

C R WORDS S

The Gesneriad Hybridizers Association

NEWSLETTER

Volume VIII, Issue 3, 1984

EDITORIAL COMMENTS:

During this year's G.H.A. meeting, commercial growers discussed some of the problems and rewards of selling gesneriads. It became clear that the current system for commercial introduction of new hybrids has caused problems, including the pirating of a new hybrid before a commercial grower/hybridizer had a chance to introduce it. On the other hand, should amateur hybridizers be expected to not distribute their creations among friends until commercial growers have had their chance to sell them? We need to hear from both sides: Commercial growers seeking new material for their catalogs and amateur hybridizers (as well as established ones) interested in distributing new hybrids. There is still much work to be done in gesneriad hybridizing, and the bulk of that work will undoubtedly be done by non-commercial growers. But without profitable commercial growers, the average hobbyist would quickly face a shortage of new material. Let's hear from you.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Keep those articles coming.

- Al Wojcik

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GHA FINANCIAL REPORT

by Meg Stephenson, Treasurer

May 31, 1983 - September 30, 1984

INCOME

Dues	\$1527.00
Interest	<u>162.38</u>
	1689.38

EXPENSES

Printing and postage for ``CrossWords``

Mines Press	Back issues	54.12
Mines Press	Volume VII, #1	208.90
Mines Press	Volume VII, #2	258.84
Mines Press	Volume VII, #3	249.93
Mines Press	Volume VIII, #1	250.97
	Typing	
Anne Crowley	Volume VIII, #1	130.00
	Phone calls	
Al Wojcik		41.76
	AGGS	
Fund For Progress - 1983		100.00
Donation to ``The Gloxinian`` - 1983		100.00
	Best New Hybrid Award (1983)	
Bartley Schwarz		25.00
Canadian check cashing charge		10.00
Returned checks		10.00
Total		<u>1439.52</u>
Balance as of September 30, 1984		2777.81

A NEW INTERGENERIC HYBRID - xNAUTILOTHEMIS

Norma Ward, 5061 Cleveland Rd., Delray Beach, FL 33445

Charlie Harvey of Miami, Florida has succeeded in crossing a Chrysothemis with a Nautilocalyx.

As Charlie tells it, he was out walking his dog one night around 2 a.m., ``just killing time, really,`` and saw both Nautilocalyx mellitifolius `St. Vincent' and Chrysothemis pulchella `Bronze Leaf' in bloom outside his house. He wondered what would happen if he crossed the two. He took pollen from N. mellitifolius and applied it to the Chrysothemis.

The resulting hybrid is called xNautilothemis. Two different colored blossoms have been produced. One is a lavender blue and he has named it `Robert Lee.' The other is a peach, blending to a light yellow, and this he has named `Jack Pardo.' The blossoms are shaped like N. mellitifolius and the calyxes of both are a light green. They also have petioles about an inch long.

They are very strong plants and have a tendency to grow quite large, producing foliage longer and narrower than most pulchellas but with much the same coloring. The color of the foliage is more green than bronze.

Frances Batcheller was given the tops of these two and has told Charlie that she was growing them under lights and they were staying compact. I had also started one under lights in July and mine is also compact, but not blooming yet. We planted the one named `Jack Pardo' in a flower bed next to some Zinnias and it gets full sun all day. It is now almost 3' tall and full of bloom. The blossoms have a peach-colored tube but the lobes are a rosy peach (possibly from the sun). Jack Pardo is also growing them in full sun. They are all quite tall (3' to 4' tall) but very robust and full of bloom. It seems to be a good bedding plant at least.

Charlie says the older plants have produced tubers. They are very easy to propagate from cuttings. The ones kept in smaller pots have smaller foliage. The cv. `Jack Pardo' has more bronze in the foliage than does `Robert Lee.' If they have buds and you top them and root the tops, they will still flower.

This is a very interesting new cross and easy to grow. ★

HYBRIDIZING YARN

Carl Walker Jr., P.O. Box 5545, Lenoir, NC 28645-0313

Since I have over a hundred hanging baskets of different kinds of gesneriads, I became interested in trying some crosses using them. My Columnea 'Chanticleer' was in bloom and I decided to cross it with C. 'Alladin's Lamp.' I am fond of the growth habit, everblooming characteristics and bloom color of 'Chanticleer' but I thought it could be improved with the colorful calyx and larger bloom of 'Alladin's Lamp.'

Everything went well and soon there was a nice berry forming. I decided to try more crosses.

Unfortunately it was difficult to find the berry since the green calyx seemed to close around it and hide under a leaf. And I wondered how to identify which berry came from which cross if I made more than one on the large hanging basket.

My solution was provided when I noticed some multi-colored yarn bought for wicking plants. After an unpleasant experience with soil mealybugs a few years ago I began using colored yarn so that if they reappeared they would be more easily seen.

The last yarn I bought on sale was in short segments of different colors. I cut off segments of different colors and used them to mark the new crosses.

I would take a piece of the yarn and loop it loosely twice around the stem one set of leaves above the set where the blossom being used for the cross was located. I then made a note on a label as to cross attempted, date and color of yarn used to identify the cross. If a cross didn't take, I would simply write a new date on the label and move the yarn when I tried again.

I've found this a real help with all my hanging basket-type gesneriad crosses. The colored yarn makes it easy to find the seed pod, identify the cross and keep up with progress. It became even simpler when I began using certain colors of yarn to identify certain pollen parents.

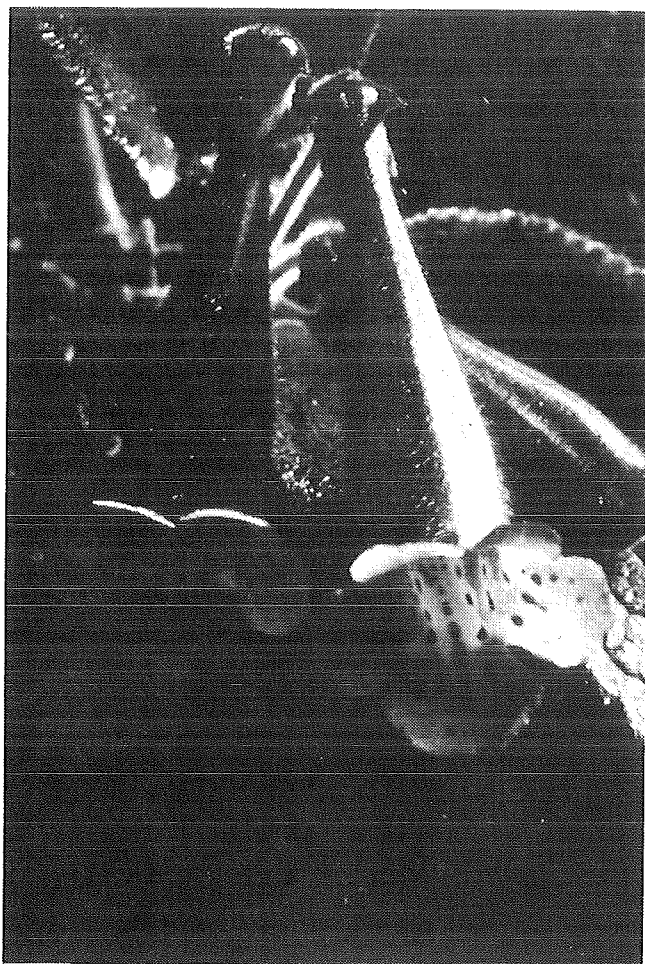
I was worried that the yarn would blow away, would lose its color or stay wet too long after a rainfall when I moved my hanging baskets out for the Summer. But I've had no problem with any of these things happening.

It doesn't replace the use of a good record book, but I find it a real help with crosses made on hanging basket and bushy gesneriads.★

Sinningia 'Tanisha' - (F2 selection from *Sinningia cardinalis* X *S. canescens*). Medium green leaves, compact with a widely-spaced cone shape. Bloom is long, tubular and a bright, glowing pink. The plant blooms in the leaf axils as the central stem elongates, with many flowers developing at the top.

More Canadian Crosses

From Georgie Bull
White Rock, B.C., Canada



Sinningia 'Staccato' - (F2 selection from *S. cardinalis* X *S. canescens*). Slightly darker medium green leaves with white hairs. Habit is similar to the larger miniatures. Flowers are a dusky rose with lines and dashes of darker rose in the throat and are produced two per peduncle.

HYBRIDIZING WITH SINNINGIA REITZII

Alan LaVergne, 124 Heather Lane, Palo Alto, CA 94303

A number of years ago, I acquired seed of Sinningia 'New Zealand' (as it was then known) from Addison Campbell. I grew the seedlings to blooming size and discovered (along with everyone else) its lanky habit. I greatly admired the white-veined, red-backed leaves, but I did not admire the plant's tendency to drop them all along the lower half of the stem. In a burst of amateur enthusiasm, I decided to bestow upon a grateful horticultural world a compact reitzii hybrid which held all its leaves. Ha!

Of course I was starting years behind everyone else.

Then, after reading Peg Belanger's article in CrossWords, Vol. 5, No. 3, and noticing that my own results didn't seem to be the same, I began to wonder if my plant was already a hybrid. The crossing experiments would also serve as a test of that possibility.

1. S. reitzii x S. macropoda:

Habit: Tall, little leaf drop.

Leaves: Large, dark green, no white veining. Red backs.

Flowers: Like S. reitzii, but with more spots on the corolla.

Fertility: Produces little pollen, but ovules are viable.

S. macropoda usually has only two or three leaf pairs when mature, but so far, none of the F2 plants have that property. These plants, though attractive, are quite large and will not take light gardens by storm.

2. S. reitzii x S. eumorpha:

Habit: Compact, up to 6 inches tall (first year). Retains leaves.

Leaves: Up to 6 inches long, dark. Reddish backs.

Stem: Very dark purple. Slightly woody.

Flowers: Purple, slipper-shaped, but without dorsal ``pouch.'' Bold spotted lines in throat.

Fertility: Copious pollen, appears to self easily (no seed harvested yet).

In the article mentioned, Peg Belanger, talking about her own products from this cross, says, ``So far there has not been one with compact habit and flowers that have any depth of color. The wishy-washy pink and pale lavender blooms and unappealing soft leaves usually dropped one by one until what was left resembled a palm tree have been the reasons for an increase in our compost pile.'' I can't believe she is talking about plants similar to the ones I got in the F1 generation. The purple flower color won't set the world on fire, but the spotting in the throat is quite dramatic, and many people other than myself like these plants. The flowers are produced in abundance the first year (exceptional under my conditions). Plants grown in 4'' and 5'' pots held their leaves well, although others grown in crowded community trays did wind up with bare stems.

(Continued on next page)

3. *S. reitzii* x *S. cardinalis*:

Habit: Like *S. cardinalis*.

Leaves: Also like *S. cardinalis*. No red on backs of leaves.

Flowers: Like *S. cardinalis*, except without overhanging upper lip (or galea).

Inflorescence: Like *S. reitzii*, i.e., open cyme, with branching well out from the axil, unlike *S. cardinalis*, the cymes of which branch right down in the axil, making each flower appear to have a separate stalk.

Fertility: Copious pollen, selfs easily (F2 seed has germinated).

This plant has all the virtues of *S. cardinalis* but one: It is slow to bloom from seed (and not just for me). None of the plants I distributed flowered the first year.

Almost three months ago, I sowed F2 seeds from this plant. For awhile, I was ready to believe that all this stuff about segregation and variety in the F2 generation was pure legend, since the seedlings appeared identical. However, on one, maybe two of the inch-across seedlings, I can see the red leaf backs which was one of the properties I was hoping for. (It also reassures me that I didn't somehow get the F1 seeds mislabeled, since the F1 plant had no single characteristic that could definitely be traced back to *S. reitzii* and no other species.)

I have seed available of this F2 cross. Seed ripening (I hope) but not yet harvested:

- *S. reitzii* x *S. eumorpha*, F2, both selfed and crossed between siblings.
- (*S. reitzii* x *S. eumorpha*) x *S. cardinalis*.
- (*S. reitzii* x *S. macropoda*) x *S. eumorpha*.
- *S. reitzii* x *S. canescens*.
- *S. cardinalis* x *S. eumorpha*.

That last cross was first done by others way back in the Dark Ages, but I want to see the results for myself. It will also provide me with further material to cross onto *S. reitzii*. (The seed has germinated).

If anyone would like any of the above seed, just send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Just from the crosses made already, I have drawn a few conclusions. The first is the importance of doing the crosses for yourself, and not being discouraged or intimidated by the results of others. They might have different conditions or different plant material. At the very least, you'll learn something. It can also make an interesting exhibit for a local club show: Red-flowered *S. reitzii* crossed with white-flowered *S. eumorpha* to produce a purple-flowered hybrid. Second is the importance of good culture, which I often can't manage. The better the growing conditions, the sooner the plants will flower. You can't hybridize without flowers.

(Continued on next page)

ALSOBIA

One last lesson I learned this year: The importance of a little advance planning. Because I had *Alsobia* 'San Miguel' and *A. dianthiflora* in bloom at the same time, I decided to backcross the hybrid onto the species, hope for a 'San Miguel' that held its flowers longer. I carefully emasculated two *dianthiflora* flowers, waited for the stigmas to mature, and then went to 'San Miguel' for pollen.

Oops. No pollen.

Eventually, the abused species got around to producing another flower or two, and I took the pollen from them, and applied it to 'San Miguel.' I wound up with one fruit, which may or may not have fertile seed (it's taking months to ripen ... Isla Montgomery take note.)

Watching *A. 'San Miguel'*, I learned something else. If the flowers are not externally pollinated, the calyxes turn yellow almost as soon as the flowers drop, even though the ovaries initially swell just as though pollination had taken place. However, if compatible pollen is applied (I haven't tried cactus pollen!), the calyx stays green. Thus the color of the calyx is a quick signal that something has been accomplished, at least in the genus *Alsobia*.★

Recently I read an article on beneficial insects used to control destructive insects and two sources for free information were listed. I wrote for and received a free copy of "Biological Pest Management for Interior Plantscapes" from the Entomology Section, Alberta Environmental Centre, Vegreville, AB, T0B 4L0, Canada.

This 30-page booklet is full of useful information and also well-illustrated with 48 color photographs of insects and greenhouses in Canada, as well as examples of damage done by particular insects.

Send for a copy and I think you will be enthusiastic about it.

I also wrote to Rincon-Vitova Insectaries, Inc., P.O. Box 95, Oak View, CA 93022, and received an excellent pamphlet on the use of beneficial insects for pest management which has excellent information on the topic in general plus more detailed information on the beneficial insects they sell.

This fall I plan to order some *Encarsia formosa*, a parasite used to suppress greenhouse whiteflies, and *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*, a mealybug predator. I will be spraying the greenhouse and all plants brought into it for Winter, and I will be releasing these beneficial insects a couple of weeks later. This should be a safeguard in case I missed any harmful pests.★

- Carl Walker, Jr.
Lenoir, NC

G.H.A. WANT LIST

Dave Zaitlin, 103 Maplewood Dr., Ithaca, NY 14850

Dave has recently moved. Please note his new address. He reports that he has mixed seed available from his various crosses between Sinningias cardinalis, reitzii, and many others. These crosses are a result of his attempts to get true-breeding lines of hybrid diploid Sinningias. He also has seeds of Chirita sinensis (green-leaved form) for anyone who requests.

As always, please be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope when requesting seed. Any others who have seeds to share, drop a note to Dave. He will coordinate the exchange. Do not send seeds to Dave.★

BACK ISSUES

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Zelda Mines, 2206 East 66th St., Brooklyn, NY 11234

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may be obtained for \$1.50 each

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO G.H.A.

SOME THOUGHTS ON COMMERCIAL GROWERS

Carl Walker, Jr., P.O. Box 5545, Lenoir, NC 28645-0313

I would like to say a few words in favor of commercial growers. I wish there were more of them!

Frankly, to be a ``commercial grower'' I think a grower would have to be depending on it to bring in income and pay their bills. And by those standards there are mighty few commercial growers.

One ``commercial'' I know supports himself with bedding plants and hanging baskets sold in the Spring and doesn't really make any money from it. Another told me local business supported her and that her mail-order business enabled her to get to know lots of nice people and was really for pleasure.

Most are operated by people who have income from another source and do it primarily as a hobby - and don't make enough to pay themselves minimum wage!

In one case I know of, an individual thought a lot of the commercial growers were charging too much and decided to go into business and charge ``fair'' prices. Business was terrific and he was enthusiastic about it - until a profit and loss statement showed he was losing money.

I would like to see a lot more species available and new selections of some of the more commonly available species brought in. I suspect some are variable in nature and new variability might be introduced. And I wonder if line breeding from an introduction years ago might have weakened some of them as was found with one Begonia species when a new introduction was made from the wild and a large difference in size and vigor was found.

There are a lot of us amateurs who would like to do this but most of us can't. Commercial growers with a financial incentive could.

Of course, amateur hybridizers also have a lot to contribute. It's surprising how many things that wouldn't be considered ``commercially profitable'' can be tried and advances made. In gesneriads, leaving aside Saintpaulias, almost all advances have been made by hybridizers who are amateurs and not doing it for the money. I wish I could financially afford to do a lot more of it.

I would really like to see something done about bringing in new species and variations from the wild. I understand a trip is being planned by Patrick Worley and I sure hope it results in some being found.★

A NEW BOEA HYBRID

Gloria Kahle, 10024 112 St. S.W., Tacoma, Wash. 98498

In the last issue, Margaret Waguespack asked if anyone had done any hybridizing with Boea species. She must have written you before the Convention this year, for I brought her B. hygrometrica and she brought me B. lawisii. Both are very small as yet. I have made a cross with B. hygroskopica as parent plant using pollen of B. hemsleyana. Only two seedlings were produced and only one grew. This plant has B. hygroskopica leaves and flower color - with flowers the shape of B. hemsleyana. So far it has not wanted to backcross. It would be nice to obtain other Boeas with various-colored flowers to work with. Hope the two other species I have will grow and bloom at the same time.

In that same issue, Margaret Waguespack also asked for sources of Asian gesneriads.

Barbara Roberts of Village Plants (5656 Calyn Road, Baltimore, MD 21228) wrote to say that she and Jim have traded in the past with Nagahide Nakayama, formerly with the Hiroshima Botanical Garden. The Garden has an extensive gesneriad collection, though a lot of the material may already be available here in the U.S. He doesn't work there any longer, but Mr. Nakayama still has contacts with the Garden and may be able to help locate Asian gesneriads. The address is:

Nagahide Nakayama
3159-12 Adinadai-kita, Hatsukaichi
Saekigun, Hiroshima Prefecture
738 Japan

Don't Forget ...

It's Time to Renew Your Membership

See Page 13 for Form

SINNINGIA PUSILLA

Juanita Stone, Riverside, R.I.

I opened the last issue of CrossWords (Vol. VII, issue 3, ``Mystery of the Spotted Sinningias'') and on page two saw your pictures of S. pusilla and immediately became interested. I have had S. pusilla with fringed edges occurring several times during the last few years. This past winter when one showed, I decided - at long last - that perhaps I should do something with it. Since my interest with the gesneriads is to send seed to the AGGS Seed Fund, I have formerly just culled out any poor flowers.

This time I tried to examine the flower closely to determine whether the unusual petals grew on the same level as the normal ones. In other words, was this true doubling. Well, I did not get very far with that because the whole flower just snapped off the stem and I could not answer my question or try to set seed. I will watch and try to be more careful with the next one, should any occur.

I also had a single little flower that was an intense true red, even when I pulled the plant out from under the lights. A seed capsule formed and ripened. I should mention that I tagged the stem for identification. Upon harvest, I emptied the contents onto white paper but was not sure that there were seeds inside. If so, they were very fine indeed. I have a lens, but it is only 3x and that did not help me, so perhaps there was only chaff. But, I sprinkled whatever it was onto the growing medium and got about 13 seedlings; but one seedling looks a bit different from the others - if one can differentiate seedlings. I will treasure the lot with crossed fingers.

I grow two five-inch pots of S. pusilla, that have well-spaced plants. The medium is a growing mix that I bought two years ago for raising vegetable seedlings. That is very vague, but when one wants large-size bags of growing mix, there is a problem in this area. Thirty years ago when farms were common, there were hay and grain stores. But times have changed. I once tried to have a special order filled by the last survivor, but even though I had been a long-time customer, I think that his offer was all a put-on. Alas, my small garden is almost all sand and compost piles are always depleted.

I have grown S. pusilla many times from transplanted tubers and from seed and have not found them fussy about what they were planted in.

The pots have always been kept inside squatty glass containers, with covers, and kept moist but not soggy.

They have a place under a table lamp that has two 20-watt lights. I used Gro-Lux bulbs until two years ago, when they priced them out of my budget. Right now there are cool white lights in the fixture, with a timer set for 14 hours. Yes, I know that one warm and one cool light is better, but the other lights are available only by special order and the price is too high. The plants are seven inches from the bulbs.

(Continued on next page)

SINNINGIA PUSILLA (continued)

Temperature is a steady 70 degrees night and day. In winter with the heat on (forced-air), covers are needed. In summer the house gets very hot and does not cool very much at night. Fertilizer varies - I make up a batch of concentrate so that one teaspoon of it mixed into my water pot, holding almost a gallon of water, is equal to quarter strength; or sometimes when the weather is dull or cold, I mix to equal one-eighth strength. This is used in watering as needed. For the Sinningias, perhaps that would be about once every ten days.

When I mix a batch, which might last on average five months, I vary the brand, and I do keep a record: Rapid Grow, Peter's 10-30-30, Peter's 30-30-30, Rapid Grow, Hyponex 20-20-20, Peter's 12-36-15, Miracid, Hyponex (in that order).

All this is not very scientific. But I lack the competitive spirit and do not show plants. I find that gathering seed suits me fine. Hybridizing? Well, I have kept only one plant, and that one I am trying to miniaturize; the others did not come up to my standards for new introductions, but I am still trying.

Last spring, when S. regina bloomed, it threw up a thick stalk that had buds which upon opening were a shade that could be described as Old Rose. Seed set, sprouted, but the plants were frail. I carried them to the third generation. Those plants were also weak and I kept one tuber. It sprouted, but is now dying and there is no point in keeping it. Exasperating! There are enough plants - the results of trials - that do not measure up, to add another one. Most of my crosses also end up as discards.*

Gesneriad Hybridizers Association
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Send your check for \$5 (made out to "Gesneriad Hybridizers Association"), along with this form, to:

Meg Stephenson
4115 Pillar Dr., Rt. #1
Whitmore Lake, Mich. 48189

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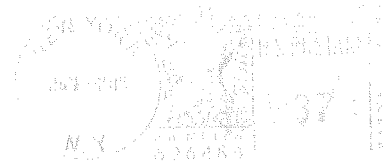
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