



# *The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society*

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## ***Growing Episcias for Maximum Blooming***

By Andrew Norris

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I am no Episcia expert, in fact, I only started to try growing them seriously in May of 2012. What I can offer in this article is how I grow them and what they seem to like in my growing situation. The *Episcia* 'Show Time', I exhibited in our September show at the University of Delaware, was a mere stolon gleaned from an African Violet Club friend's show plant this past May! Evidently, the *Episcias* are fond of my methods and what I have to say will bring you great success with your *Episcias*.



***Andrews growing area in 2012***

I want to cover lighting and temperature first, since to me, those two things are closely related and the most important factors in successful growing. My plants are grown about 6-8" from one T8 40 watt 3000k bulb and one 40 watt T12 6500k bulb. My bulbs are a few years old and

what I have found with t8's is that they are too intense for my plants. I was primarily a violet grower until the fall show, which are better suited to the less light hungry plant's needs, after a year or more of burn in time. I usually buy t8 bulbs in lower wattages now and don't bother with the 3000k bulbs, just sticking to two 6500k bulbs. For those wondering, a very simplified explanation of "k", relating to light bulbs, is the color temperature of the bulb in degrees Kelvin. The higher the k rating, the more blue rays are emitted, the lower the k rating, the more red. A Kelvin rating of 6,500 is your closest representation of sunlight, encompassing the colors in the proportions given off by the sun, at the equator, at noon. It is thought that red spectrums help with flowering and blue/green spectrums are best for foliage. The same results are found by the use of one cool and one warm white bulb as using the 6,500k bulbs.



This plate from Rob's Violet Barn Website illustrates the diversity in folial and flower forms and colors. Appearing from left to right...**Top row:** Aloha Mauna Loa, Chocolate Velour, Chocolate Cream, and Emerald. **Second row:** Faded Jade, fimbriata Blue Heaven, Jim's Dancing Doll and Jim's Canadian Sunset. **Third row:** Jim's Hall Choice, Jim's Holiday, Jim's Mystic Star and Jim's Rose Garden. **Fourth row:** Katherine, lilacina Panama White, Strawberry Patch and Pink Panther. **Bottom row:** Thad's Homemade Wine, Thad's Pink Diamond, Suomi and Silver Skies

*...continued on page 2...*

Since sunlight is certainly adequate, I find the use of anything other than 6,500k bulbs to be obsolete. I still have some 3000k bulbs in use, so mention them, since I just choose not to replace them until they are no longer adequate. Lights run between 9-12 hours, 10 in this case.

I grow my *Episcias* on the top shelf of my stands. This is the warmest location, benefiting from the heat rising from the ballast below and the lights above them. They receive temps of about 76-78F, with 3 lights running and down to 65F, at the lowest, with the bulbs off. I run my lights at night, keeping cost down by having cooler temps during summer's daytime heat and warmer temps during winter's frosty nights. This also helps win the battle with powdery mildew, during mildew seasons.

*Episcias* like it warmer, but also don't resent a drop to the low 60sF, at night. I run an ultrasonic humidifier, on low, just so you can barely see the output, all year round. While I don't measure the humidity, I can tell you that over 300 plants and the humidifier running, means no static electricity building up in my 1 bedroom apartment!

After light and temperature, the next most important item is the soil mix. I have struggled with my wicking mix for the 4 years I have been growing violets and gesneriads. The pH was a sneaky problem and one hard to measure, hard to understand, and hard to solve. Many gesneriads grow on limestone, but still want a slightly acid pH, while others seem to require lime. I try every plant in the mix I will give you here, only adding a pinch of lime for *Gesneria* and Chinese terrestrials, so far with great success. My mix is a base of a 10 quart bag of Burpee eco friendly Seed Starting Mix. It is coir based, which was not something I was looking for, but also decided, isn't bad either. Burpee tests their products, so the problems of other coir products are eliminated, with some considerations. Epsoma has a similar, suitable product, which may or may not be coir based. To this, I add 1 1/3 cup of Epsoma HollyTone, and about 60% 1/4"-1/2" perlite. HollyTone lowers the pH and provides a biologically active mix. Which is working in my favor, I don't know, but since switching to this formulation, my violets are superior and my plants are better than ever before.

It has been about a year since the switch and other than finding a less visible alternative to perlite; I am very pleased with my results. I will add that this mix test out to a very low 5.5, but with 7.0 watering and Miracid as a fertilizer, it stabilizes quickly to around 7.0 in a short time. No plants have resented the mix so far and my

testing equipment is also, not the greatest, being a simple probe from a Lowes shelf. Watering and fertilizing is next on the list. Watering here is by wick, once the plants are established. My water is 7.0 in pH and I collect it from a mountain spring to avoid the additives in city water. I fertilize with Miracid ( the azalea, camellia, rhododendron formulation, by MiracleGrow is the same), at 1/16th a tsp per gallon, every watering. On occasion, I also add a few drops of Super Thrive. I wait until a newly potted plant needs its reservoir refilled (I wick on individual deli containers), before fertilizing, to allow for the fertilizers in the HollyTone and Seed Starting Mix to be used. Finally, it's the artistry of growing show plants! Here are some tips on the grooming, potting, and shaping of the plants into a specimen that is not just well grown, but worthy of display.

Most stolons should start in a 3" or 4" pot. They will quickly move up a pot size, often in a few weeks or month. While the stolon grows, I remove all marred, dying, or unattractive leaves and stolons. I continue to remove stolons until the main plant is well established. I then allow stolons to grow, allowing 3 at the most and removing any leaves that crowd or block light from the stolons. I place the stolons evenly inside the pot, rooting them in place and leaving them attached to the mother plant. When you no longer have room to place your stolons, or they are crowded, pot up to a 5" or 6" pan pot. I resume and keep pinching off stolons, until the pot is full of large, robust plants. I then allow a few to trail over until my sense of aesthetics is achieved. Continue removing over lapping leaves and potting up to accommodate the larger crowns, eventually into a 8"-10" pot. A maximum of 5 stolons will provide a full pot without appearing crowded and then, one or two stolons from each established crown can be allowed to trail over and gain some size. Too many stolons allowed to trail or root, rob the plant of energy for flowering and detract to the judges.

Flowering should have begun in your 5"-6" pot and will continue indefinitely. Remove spent flowers and leaves every few days, as the blooms are short-lived and can get messy, if not tended to. I will add that new plants are best started from stolons, as I have found many varieties to slow or cease stolon production at flowering size. Always have a non-flowering stolon to continue with for best results. Hope you find my methods helpful and I hope to see some bloom covered *Episcias*, gracing our future show tables.

Andrew e-mailed me to advise that the *Episcia* 'Jim's Green Grass' and 'Jim's Choice,' he shared at the meeting are actually *Episcia* 'My Precious.' The plant was so large, it engulfed another plant's pot and tag.

## DAVS 2014 Spring Show

### Artistic Classes

The theme for the 2014 Annual Show at Boscov's on Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014 will be "Casting a Violet Spell." Bobbie LaFashia again proposed and wrote the artistic classes for the Show. The possibilities to interpret these classes are endless, so here they are so you can begin planning your arrangement!

#### Class 26 "Harry Potter"

Harry Potter attended Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry where he learned how to use a magic wand and how to ride a broomstick. Create a miniature design suggesting motion to be staged in a lighted niche 6" high, 5" wide and 4" deep. Background is the designer's choice.

#### Class 27 "Abracadabra"

Magicians use a variety of props to stage their sleight of hand. Objects of all sorts have disappeared behind silk scarves. A silk scarf should appear in this design to be staged in a yellow niche 10" high, 8" wide, and 6" deep. Background is the designer's choice.

#### Class 28 "Illusion"

Magician David Copperfield is a popular showman who performs grand illusions. Your violet illusion will be a mobile suspended from a dowel placed over a niche 23" high, 24" wide, and 20" deep. Background is the designer's choice.

#### Class 29 "Hocus Pocus"

There are more card tricks than any other type of magic tricks. Pick a card, any card, for this design containing a mini or semi miniature African violet plant to be staged in a niche 16" high, 12" wide, and 10" deep.

### September Little Show

Gary Hunter and Stephanie Griffith would like to thank all of the members who entered plants in the September 10, 3013 Little Show. All of the entries were awarded blue ribbons!

Elizabeth Varley	<i>Petrocosmea barbata</i>
Elizabeth Varley	<i>Streptocarpus</i> 'Potpourri Spinart'
Mary Schaeffer	<i>Sinningia</i> 'Magic Moment'
Mary Schaeffer	<i>Sinningia</i> 'Gabriel's Horn'
Mary Schaeffer	<i>Sinningia araneosa</i>
Mary Schaeffer	<i>Sinningia eumorpha</i>
Mary Schaeffer	<i>Streptocarpus</i> 'Last Night'
Gary Hunter	<i>Streptocarpus</i> 'Dale's Polar Lava'

Barb Borleske  
Barb Borleske  
Barb Borleske

Barb Borleske  
Barb Borleske  
Barb Borleske

Barb Borleske  
Libby Behnke  
Julia Lynch  
Julia Lynch  
Julia Lynch

*Petrocosmea rosettifolia*  
*Sinningia* 'Stone's Yulia'  
*Saintpaulia* 'Rob's Little Pueblo'  
*Kohleria* 'Manchu'  
*Streptocarpus* 'Tatoo'  
*Streptocarpus* 'Heartland's White Gold'  
*Primulina* 'Silver Surfer'  
*Primulina gemmella*  
*Aeschynanthus* 'Big Apple'  
*Sinningia* 'Orange Raindrops'  
*Columnnea* 'Chanticleer'

The next Little Show will be held in November, so look over your plants and plan to enter!

### Holiday Dinner and Auction

Again this year since the Society will hold the holiday dinner and auction in the Brandywine Room at Rockland Place, and there will be no stove and very limited facilities. So except for a few outlets for crock pots, it will not be possible to heat or keep entrées and side dishes warm. Also, members must plan to bring everything they need for the dish they plan on bringing including severing utensils, since there are no utensils available at Rockland Place for our use. We will discuss the holiday party at the November meeting and will be circulating a sign up sheet.

### Welcome new members

Four new members joined our group at the November meeting and we would like to extend a welcome to each of them! The new members are:

Jim. Roberts and Andrew Norris  
2408 Henson Drive  
Marriottsville, MD 21104  
(410) 227-2324

Jim Roberts - [jim.roberts2408@gmail.com](mailto:jim.roberts2408@gmail.com)  
Andrew Norris - [blondeboi.an@gmail.com](mailto:blondeboi.an@gmail.com)

Lynn J. Cook and Troy Ray  
Half Dime Farm  
225 Reynolds Road  
Landenberg, PA 19350-9300  
(610) 268-5282  
[lynncook225@gmail.com](mailto:lynncook225@gmail.com)

We will prepare and distribute labels with this information to add to you yearbook at the November meeting. Also, please note that Bobbie LaFashia's e-mail address as published in the yearbook is incorrect and should be: [rlafash@comcast.net](mailto:rlafash@comcast.net).



## ***Upcoming DAVS Meetings...***

**Tuesday, November 12, 2013 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Quarterly Board Meeting for Officers and Committee Chairs. Dinner is being provided. Please contact Mary Schaeffer at (302) 836-0540 or [schaeffermary@yahoo.com](mailto:schaeffermary@yahoo.com) if you plan to attend.**

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

**Tuesday, November 12, 2013 – 7:30 p.m.**

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

**Program: “DAVS Golden Jubilee Remembering our Roots” Tuesday, November 12, 2013 – 7:30 p.m.**

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

**Hosts:** Snacks - Diana Metzger

Beverages – Bobbie LaFashia

Raffle Prizes – Linda McGregor/Barb Borleske

**Program: “DAVS Golden Jubilee Remembering our Roots”** – Our long time members will reminisce about the past 50 years with slides highlighting special events and friends. Following the presentation, pot up plantlets to grow on for our show, including Saintpaulia ‘Double Black Cherry’ a favorite vintage violet introduced in 1962 and featured in our early shows. Little Show and Plant/Supply Sale will be held.

**Tuesday, December 10, 2013 – 6:30 p.m.**

Note earlier time! Holiday Dinner and Auction in the Brandywine Room at Rockland Place.

**Tuesday, January 14, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.**

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

**MiniWorkshop – Getting Plants Ready for Show/ Libby Behnke**

**Program: “Gesneriads from Viet Nam”**

## ***The Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society Newsletter***

c/o Quentin Schlieder, Editor

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## ***November 16<sup>th</sup> Judging School***



This is just a quick reminder to register if you want to attend the November 16 Judging School led by noted AVSA Judge Paul Kroll which will be held in the Brandywine Room at Rockland Place (where we hold our regular monthly meetings).. All attendees should have a current AVSA

Hand-book (2011). While refreshments and beverages will be provided, attendees should bring their own lunch.

You can register to take the test for judging or you can just audit the session which will run from 10 a.m. to about 3 p.m. The cost for the day is \$25.00 and checks should be made payable to DAVS. An up-to-date AVSA membership (see the front white cover of the African Violet Magazine) is required if taking the test. Also, if taking the test, three (3) blue ribbons, signed by the show or judge’s chairman of previous AVSA approved (affiliate or convention) shows is required. A signed computer printout is acceptable. These blue ribbons must have been earned between the previous examination and the one to be taken. At least two of the blue ribbons must have been won for African violet plants in the horticulture divisions. The third blue ribbon may have been earned in the design division, or from the “other gesneriad” classes.

If you have any questions email Mary Schaeffer at [schaeffermary@yahoo.com](mailto:schaeffermary@yahoo.com) or Stephanie Griffith at [skomerms@yahoo.com](mailto:skomerms@yahoo.com).

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