



# Gleanings

a monthly newsletter from The Gesneriad Society, Inc.

(articles and photos selected from chapter newsletters, our journal *Gesneriads*, and original sources)

Volume 7, Number 11

November 2016



Welcome to the 80th issue of **Gleanings**! This issue includes photos from the Lone Star African Violet Flower Show, Alcie Maxwell's article on growing *Boea hygroskopica*, and information about the next webinar.

Hope you enjoy **Gleanings**!

Mel Grice, Editor



Margery Anderson-Clive of Dallas, Texas, USA exhibited the Best Texas-Hybridized Gesneriad at the Lone Star African Violet Show this year. Her entry of *Sinningia* 'Savannah's Surprise' is shown above and on the right. See another hybrid sinningia created by Margery on the next page.



# Gesneriads at the Lone Star African Violet Flower Show



*Sinningia* 'Dreamsicle'  
Margery Anderson-Clive



*Streptocarpus* 'DS-Mysticism'  
Richard Nicholas



*Episcia* 'Pink Panther'  
Penny Smith-Kerker

Mel Grice photos





*Petrocosmea* 'Keystone's Blue Jay'  
Ken Froboese



*Achimenes misera*  
Margery Anderson-Clive



*Primulina* sp. USBRG 98-083  
Ron Davidson



*Gloxinia erinoides* 'Luiziana'  
Alcie Maxwell

Mel Grice photos





*Streptocarpus* 'Lady Slipper Blue Ice'  
Richard Nicholas



*Primulina* species V-27 - Nadine Tichy



*Nautilocalyx*  
*pemphidius*  
Margery  
Anderson-Clive

Mel Grice photos

# Growing *Boea hygroskopica*

Alcie Maxwell  
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I first became interested in the genus *Boea* when a member of one of my online African violet forums posted a picture of *Boea hygroskopica*. We all fawned over the plant photo because it looked like a species *Saintpaulia* but with better-textured foliage. We did not even realize that it was another gesneriad in the same family as *Saintpaulia*. Like any crazed plant collector, I decided that I had to get that plant.

I quickly learned that *Boea hygroskopica* was called the Queensland Rock Violet because it grew on the northern coast of the Queensland state in Australia. This location placed the plant just south of the equator near Papua New Guinea and Indonesia where many other boea species are found. The area typically has a wet spring and summer and a dry winter. The average high temperature is 88°F/31°C, and the average low is 70°F/21°C.

I tried to obtain plants or seeds from the traditional sources like eBay as well as from various Australian nurseries but had no luck. After I learned that *Boea hygroskopica* was a gesneriad and that seed was available in the Gesneriad Society's Seed Fund, I was ecstatic and ordered it.

I grew one plant from the seeds but killed it after its first couple of bloom cycles. I then tried to obtain more seeds from the Gesneriad Society's Seed Fund but none were available. Just when I had given up on ever growing the plant again, I learned that seeds were available from the Brazil Plants website. When I got them, I was careful. I sowed one quarter of the seeds and grew out five plants. My plan was to experiment with these plants, and if I killed them, I had backup.



*Boea hygroskopica*

## Culture

I grew some plants under a 2-tube T8 fluorescent fixture and others under a 4-tube T8 fixture. The lights were on for 12 hours per day, and the fixtures were placed 10-12 inches above the leaves of the plants. The plants grown under the 4-tube fixture were more compact, but I prefer the more open growth habit of the plants grown under the 2-tube fixture.





This plant grows best in high humidity. One of the plants under the 2-tube fixture was grown in an enclosed container with humidity in the high 90% range. This plant had lush, green quilted foliage. In comparison, the plants grown in the open, where the humidity was 50%, had dull foliage with brown edges. I improved the growth habit of the plants grown uncovered by placing them on wicks. Just like in the case of African violets, I used a wicking mix heavy in perlite as the soilless medium.

## Drawbacks

*Boea hygroskopica* is very susceptible to soil-based pests like soil mealybugs, fungal gnats, and springtails. I have had some success using a systemic insecticide mixed in the soil to combat these pests. I prefer the granular formulations of the systemic insecticide over the liquid ones as I can be heavy handed with the liquid formulations. *Boea hygroskopica* can be sensitive to excess chemicals. I lost a few plants when I sprayed higher-than-needed concentrations of insecticidal soap, fungicide, or Neem oil on the leaves at various times.

The plants do not respond well to low temperatures. In the winter, my grow room is unheated at night and the plants do poorly in the cool room temperature combined with the even cooler soil temperatures. I usually lose at least two wick-watered plants. I have had some success removing the plants from their wicks during the winter or with changing the soil medium to a mix that is approximately 80% perlite. Of course, I could always turn on the heater in the room, but that would make too much sense!

## Resurrection Properties

One of the cool features about *Boea hygroskopica* is that it belongs to the "resurrection plant" group. In its natural environment, the plant has little rain through most winter months and the foliage shrivels to conserve moisture. Once the spring rains come, the plant revives back to its normal shape.

In the pictures shown, the four plants were not watered for approximately two weeks after which I soaked them in water for 30 minutes. Eight hours later, they had revived. When I performed this "resurrection test" on larger, more mature plants, the plants typically recovered but lost some leaves in the process.



Left, desiccated plants of *Boea hygroskopica*

All photos courtesy of Alcie Maxwell

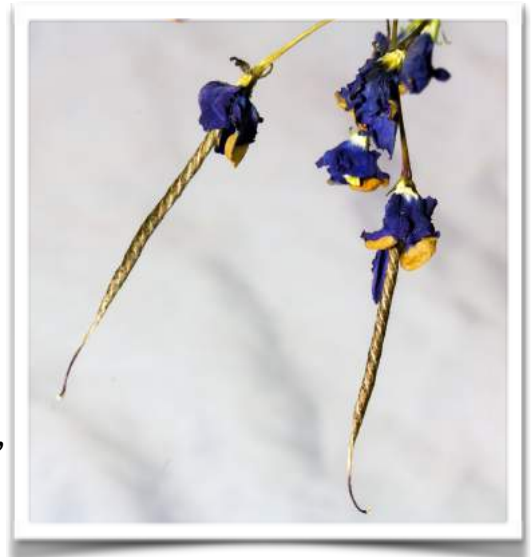
*Boea hygroskopica*  
plants revived



## Propagation

*Boea hygroskopica* is easy to propagate from seeds or suckers. The stigmas frequently grow into the anthers, so the plant self-pollinates itself readily. Hand-pollination is performed exactly like African violets: the anthers are opened to release pollen that is applied to a receptive stigma that had been open for a few days. Seed pods resembling those of streptocarpus and primulinas mature in four to six weeks.

The plant can be propagated by planting its leaves or by harvesting the suckers that develop freely at the base of a plant. I prefer to propagate from suckers since the plant produces them so readily. After removing the suckers, which have no roots, I place them in lightly moistened soil in an enclosed container. The day after planting, the suckers look a lot like the desiccated plants in the picture above. However, within a month, the sucker has rooted and has been revived with lush green foliage. Removing suckers also has the benefit of producing larger foliage on the main plant, similar to how removing stolons on an episcia promotes a larger base plant. From the five plants I grew from seed, I produced about 20 plants using suckers.



*Boea hygroskopica* seed pods

## Comparison to other boeas

The only other species of *Boea* readily available in cultivation is *Boea hemsleyana*. It is native to Papua New Guinea, just north of the habitat of *Boea hygroskopica*. Under my conditions, I have found *Boea hemsleyana* to be a little more forgiving of the lower humidity levels such as those out in the open on my plant shelves. *Boea hemsleyana* has better-looking blossoms and a more upright growth habit, while *Boea hygroskopica* has better foliage and is more floriferous. My goal is to cross the two species, but I have never had them in bloom at the same time.



*Boea hemslyana* (left) and *B. hygroskopica*



Another species native to Australia is *Boea kinneari*, which is found in the same area as *Boea hygroskopica*. However, it is not in cultivation. Hong Xin showed pictures of *Boea hygrometrica* (now *Dorcoceras hygrometricum*) and *Boea clarkeana* (now *Damrongia clarkeana*) taken during his trek around eastern China in an article in the Third Quarter 2015 issue of *Gesneriads*. If anyone ever obtains plant material of any of these species, please contact me.

This article appeared originally in ***Gesneriads*** Vol. 66, No. 3, Third Quarter 2016, Peter Shalit, editor. Read other interesting articles like this about gesneriads by becoming a member of The Gesneriad Society and receiving our quarterly 64-page journal.



# Next Gesneriad Society Webinar

The Gesneriad Society just added a new webinar: "Growing and Showing Florist Gloxinias" by Dale Martens.

<https://the-gesneriad-society.myshopify.com/collections/frontpage/products/webinar-growing-and-showing-florist-gloxinias>

You do not need to be a member of The Gesneriad Society to register to watch this very informative hour-long webinar that premieres December 6, 2016, at 9:00 p.m. EST. If you can't watch the premier, sign up and you'll be able to watch it after the premier, anytime as many times as you wish until the expiration. Please register at least 24 hours before Tuesday night as it is often overwhelming to process last-minute registrations.

*Dale Martens along with Mary Schaeffer and Paul Susi, the webinar team*

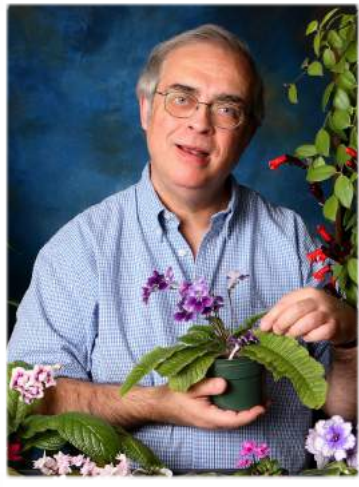


## Growing and Showing Florist Gloxinias

With Dale Martens

Sinningia speciosa hybrids:  
S. 'Rock Lyrics' exhibited by Jay Sespico, S. white hybrid exhibited by Carolyn Ripps, and S. 'Merry Christmas' exhibited by Barbara Krueger.





**From the editor —**

November has been another busy month for me. I finally was able to put my van in my garage on November 20. My usual goal is to be able to do this by Halloween. The Lone Star Convention put me behind schedule. It was well worth it!

If you have suggestions, comments, or items for possible inclusion in future issues, please feel free to contact me at [melsgrice@earthlink.net](mailto:melsgrice@earthlink.net)

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**Application for Membership — The Gesneriad Society, Inc.**

WELCOME — membership in our international society includes quarterly issues of *Gesneriads* — *The Journal for Gesneriad Growers*, a copy of *How to Know and Grow Gesneriads*, a packet of gesneriad seeds and a wealth of information about our chapters, flower shows, publications, research, programs and seed fund. Membership begins upon receipt of dues.

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