

48th Annual AGGS Convention — 2004

Convention Speakers

We will have three speakers for you at Convention in July and hope you will make some time to come and listen to their presentations. I'd like to thank Robert Hall, Speakers' Chair, for the time he spent on putting together such an outstanding lineup.

- Paul Susi - Local Convention Chair

Dr. Tamson Yeh (Friday, July 9th) Dr. Yeh has spent the last seven years of her professional life as an extension education coordinator with the Cornell Cooperative Extension in Nassau County on Long Island. Her areas of concentration are entomology and plant pathology, as well as integrated pest management for commercial and homeowner audiences. Dr. Yeh has a BA biology from Wells College, an MS in Animal and Veterinary Science from the University of Rhode Island and a Ph.D. in Plant Science, also from the University of Rhode Island. Dr. Yeh's presentation will show you how you can apply integrated pest management techniques for gesneriads in the home environment.

John L. Clark (Friday, July 9th) John L. Clark is a botanist conducting his Ph.D. dissertation research on the plant family Gesneriaceae. His research incorporates molecular sequencing techniques and field-based observations for understanding evolutionary history (phylogeny). John's presentation will cover some of the obstacles in understanding biodiversity and will cover progress made throughout the last ten years of his research in Latin America.

Vincent Woo (Saturday, July 10th) Vincent Woo has grown gesneriads since he was a teenager, but he never thought he'd have the chance to pursue this passion formally. He recently decided to take a year off from work and traveled to New Zealand to study *Rhabdothamnus solandri*, New Zealand's only native gesneriad, after an exciting volunteer stint with flightless parrots in 2002. While in New Zealand, he became more interested in *R. solandri*'s relatedness to other South Pacific cousins, and was able to go collecting in New Caledonia and Lord Howe Island, as well as see *Rhabdothamnus* in populations around the North Island of New Zealand. His project has now expanded to look at Southern Hemisphere subfamilies, flower pigments, DNA fingerprinting and a revision of one of the genera, *Coronanthera*.

Dr Michael Kotarski (Wednesday, July 7th) In addition to the three convention speakers, Dr. Michael Kotarski will be speaking at the Gesneriad Hybridizers' Association meeting on Wednesday evening, July 7th. His topic will be "Strategies for Producing New Varieties of Gesneriads." Dr. Kotarski is an Associate Professor of Biology at Niagara University in Niagara, NY. He says this about his topic: "Chemical mutagens can be used to produce new mutations of *Saintpaulia* and *Streptocarpus*, especially those involving variegation. Ethyl methane sulfonate (EMS) is used to treat petioles or leaf sections and the plantlets grown from the mutagenized tissue are examined for new characteristics. Transferring genes from other plant species into African violets using sterile culture and molecular techniques is another viable way of altering violet traits. Reliable tissue culture procedures have been worked out and the first gene transfer and violet gene cloning experiments are underway."