



The Newsletter of the Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society

Volume XIII, No. 3

November 2010

October Trip Enjoyed by All

Members who participated in the October 18th trip to greenhouses in Montgomery and Bucks Counties, Pennsylvania enjoyed a really great day. John Story, Manager at Meadowbrook Farm led a behind the scenes tour of this exceptional greenhouse and garden center which featured several wonderful gesneriads including budded plants of *Smithiantha zebrina* and flowering hanging baskets of *Chirita* 'Aiko.' There was a fantastic array of unusual and choice plants including Jade Vine (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*), which displays turquoise flowers each spring! Just around the corner we visited the famous Tinari Greenhouses which had beautiful specimens of Anthoflores African Violets produced in Ontario, Canada by Harster Greenhouses. Following a short visit to Tinari's we travelled down the road to Primex Garden Center which offered an amazing array of tools and supplies as well as well stocked greenhouses. We continued on to Otto's Brauhaus for great German specialties like Wiener schnitzel and sauerbraten as well as a great selection of German beers. After lunch we travelled through countryside aflame with autumnal splendor to Ott's Exotic Greenhouses which had many mature gesneriads for sale including *Episcia*, *Seemania*, *Aeschynanthus*, *Nematanthus*, and many other great houseplants. Their famous "Mountain of Mums" was at its peak of color! We returned to Wilmington tired, but with a really great day behind us!



Pictured left to right at the Mountain of Mums at Ott's Exotic Greenhouses: Anne Petrucci, Fiore Celano, Terry Celano, Diane Abramson, Quentin Schlieder, Nancy Murray and Carol Callaghan. (Gary Hunter took the photo)

The Companion Genera: Codonanthe, Nematanthus and xCodonatanthus

Editor's Note: This article is adapted from the slide script which accompanied the slide presentation titled "The Companion Genera from the Gesneriad Society which was shown at the October 12, 2010 meeting. Much of the information in the script was based information made available to participants at the Gesneriad Research Foundation seminars on the Biology of Codonanthe and the Biology of Nematanthus as well as during the GRF Study trips to/Central and South America by Dr. Hans Wiehler.

Codonanthe and *Nematanthus* are referred to as The Companion Genera because they are the only two genera in the family Gesneriaceae with a chromosome number of 8. Because of this, the two genera have been easily crossed to form the intergeneric combination called *xCodonatanthus*. In general, these plants are quite durable and can be grown with relative ease. They have fleshy leaves and grow epiphytically in their native habitats in the tropical Americas in partial or full sunlight.

There are around 20 species of *Codonanthe* found in tropical rainforests from sea level to about 5500 feet. This is *Codonanthe gracilis*, the type species for the genus, first discovered in 1829. *Codonanthes* make good basket plants as their growth habit is usually pendant. In their native rainforest areas, they are usually found in trees or growing on cliffs or moss-covered rocks. With sufficient humidity, they root easily at the nodes and naturally cling to or climb up these surfaces.

Most *Codonanthes* grow in association with ants. The *Codonanthe* plant provides a structure for the nest as well as food in the form of nectar and in the form of the nutritious, gelatinous food bodies called funiculi or arils attached to the seeds. The ants provide the plant with a rich organic soil in the humus and accumulated ant litter. They also disperse the *Codonanthe* seeds as they are shaped and colored like ant eggs, and the worker ants are stimulated to pick them up and carry them off to their ant gardens. In

addition, the ants provide protection against predators such as herbivorous insects.

The name "Codonanthe" comes from the greek "kodon" meaning bell-shaped, and "anthe" meaning flower. Most of the species have small white flowers which are pollinated by male and female Euglossine bees in search of nectar. Unusual in the Gesneriaceae, Codonanthes have two types of fruit — berries and fleshy capsules. The genus *Drymonia* is the only other genus in the family that shares this character. Codonanthe can be divided into three groups based on the fruit. The first group has orange berries and comes from Southeastern and Eastern Brazil. This includes the species *Codonanthe devosiana*

Codonanthe digna looks very similar to *C. devosiana*, but perhaps is more commonly grown. It flowers easily and makes an attractive basket plant often displaying its orange berries as well.

Codonanthe cordifolia is one of the more recently introduced species, named for its unusual heart-shaped leaves. Unlike most species of *Codonanthe*, this one has flowers that are maroon, brown and gold in color, although the colors are not always this intense.

Codonanthe gracilis, the type species, comes in various forms. Some have reddish leaves, some have much larger white flowers and some have heavily spotted flowers.

Codonanthe serrulata also was recently introduced. Its flowers are larger and more showy than most of the others,

This second group has berries that are purple, red, or pink. These species are distributed throughout the neotropics from Mexico down to Bolivia and also in eastern Brazil. The beautiful purple berry fruit of *Codonanthe calcarata* 'Puyo' from Ecuador belongs to this group. Another species in this group, *Codonanthe erubescens*, when grown in sufficient

light produces flowers which are light pink in color. If pollinated, deep red berries like this will form.

Codonanthe venosa from Brazil is one of the latest species to be introduced. It is a large grower with widely spaced leaves which do not grow in the typical opposite equal-sized habit of most Codonanthes.

Codonanthe uleana displays both its beautiful long flowers and showy red fruit. Some species of *Codonanthe* are reported to have medicinal uses. The Ticuna people of Amazonian Colombia use a poultice of the leaves of this species to treat wounds and infections.

The last group in the genus *Codonanthe* has fruit which is a greenish fleshy display capsule. This group comes from Central America and the Caribbean area. *Codonanthe elegans*, which belongs to this group, has a fruit is not the typical round berry but is elongated and splits open when ripe to reveal the showy maroon interior and a mass of seeds. *Codonanthe* has the largest seed in the gesneriad family. Also in this group are *Codonanthe luteola* from Panama, and *Codonanthe macradenia* from Panama and Costa Rica, both of which also have display fruit and red spots on the leaves which are the extra-floral nectaries that produce additional nectar.

Codonanthes make excellent pot plants or small basket plants. Several cuttings in a pot and routine pinching will give you a nice full specimen. They need average to good light, minimal fertilizing, and watering when the top surface is dry. Irregular watering is often the cause of the plant dropping its leaves.

Gary Hunter produced the only one known hybrid in 1974 by crossing *Codonanthe devosiana* by *Codonanthe gracilis*. He named this hybrid *Codonanthe* x 'Gina'.

Next Month - Nematanthus

A New Feature...

Are you looking for something special? Perhaps one of our members is growing the plant and will be happy to give you a plant or a cutting...or bring it for the sales table! Submit your requests to Quentin Schlieder at (302) 653-6449 or qcsjr@comcast.net. Below is our first request...

Quentin Schlieder is seeking the following African violets – 'Tommie Lou,' 'Star Wars,' 'The King' and 'Blue Eyed Russia.' He is also seeking *XCodonanthus* 'Springtime' and *Columnea* 'Apollo.'

Prop Shop Highlights

As noted earlier in this newsletter, the program at the October 12, 2010 meeting featured a superb slide presentation from The Gesneriad Society Slide Library titled "The Companion Genera" featuring *Codonanthe* and *Nematanthus* as well as the hybrid between these two genera, *xCodonatanthus*. This was by far the best program we've enjoyed from the Slide Library.

Following the presentation, members had the opportunity to propagate a number of plants from these genera, as pictured below. Cuttings in individually labeled plastic bags, 2-1/4 inch pots, soilless mix and four inch plastic labels were supplied. It was noted that for best effect, it is better to plant at least three cuttings per pot. No rooting hormone is needed but a cut should be made directly below the node (the point at which a leaf joins the stem) and if possible, at least two nodes should be inserted into the moistened (but not wet) soilless mix.

The soilless mix is then firmed gently around the cuttings which are lightly watered and allowed to drain before being placed into a poly bag sized for the pot which is then sealed with Scotch tape so that it can be reopened to water the plant if needed. This poly bag allows the grower to raise the humidity around the cuttings so they do not desiccate until they form roots.

One caveat was to place these sealed bags in bright light, but never in direct sunlight which would cause them to cook! The cuttings should be maintained at about 70 degrees F. They should root in three to five weeks. After they are rooted, it was recommended that the tips of the cutting should be removed just above a node to stimulate side branching, resulting in a fuller plant. It also was suggested that after the plants are thoroughly rooted that the tops of the poly bags should be opened, and the rooted cuttings should be acclimated slowly to their new growing environment.



Codonanthe devosiana



Codonanthe gracilis



Codonanthe gracilis
"Kautsky Red Leaf"



X Codonatanthus
"Antique Gold"



X Codonathanus 'Sunset'



X Codonatanthus 'Vista'



Nematanthus albus



Nematanthus 'Black Gold'



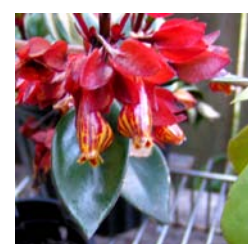
Nematanthus 'Cheerio'



Nematanthus gregarious
"Dibley's Gold"



Nematanthus
"Lemon Lime"



Nematanthus 'Tropicana'

Upcoming DAVS Meetings...

Tuesday, November 9, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.

Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Hosts: Beverages - Quentin Schlieder
Snacks – Geno Iubatti

Program: “Gesneriads...My Way” Charlene Marietti is an award winning grower and hybridizer as well as Chairperson of the upcoming 2011 Gesneriad Society Convention in Philadelphia. Charlene also serves the Society as Editor of Appraisal, the newsletter of the Gesneriad Society’s Judges Interest Group. She will share her techniques of growing award winning show entries. 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!

Tuesday, December 14, 2010 – 6:30 p.m.

(Note earlier time!)

Holiday Party and Auction at Carol Callaghan’s home, 2806 Rickdale Road, Wilmington, DE 19810

Pot Luck Dinner and Auction: Guests are welcome and we would like you to sign up to bring an appetizer, salad, main dish or dessert that will serve 8 people or more. Also plan to bring plants, handcrafts, surprise boxes, gifts or something from your kitchen for the auction. All proceeds go to the club-sponsored horticulture therapy program at the Richardson Park Learning Center. Sign up at November meeting!

The Delaware African Violet and Gesneriad Society Newsletter

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Upcoming Shows and Sales...

November 6 and 7, 2010 (See times below)

The TriState African Violet Society will present "Violets in the Moonlight" in the Haggerty Education Center at The Frelinghuysen Arboretum, 53 East Hanover Avenue, Morristown, NJ 07960 on Saturday 1:30-4:30 and Sunday 11- 3:30. Plant Sale. Free parking and admission. Information: Jan Murasko at jmurasko@comcast.net.

AVSA's 65th Annual Convention

Cherry Hill, NJ

May 15th to May 22nd, 2011

***Crowne Plaza Hotel Philadelphia/Cherry Hill
Cherry Hill, NJ.***

***Host - African Violet Society of Springfield,
PA***

56th Annual Convention

The Gesneriad Society

July 5th to July 9th, 2011

Loews Hotel, Philadelphia, PA

Host - Liberty Bell Chapter

2011 MAAVS Convention

November 10th to 12th, 2011

The Crowne Plaza Hotel

Timonium, MD