



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

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## **DAVS Goes to MAAVS**

*By Mary S. Schaeffer*

DAVS members made a respectable showing at the Mid-Atlantic African Violet Society (MAAVS) annual conference held in nearby Timonium, MD last month. Two members exhibited, judged, clerked and worked at the show. They were joined by several others for a visit on Friday filled with good food, great conversation and lots of laughter. Plus, we all got to see some really neat plants.

Libby Behnke and Mary Schaeffer exhibited with Libby earning three Best-in-Class ribbons and Mary being awarded one. Both received a number of blue ribbons. Most notably, Libby won a Best-in-Class exhibiting a *Streptocarpella* “Concord Doubled”, a new Gary Hunter introduction which he distributed to members at a recent meeting.. They were joined on Friday by Nancy Murray, Quentin Schlieder and Gary Hunter to see the show and for lunch at Bluestone Seafood Grill and a visit to nearby Watson’s Garden Center.



*President Gary Hunter with Libby Behnke and her plant of *Streptocarpella* “Concord Doubled” which won Best in Class at the Mid-Atlantic African Violet Society (MAAVS) annual conference held in nearby Timonium, MD last month.*

Back at the show the group ran into Pam Orris and was dismayed to learn she had been at the restaurant with several of our friends from the Springfield chapter. Somehow we managed not to connect with them. Maria Walueff zipped in for a short visit and snagged the last *Saintpaulia* ‘Woodland Sprite’ from the Violet Gallery. But I didn’t go home without a shot at getting a Sprite of my own. Although it didn’t get Best-in-Show, leaves from the breathtaking Sprite exhibited by Baltimore’s Rodney Barnett came back to Delaware. As the show was breaking down, he generously took numerous leaves from his plant and shared them with other attendees.

Friday was jam packed with activities. Upon returning from our adventure at Watson’s, there was a really instructive talk by Sue Hoffman on the Mechanics of Design. I will never look at the inside of a tape roll in the same way again. Her lecture was filled with props mostly purchased from the Dollar Store or repurposed household items that might have been discarded. Then it was time for the infamous costume party dinner. Although DAVS attendees did not participate in the costume part of the event, we did thoroughly enjoy watching those that did. If you’ve ever seen the ladies from Springfield in action, suffice it to say, that once again they outdid themselves.

Saturday began with a very interesting talk by Jim Roberts about his recent trip to China. Not only did we get to see photos of gesneriads growing in the wild, we also got to see a very different side of China. His lecture generated a lot of conversation about meals, hotel accommodations and oh, yes, plants.

And speaking of plants, the show itself had some very interesting entries. One plant, *Saintpaulia* ‘Botanica,’ generated a huge amount of discussion among the judges. The conversation was not about what ribbon to give it—for this plant grown by Barbara Jones who grows fabulous plants, was definitely worthy of a blue ribbon—but whether to review it all. The dilemma arises from the fact that *Saintpaulia* ‘Botanica’ has no petals. After a prolonged discussion, a decision was made to put it

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in a class by itself called *Saintpaulia* 'Botanica.' Hopefully, we'll get to see this oddity at more shows in the future.

The half a dozen vendors had tables packed with well-grown interesting plants. I was especially pleased to acquire a *Chirita* 'Betty' which originated with own Quentin Schlieder. As with most conventions, it was over too quickly. It seemed like we had just arrived when we were packing our bags to return home.

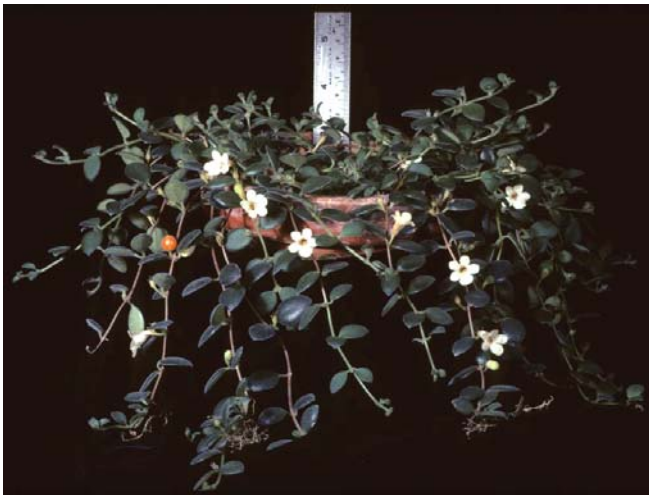
## ***Can we make a species better?***

**Gary Hunter, Proprietor of Gary's Specialty Plants and President of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society**

Can we make a species better than it already is? Is it possible to improve on a species that has survived for untold millions of years in the wild?

I learned the original definition of a botanical 'species' as a plant found in nature that is uniform in it's characteristics and comes true (identical to the parent) when self-pollinated.

So if they are all identical then how can they be improved? It seems that the modern day definition is not as rigid and some species are variable and in some cases can have different colored flowering forms within the species.



*Codonanthe digna*

The plant that I want to improve is *Codonanthe digna*, a small trailing plant with small bell shaped white flowers and orange berries. (The name was *C. carnosa*, then *C. digna*. It may now be *C. devosiana*). Well grown plants will self-branch and get a flower at every leaf axil. It could be a commercial plant in the terrarium market if crop time could be speeded up.

My proposal is to grow quantities of seed crops of *Codonanthe* and select for speed and flower size. In every measurable step, we select the best. Save the first to germinate and from them, the first to flower. If flower size improves, of course, you save them. You record the times so we can see if any improvement is made in successive generations.

Does science support this plan? I think so. Plants have been improved by intercrossing species within a genus. This is self-pollinating a species and hope for variability. In nature seed germinates at varying rates to insure survivability, so we will just select the fastest.

Since no one has tried to improve *Codonanthe digna*, the story is not yet written. But nothing can be lost in trying since all plants, fast or slow, can be sold. If somehow flower size improves then all the observation will pay off.



*Gary is trying to select for a pink flowered form of C. digna*

There is a pink flowered form of *Codonanthe* from Brazil that we are attempting to establish. The goal there will be to select for the brightest pink. Then cross the white with the pink and see if we get hybrid vigor and a big, bright, pink flower on a tough little trailing plant. But that's a different story.

## ***November Program***

The November program was a botanical and horticultural survey of the genus *Aeschynanthus* by Quentin Schlieder. The program was illustrated by both colorful photographs and live specimens of the six sections of the genus, which he noted are divided principally by the characteristic of the hairs on the seeds.

He noted that these plants which are native to the Himalayas, China, and throughout Southeast Asia are either epiphytes (growing on other plants) or lithophytes (growing on rocks), and included about

150 species. The genus name is literally translated from the Greek as “shame flower,” a reference to the bright red flowers on many species. They are pollinated by sunbirds in their native habitats.

These plants are the old world counterpart to the new world species *Columnnea* and *Nematanthus*. They are perennial woody based sub shrubs or vines with stems ranging from stiff to upright or pedant and trailing. The leaves are whorled or opposite with entire or finely toothed margins.



*Sunbirds and Aeschynanthus* courtesy of Wallace Wells from his Saturday, November 26, 2011 post to *Gesneriphiles*

In cultivation, most species grow best between 70 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit in a moist (not wet) well drained medium in bright light. He noted that they grow better for him in natural light, except for *A. humilis*, so while he keeps maintains his plants under T-8 fluorescent lamps over winter in his basement; they perform best on his semi shaded patio from late spring to early autumn.

The prop shop which followed the presentation provided some choice cuttings for members to root and grow on at home. Pots, rooting medium, labels and plastic bags were provided. The offerings included: *Aeschynanthus evrardii*, *A. gracilis*, *A.s* Thai Pink, *A. lobbianus* Variegated, *A. humilis*, *A. lanceolata*, *A. angustifolius*, *A. ‘Mandalay,’* *A. longicaulis*, *A. x ‘Splendidus’* and *A. ‘Thailand.’*

Members also received a complimentary potted plant in a 2-1/4 inch pot. Selections included: *Aeschynanthus lobbianus* Variegated, *A. ‘Mandalay’*, *A. longicaulis*, *A. x ‘Splendidus*, *A. Thai Red*, *A. ‘Rasta’* and *A. ‘Tangerine.’*

## **Bobbie’s AVSA Notes**

Bobbie LaFashia, AVSA Liaison, presented a great report on the current issue of African Violet

Magazine high lighting the article by Mary Schaeffer about Pam Orris’ prize winning *Saintpaulia nitida* which took a Best of Class Award at the AVSA Convention in Cherry Hill last April. She also noted Neil Lipson’s lovely photographs of Libby Behnke’s entry of *Saintpaulia ‘Ma’s Party Music’* and Nancy Murray’s entry of *Saintpaulia ‘Sunset Ridge’* in our 2011 Show.

Bobbie has consistently taken first place with her beautifully grown entries of miniature *Saintpaulias* at our show, so the Column titled “Small Talk” by Laurel Goretsky which listed Dr. Ralph Robinson’s favorite varieties caught her eye. Robinson’s favorites for show include ‘Rob’s Fuddy Duddy,’ ‘Rob’s Calypso Beat,’ and ‘Rob’s Boogie Woogie.’ Two others he recommended were ‘Rob’s Jitterbug’ and ‘Rob’s Chilly Willy.’

Varieties from other hybridizers he recommended include Hortense Pittman’s ‘Jolly Mischief’ and Delores Harrington’s ‘Delores’ Sugar Candy.’ Bobbie noted that she is anxious to try some of these varieties which she hasn’t previously exhibited. She won Best in Show previously with ‘Rob’s Fuddy Duddy’ and ‘Rob’s Fuzzy Navel.’

## **DAVS Growing Supplies**

One of the great benefits of membership in DAVS is the opportunity to purchase growing supplies not found at local outlets or in quantities for the indoor gardening hobbyist. Barb Borleske maintains an inventory of supplies for our members, and will try to procure others if requested.

Since it is cumbersome to bring all of these to every meeting, if you want to purchase supplies at a meeting, please email Barb at [bborleske@yahoo.com](mailto:bborleske@yahoo.com) to ask her to bring the itm or items you would like. Her current inventory includes:

- Physan 20 (pint) \$8
- Marathon 1% (4 oz) \$8
- Plant Marvel 12-31-14 Urea Free Soluble Fertilizer (8oz) \$5
- Peters Soluble Fertilizer 20-20-20 (8oz) \$4
- Pots: 2.5” green square \$0.15 ea.
- 3” white standard \$0.10 ea.
- 3” white tub \$0.10 ea.
- 4” white tub \$0.15 ea.
- 5” green pan pots \$0.25 ea.
- 2.5” white round \$0.15 ea.
- 3.5” white standard \$0.15 ea.
- 6” white round \$0.75 ea.
- 8” white round \$1.00 ea.

## Next DAVS Meeting...

December 13, 2010 – 6:30 p.m. (Note earlier time!) Potluck Holiday Dinner and Auction at Carol Callaghan's home located at 2806 Rickdale Road, Wilmington, DE Please e-mail Carol to let her know if you will be attending at [mom.callag2@verizon.net](mailto:mom.callag2@verizon.net) (preferred) or if you don't have e-mail by phone at (302) 478-4719.

### Directions to Carol Callaghan's Home

These directions are courtesy of Expedia and originate at the Sunrise Assisted Living Facility where we had held our monthly meetings. Carol lives nearby in the development named Talleybrook, which is located a few minutes north of Sunrise Assisted Living where we used to meet, just off Shipley Road. See directions printed to the right.



Map to Carol Callaghan's home.

Directions	Distance	Time
Start: Depart Start on Shipley Rd (North)	1.1	0:03
1: Turn RIGHT (East) onto Summerset Rd	0.1	0:01
2: Turn RIGHT (South) onto Rickdale Rd	0.1	0:01
End: Arrive End	< 0.1	< 1min
Total Route	1.3 mi	4 mins

Don't forget to bring plants, handicrafts, surprise box or something special from your kitchen for the auction!

## January DAVS Meeting...

Tuesday, January 10, 2012 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Hostesses: Beverages – Pam Orris

Snacks – Carol Moody

Program: - - "African Violet Troubles!" – African

Violets and their relatives are among the easiest and most rewarding of Houseplants, but occasionally a problem arises and intervention is necessary. We also will enjoy a panel discussion on how to cope with the occasional bumps in the road we encounter when growing African Violets and Gesneriads. 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!

*With Best Wishes for the Holidays and the New Year!*

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

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