will have a prop shop on *Streptocarpus* leaf section cuttings. If you can spare a leaves of named varieties, please bring them to share. We will gather at 7:20 so we can begin promptly at 7:30 with business meetings as short as possible.