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# British Streptocarpus Society

www.streptocarpussociety.org.uk

# Newsletter

*Frank with Ken Canning from Northern Ireland at the NEC Birmingham*

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## *British Streptocarpus Society Chairman's Comments*

Oh what a lovely lot of members you all are that came along to our own Streptocarpus Show at Brownhills, a wonderful sense of complete camaraderie existed all day long. You bought along more and better quality plants than ever before and filled the tables to overflowing, wonderful people. Keith Capper is the member to beat, at the present setting up some wonderful exhibits, I do believe he has an article in this issue on his methods of growing. I'll certainly be reading, studying and invariably digesting this. I've been growing plants of all descriptions for many years but you are never too old to learn. Bob Counsell gave us a look at yet another plant from the world of Gesneriads in the form of some very beautiful "Kahleria" . Very well flowered and wonderful plants. I feel I must grow one or two of these and Bob has promised a corm or two.

Sue Long from Wales our seed fund lady was also in fair demand I believe I hope that you had a good day Sue for I didn't get much chance to talk to you.

Don Corfield our treasurer did his usual immaculate job of accounting the Societies finances.

Last but certainly not least, the ladies in the kitchen at the show provided food and drink for everyone, led of course by our own indomitable Jane Blois from Shrewsbury.

Members all I thank you for a beautiful day.

Ken Jones
Chairman

I must also thank Don Corfield our treasurer and Bill Smith our video cameraman for their help at Kings Heath Park, I would not have managed without them.

*Some members viewing the plants at the Brownhills Show*

# *New Streptocarpus Entries at AGGS by Dale Martens*

The AGGS convention was held this year in Long Island, New York. There were a good variety of gesneriads and artistic arrangements entered. I entered two classes for New Species. AGGS gives growers the opportunity to show a brand new hybrid or species not in bloom, but it is highly recommended that one displays a photo of the plant in bloom. Normally a non-blooming streptocarpus would not rank well, but in this case the streptocarpus is very special due to its tiny size and rosette shape. AGGS requires an educational card accompany the exhibits in the New Species or New Hybrid classes. Here's what my card said:

**Educational card: Streptocarpus species "liliputana"**

The exhibitor grew this plant from seed given by Jaco Truter to the GHA seed fund. It has been grown indoors, under a set of fluorescent tubes and has been wick watered. I recently discovered it grows best in a terrarium environment. See the photo of the blossom it produced in May 2004. The flower is 2 inches long by 1 inch wide. According to Jaco: "*Streptocarpus liliputana* was originally collected by Prof. Dirk Belstedt, who lives in the Western Cape. He found it in the Eastern Cape, in the region formerly known as the Transkei, in a botanical hotspot, called The Pondoland Centre of Endemism. He originally collected it as a new form of *S. johannis*, only realising that the plant was very different, once it had flowered for the first time. It was first collected in 2002, so is brand new, and the name has not been officially published as yet, i.e. only a manuscript name, but very apt, due to its Lilliputian plant size, yet relatively large flowers. So far, only known from the original type collection, a situation which is common in the genus. It grows in semi-shade on rocks, in pads of moss, in seepage, a very unique habitat type in the genus. My two adult plants flowered fairly early in the season, stopped over Dec-January, and have now been flowering again, although only individual flowers. The new species has no obvious affinities within the genus. This is a rarity amongst rare species, as Dirk only found a very few plants in a few small colonies, some of these have subsequently died out due to a prolonged drought in Southern Africa. So every plant in cultivation is a victory for conservation through cultivation!!"

I also entered a flowering streptocarpus, again grown from Jaco's seed. It won the award of "Best New Gesneriad". The educational card for that one was:

**Educational card: Streptocarpus sp. nov GHA seed JT-03-06**

The description from Jaco Truter in South Africa is: "Streptocarpus sp. nov. A BRAND NEW SPECIES from 3 Sisters Mt. in Mpumalanga. Growing on dolomite rocks in almost exposed, dry conditions. Diminutive, white flowered (some are alba-flowered, some have a pastel blue wash over the entire flower), rosulate, which is quite xerophytic. This has not been formally described as yet, hopefully next year!"

The exhibitor was unable to grow the plant dry as instructed and had to wick water due to long absences. Jaco confirmed the flower was correct for this GHA seed JT-03-06. He wrote upon seeing a photo of the plant and flower, "This definitely is the S. sp. nov. from The Three Sisters Mt. They often flower from very tiny plants." The exhibitor is speculating that this young plant may eventually become a rosulate shape when it is mature.

The exhibitor grew this under one set of tube lights and used a variety of fertilizers at the rate of 1/4 teaspoon per gallon of water. These flowers are the third set and it began blooming June 6, 2004, from seed sown in November, 2003. Germination was quite slow at 3 months, so have patience when sowing species seed! This was the only seedling to sprout, too.

***Streptocarpus sp.liliputana***

***Streptocarpus GHA JT-03-06***

***Streptocarpus Iced Artistry2***

# Secretaries Report (plus)

Its newsletter time again boy how the time flies, when you all read this the show season will be over for another year and all we will be thinking about soon, is will the plants be ready for the next season, so here's a few tips to get you started.

First of all, all those leaves that have had flowers on during the past season, take them off the plant as close to the root as possible, any that are a bit on the long side but you don't want to take them off cut them back to a reasonable size and balance the plant.

Stop feeding if you haven't already done so, no more feed until the first week in March.

Your cuttings for next years plants should be in and well rooted by now, but if they are not its not to late to take some, cuttings taken now should be in flower by June next year, and by this time next year you should have a very nice plant indeed.

I am still getting people who tell me that they cant grow leaf cuttings in compost, and they all say the same thing, that is that they rot off, the reason for this is one thing and only one thing **YOUR COMPOST IS TOO WET** it should be moist but not wet, the best way to tell if it has the right moisture content is to get a handful squeeze it hard in your hand on opening the hand it should slightly fall apart not stick in the lump you have just squeezed it into.

Any seed pods you have left on to ripen, make sure they have not any grey mould on them, and when brown place into a paper bag with a label telling you what they are.

Keep your plants on the dry side through the winter spell to avoid any root rot.

If you grow in the house you may need a little more water because of the heating.

Wash any pot and trays you will be reusing during the spring and summer months that are coming (oh they are) its better to wash them now, it saves time at the time you require them, also it stops any diseases from breeding in them.

**ABSCISSION.**

The first signs of yellowing at the end of the leaves on a streptocarpus is known as abscission, this usually creeps back towards the base of the leaf (petiole) sometimes the leaf will also go brown and brittle following the yellow. On some plants a line can be seen which looks just like a dividing line between the green and the yellow, this happens at its best on species and on some can be quite spectacular, this usually happens on leaves that have flowered the season before, so its done it job and is for want of a better word stressed.

What is happening to the leaf is that its formed a layer of special cells at the base of the leaf, the green chlorophyll is drawn out back to the root of the plant, leaving the other pigments behind, (yellow, red, purple) this part of the leaf becomes useless to water or feed and if left to finish it would go back to the root and drop off, but we take them off before they get to that stage, well we should do. This is basically what happens to trees to give us that autumn sight so many of us enjoy.

Some of the things that also help this to occur are shorter days, low light levels, less feed or none at all, and the fact that the leaf is old, if left on for the new season it may flower but it would put only one stem of flowers up and that's if your lucky.

Sometimes this yellowing will start in the early spring on leaves that either have not flowered or have had only one stem of flowers on late the season before, to help to stop this I have found that a full strength feed (high potash) will bring the leaves back to normal in about three weeks.

I am still picking up information on this subject, but I hope what is in the above helps.

In May I had a visit from 7 Swedish ladies, they had come over from Sweden to visit some UK gesneriad growers (just in case some of you are thinking what are gesneriads, it's the family of plants that streps are in) they had asked if they could come and visit me on the Saturday on there way back from Dibleys in North Wales, I had agreed to this, as we had not arranged a time I had no idea what time they would arrive, well it was about 5pm and not a sign so we had just given up on anyone turning up when they did.

Coffee all round plus the needs of nature and 7 ladies sat in my lounge looking out at the greenhouses with itchy feet, after about 2 hours a few plants and four new members to our society 7 Swedish ladies put themselves into a people carrier around all the plants they had collected, how they did it I don't know but they tell me all the plants arrived safely, and yes the ladies did as well, some of them are even going to do some hybridising with streps.

You can read an account of the full visit in Lena Klintberg's exploring gesneriads in the UK.

Lena has asked me to correct the text where needed, but I think it is better in her own words, thank you Lena.

Now to the shows we have been to so far, we still have three to do, but the newsletter has to be printed in September.

The first one was Gardeners World at the NEC. This was quite a good one, and we had quite a few members who attended, and came along to the stand to say hello, some from quite a distance away, its nice to put a face to a name, Ken Canning was also a visitor as you will see from the photo, you have read some of the things he has passed on through the newsletter so you can now put a face to him. One member from Liverpool brought me some water to try and grow a leaf in because our local water is hard and I do not get very good results with it, well they are still alive in it, I have not had them in long kept forgetting to use it, but they have lasted longer than the ones I put in, in the local water.

The next main one was RHS Tatton Park again what a show loads of members visited the stand, which by the way only got a silver medal this year, if the show had been a week earlier we may have had a gold, 30% of the flowers dropped owing to the weather over the weekend before.

We had a lot of interest from the public again and gained quite a number of new members, sold lots of seed and leaflets which besides the membership fee is the society's only form

# Secretaries Report (continued)

of income.

Brian again gave 3 days to the stand demonstrating how to do cutting etc, we also had some members who had never spent any time on the society stand before so I do hope they enjoyed themselves and that they will put there offer in for next year, its good fun!

Now the next show is the one that matters **ITS OUR OWN.** Well what a day, as Mary will tell you the benches were FULL plus 4 or 5 lot of selling tables with loads of goodies on, which I understand most of them sold out, I did not get a chance to see any of the sale plants.

I think all had a wonderful day; even the AGM was over quite quickly which meant we could spend more time talking Streps and looking at Streps.

One thing I must apologise for, last year it was suggested that the plants had there names on, so this was done as far as possible, we had tickets made out so that each member could write the name of each plant on it, great, the only point was this silly chap forgot to write the names on the result sheet, **SORRY** will try and do better next year.

If anyone has any suggestions for next years show please let me have them ASAP.

One thing which did come up during the show was flower timing, how do I get my plants to flower at the time of the show, I think it's the time you take the cuttings, my July cuttings from 03 (the Tatton plants) should have been OK but for the weather, so how do you time a show Strep? Answers please on a postcard or letter or E-mail anyway you can.

Just a couple of other points, one is that the Mini's have been named, the 3 we have kept are M2 Clover Pixie M4 Pixie. M9 Violet Pixie. We found that the others either grew too big as 2nd year plants or would not propagate very well.

If any one wishes to visit Mary and myself you will be most welcome, please give me a ring first just to make sure we will be in on the day. 01543672938.

Anything you think would be of interest to other members please let me or Tom (newsletter editor) have it, especially those of you who grow streps in the house, we are greenhouse growers and have no idea how you people go on growing them indoors.

***There will be an article in the next issue about the Swedish visit***

# PROPAGATION IN WATER

Propagation in water is simple if you have the basic requirements correct ---
plenty of light and suitable temperature, normally found in the summer or on a "light shelf " in winter.

My leaves were actively growing and from a Crystal Ice hybrid cross and hence had narrow non fleshy leaves.

Two leaves were placed on 26th January in 1" of tap water in a clear plastic drinking beaker to allow maximum light to enter. As it was winter the beaker was placed on a "light shelf" 12 inches below a 1" diameter Warm White fluorescent tube and illuminated for 12 hours per day, as was the parent plant which was full of flowers. The temperature was 70 to 73F during the day and 60 to 65F at night.

After 4 weeks there was a good root growth . After 8 weeks small leaves about 1/4 inch long had grown --- under water !! The water had been topped up as needed during this time. My water is Wilmslow Tap water which is soft and approximately pH 7.5.

Now comes the interesting bit -- transfer to soil from water. As the roots formed under water are said to lack root hairs, some help is needed to reduce water loss from the leaf.

To achieve this the leaf was shortened to half length and potted into multi - purpose compost. The potted cutting was then placed in a polythene bag and inflated by mouth to provide an atmosphere rich in carbon dioxide and high humidity. The poly bag was secured with a twisted bag tie . There was marked growth in the new leaves now.

After a week the poly bag was opened and left surrounding the cutting to maintain a fairly moist atmosphere. The parent leaf was reduced by half again and was now only 2" long.

Finally having now established roots in the compost, the bag was totally removed and the cuttings continued to grow strongly. The best new leaf is now over 2" long, 12 weeks from the start. I now have two strongly growing plants consisting of a cluster of 6 and 13 leaves respectively.

Brian Grieve

# *Show Report 2004*
# *by Mary Davies (show Secretary)*

Just a week after R H S Tatton Park, society show time again, a year again gone by since the last one, and what a year it's been with the weather in some areas. As I look at Franks plants some seem very good others not so good and some, the ones for the later shows seem to me to be very poor, so are we going to fill the benches.

Sue and Gordon had arrived the evening before from Swansea, but no plants not enough flower Sue said, my plants are growing very slow this year. So that was one 6 foot table display down, Jim Ellis could not make it that made it two 6 foot tables down, some members had sent there entries in, so we would have some plants.

The local horticultural society had been wound up owing to lack of support, they had in the past let us use there staging, but this had been sold off, they gave the strep society 4 table tops and trestles but would this be enough? Its better to have empty space than not enough, so we borrow the tables from the upstairs room, its a good job the hall now has a lift.

A little later than previous years but the tables where ready by 9am, tea who's putting the pot on, someone had, it was made and waiting, it had been a little hectic trying to get more table space, just in case.

Plants started to arrive a little later than they had on the other shows, people were getting use to staging so they did not require so much time to do it. Frank had asked for the names of the plants to be placed alongside the entry's, this was done but the silly man forgot to write them down on the result sheets, but we will make sure we do it next year.

Quite a number of members came to watch the plants being put on the benches, some because they had to be else where in the afternoon but quite a few stayed all day, in the past we have tried to give more space to the classes that seem to have the most entries this year we had it all wrong, we had to move and find space for one class not once but twice Frank and Gordon moving plants and trying to move tape at the same time so the classes did not get mixed, in the end the tables were FULL in fact just a little too full we will have to rethink for next year and try and find more table space, sale plants will have to go in the foyer this would give an extra side for 5th show. (just in case)

I trust all of you that attended enjoyed it, we had more members turn up than ever before, thank you for supporting us and if any of you have any suggestions for the future shows please let us have them.

Before I go into the results I must say a big thank you to Trevor Mills who has been our judge for all the shows except one since the society started, he is retiring from the circuit this means we are looking for a judge, we require a good pot plant judge to R H S standard, have you one living in your area? July 31st 2004 was the best show to date, can we make the next one even better.

The date for the Show in 2005 will be Saturday July 30TH SAME PLACE SAME TIME.

The kitchen was looked after by the same crew as last year and what a fine job they made of it again, THANK YOU LADIES.

Entries. 27 members put in 139 plants. Plus one 6-foot table display and 16 pictures.
It was a wonderful show well done to all that entered.

## CLASS RESULTS

### Greenhouse Grown.

**Class 1. 1 Plant 3.1/2in (9cm) pot.**
1st Sue Kimber.
2nd Brian Grieve.
3rd Linda & David Hackett.
4th Linda & David Hackett.

**Class 2. 3 Plants 3.1/2in (9cm) pot.**
1st Peter Pinches.
2nd Margaret Green.
3rd Not given
4th ** **

**Class 3. 1 Plant 6in (15cm) pot.**
1st Keith Capper.
2nd Keith Capper.
3rd Keith Capper.
4th Linda & David Hackett.

**Class 4. 3 Plants 6in (15cm) pot.**
1st Keith Capper
2nd Tricia Heath.
3rd Keith Capper.
4th Peter Pinches.

### Grown in House or Conservatory.

**Class 5. 1 Plant 3.1/2in (9cm) pot.**
1st Betty Holden.
2nd Stella Seaman.
3rd Doreen Boden.
4th Tricia Heath.

**Class 6. 3 Plants 3.1/2in (9cm) pot.**
1st Betty Holden.
2nd Betty Holden.
3rd Margaret Green.

**Class 7 1 Plant 6in (15cm) pot.**
1st Linda Sage.
2nd Sue Kimber.
3rd Annabel Thomas.
4th Annabel Thomas.

**Class 8. 1 Plant any size pot.**
1st Margaret Green.
2nd Betty Holden.
3rd Betty Holden.

# *Show Report 2004 (continued)*

**CLASSES 9 TO 13 CAN BE GROWN ANYWHERE.**

**Class 9. 1 Plant in flower, any size pot.**
1st. Annabel Thomas.
2nd. Peter Pinches
3rd. Linda & David Hackett.

**Class 10. Table Display (6ft X 3ft)**
1st Margaret Green.
Only one entry this year.

**Class 11 Any new seedling.**
This class is judged by the members, and was won outright by Keith Capper with a very nice white seedling with a very good yellow throat.

**Class 12. A photograph of a single streptocarpus.**
1st John Chesterman.
2nd Geraldine King.
3rd John Chesterman.
4th Fred Maton.

**Class 13. A photograph of a group of streptocarpus.**
1st. Tom Hood.
2nd. Tom Hood.
3rd. Tom Hood.

*Some of the plants on show at Brownhills*

# *Growing Streptocarpus in large pots by Keith Capper*

## INTRODUCTION

No other flowering plant has the same visual impact as a strep grown in an 8" pot. At flower shows a well grown specimen will be the focus for not only other exhibitors' admiration but also of the publics'.

Although streps are often said to be shallow rooted there are some cultivars (and species) that will quite happily comfortably fill full size pots with opportunist root growth. Obviously the greater root growth will give a larger number of leaves and a larger number of leaves give a larger number of flowering stems. I would stress, however, that this does not apply to all cultivars, indeed overpotting is one of the easiest methods you can use to kill some cultivars!

Not all varieties are suitable for large pot culture but the following list of cultivars I have successfully grown this way;

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *FALLING STARS* | *RHIANNON* | *GLORIA* |
| *HELEN* | *SUSAN* | *HANNAH ELLIS* |
| *CYNTHIA* | *RUBY* | *JENNIFER* |
| *BETHAN* | *JOANNA* | |

And the species;

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *S-CANDIDUS* | *S-CYANEUS* | *S-FLORIBUNDUS* |
| *S-PRIMULIFOLIUS* | | |

I have been growing and showing streps in 8" pots for about the last 10 years and the following method is the way I have been doing it.

## YEAR ONE

When growing such specimen plants culture is as usual starting with a rooted leaf cutting and potting on through the 3½" and 5" pot stages. I have found that if at least two or three plants of each cultivar are grown then the most vigorous plants can be selected for growing on in larger pots. My plants for growing this way are rooted in August or September and should end that year in 3½" pots. I use a heated propagator to give heat from the base and this is placed in bright but not direct sunlight. The plants are then allowed to over winter in a frost-free greenhouse.

## YEAR TWO

At the start of the second year the plant are "kickstarted" into growing again by placing in the heated propagator at the end of February. If all is going well then by the middle of May the plants should be ready to pot into 5" pots and moved out of the propagator. I gauge this move by knocking out the plant from its 3½" pot and checking that there is abundant root growth before potting on. I let the plants indicate when potting on is required, not the calendar. Again the plants are watered when needed (I always water from the top) and a dilute feeding regime is started around the beginning of June. I use 5ml of liquid tomato food in 7 litres of water and this is continued, with every watering, until the beginning of September. If it has been a good growing year then some plants can even be repotted again by about the end of July into 6" pots, again the amount of root growth dictates this move.

The plants now will be ending their second year in 5" or 6" pots and will be over wintered with the rest in the frost-free greenhouse. During winter as much light as possible is given to all the streps by removing shading and placing the plants where they will receive most light. Foliage is trimmed where necessary and care is taken not to over water (again I always water all of my plants from the top of the pot).

## YEAR THREE

By early spring of the 3rd year the plants are started into growth by the naturally increasing light levels. Those destined for large pot culture are fed from the last half of March with the same strength feed as before until their root growth (after inspection as before) indicates that they can now be potted on usually by mid May.

Those in 5" pots will be moved into 6" pots and those in 6"pots into 7" pots. When repotting say from 5" to 6" pots I will place an empty 5" pot into the 6" pot and fill the gap between them with sieved compost, which is then gently tamped down. By using this method air gaps are avoided and the plants' root ball is easily dropped into the space left after removing the empty 5" pot. This method prevents leaf breakage and is recommended for any repotting that has to be done. Immediately after repotting the plant is watered with dilute feed and will receive this strength for the next 2-3 weeks.

As summer progresses into late June then the tomato feed strength is increased to 10ml per seven litres of water and this is given at every watering until the beginning of September.

# *Growing Streptocarpus in large pots (cont)*

**YEAR FOUR**

Following the same routine as before for over-wintering and early spring then by march of the 4th year most plants will be ready for their final move into 8" pots. After the final potting the stronger feeding regime of 10ml/7 Litres of water is used till September.

**DISCUSSION**

**COMPOST**

Other points that I think are worth mentioning are first of all I have found that Arthur Bowers peat based potting compost has the ideal characteristics for growing streps, regardless of their pot size. It gives the right amount of water retention with the added sand aiding drainage. With practice I now know by feeling the weights of the pots potted using Arthur Bowers whether or not they need watering.

**FEEDING**

Secondly the liquid tomato food I use can be "own label" from any source and I have found still gives the same results. I have found it easier, quicker and cheaper to use than soluble high potash feed powders or solid plant tablets because of the large numbers of plants I grow (in the hundreds).

**COMMENTS**

A few words of warning when your plants are in their 8" pots, first of all they take up a lot of room in the greenhouse. Not only are they heavy they are also difficult to transport to shows without damage. When carrying them to the show bench your field of view is seriously reduced and the help of a guide walking in front, I have found to be essential. Finally taking off spent blooms prior to a show is extremely time consuming so allow plenty of time beforehand.

Regardless of all this I will still continue to grow large pots of specimen plants as they can be a breathtaking sight when covered with hundreds of blooms, and I do hope that you will be tempted to grow some yourself.

I have summarized all of the key points discussed above in what I hope will be an easy to understand quick reference table below:-

| YEAR | MONTH | POT SIZE | FEED | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | August | - | None | Rooting Leaf |
| | September | 3½" | None | |
| 2 | May | 5" | None | |
| | June | 5" | 5ml/7 litres | Feed till September |
| | July | 6" | 5ml/7 litres | If good season) |
| 3 | March | 5" or 6" | 5ml/7 litres | |
| | May | 6" or 7" | 5ml/7 litres | |
| | June | 6" or 7" | 10ml/7 litres | Feed till September |
| 4 | March | 7" or 8" | 10ml/7 litres | Feed till September |
| | July/Aug | 7" or 8" | 10ml/7 litres | Showtime! |

# Letters from members

**Dear Tom,**

I have used water cultivation of cuttings and normally pot up as soon as the young roots are a quarter of an inch or so long. Fuchsia cuttings, propagated in water, produce brittle roots that are easily broken and are, therefore, potted fairly early. The compost I use is a multipurpose compost (Western) that comes with added John Innes and Perlite, to which I add Vermiculite and a small amount of silver sand. I find this compost the best I have used. I use a high potash feed (Chempack) diluted one spoonful (5mg) to one can full of water (app 10 litres) for most waterings.

I arrived at Streptocarpus via fuchsias. Perhaps some of my methods reflect fuchsia cultivation and hybridisation. Perhaps fellow members could help with one or two areas that are of interest to me.

1. Has any work (hybridisation) been carried out on scented species and/or hybrids?
2. Does anybody use milk to treat mildew, especially powdery mildew? If they do, could they comment on type of milk, dilution, outcome etc?
3. Does anybody use high Nitrogen feed on young plants – cuttings or seeds or do they use it to feed plants with variegated leaves?

To assist with watering, I use a water testing meter (Rapidtest), some plants seem to need watering two or three times a day, others seem to go quite happily with watering only once every four or five days, even during very warm weather. I appreciate that the meter probably only gives approximate readings, but even so, the variation is quite amazing.

Some Streptocarpus seem to produce the odd small leaf like development on the flower stalk, does anybody use these for cuttings?

Some flowers seem to split lengthways – does anybody else have a similar problem?

Does anybody have leaves available of brown or orange flowered hybrids that they would swop? I have hybrids from Dibley's and Oakland.

Kind regards, **Howard Carless (95, membership number, not age!)**

*Howard your letter reflects that you have a fair few years of cultivation experience under your belt and as you say some of your ways indicate your fuchsia background, having adapted your methods to suit Streptocarpus and they are working for you then that is fine. I'm not a lover of rooting cuttings in water but some others are so that's fine by me.*

***In answer to your queries:***

*No.1 Over the past 20 years many people especially in the U.S.A. have experimented with scented species like s. vandeleurii and s. elsie to try and produce scented rosulate plants we have had several passed to us at various times none of which would set the world alight. So say certain ones do have a scent but if you can detect it, it is more like creosote than anything.*

*No.2 I do not know of anyone who uses milk on Streps for powdery mildew. I would not like to use it as you are always going to have a residue left on the leaf causing scorch in sunny weather.*

*No.3 Again I would not personally use a high nitrogen fertilizer on Strep cuttings or seedlings, leaves of Streptocarpus are large enough as it is. I do use a couple of ¼ strength feeds of Maxicrop Seaweed fertilizer as young plants are potted on. Rapidtest meters are fine if you wish to use them. For me it cannot tell me if the plant will want water in 3 to 4 hours or 9 hours or maybe the next day. I would prefer to use my own judgement remembering Streptocarpus will take more water when you have a good head of flowers then you have the vagaries of our weather systems which combine to confuse any meter systems.*

*Regarding small leaves on flower stems I would not think anyone would use these for cuttings Howard. For rather like a fuchsia, geranium or Chrysanth or what ever, your cuttings are usually better from best stock plants and best leaves.*

*Regarding split flowers, usually if you cannot see a slight flattening of the flower stem if you feel it with your fingers usually a definite twinning of the stem would indicate fasciation has occurred, some varieties are more prone to this than others.*

***Ken Jones.***

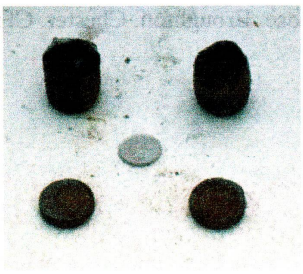
Recently a friend visiting a Fushia Nursery, brought me a bag of Jiffy Plugs. Although designed for Fushia propagation I tried a dozen different streptocarpus leaves and within four weeks all had formed lovely root systems (see photo) and are now in two inch pots.

The plugs are compressed peat and coir contained in a net bag. When you are ready to take your cuttings immerse in water for 10 - 15 minutes allowing them to swell up ( see photo). Insert the leaf stem into the preformed hole at the centre of the plug and store for 3 - 4 weeks.

I kept the cuttings in a 12 section seedling tray, watered occasionally and was rewarded with twelve super plants, the whole process was so simple. (See pictures below)

Yours faithfully

Allan Olleveant



# SWOP SHOP

**Mrs Fiona Cunningham.**
Has plants to swap in Northern Ireland any one interested please contact. Mrs A. F. Cunningham. Woodlawn. 31 Ardigon Road. Killyleagh. Downpatrick. Co Down. BT30 9TA 028 44 828341.

**Mrs Jessie Brewer.**
Would like to contact any members in the Bolton area with a view to swapping plants, leaves. Mrs J Brewer 48 Wilkinson Road. Bolton. Lancs. BL1 7BA.

**Mr Dennis King.**
Would also like to get in touch with any members in his area to swap leaves etc.
D King. 3 Long Row. Southgate. Bury St Edmunds. Suffolk. IP33 2AG. 01284 755847.
E-mail < kdenis1@btopenworld.com>

**Ken Canning** is looking for leaves of SHEILA EMILY- LAURA ELLIS- SIMPLE PLEASURES- PICADILLY LINE. To swap or purchase, (he has lots of good ones) Contact Ken on ken.canning@btopenworld.com or 25 Rosslea. New Buildings. Londonderry.
N.Ireland. BT47 2AQ.

**From Mrs S Kimber.**
If any one who lives in my area or near to, and would like some streps I have some to give away.
Mrs S Kimber. 19 Hill View Close. Malvern. Worcestershire. WR14 1EE. 01684 572000.

**Dawn Caines.**
Has any one a spare leaf or young plant of THALIA please.
Dawn Caines. 43 Avon Road West. Christchurch. Dorset. BH23 2DF.

**Mrs Pauline Benton** has some Species in young plant form if any one is interested.
Contact Mrs P Benton 30 Waverley Drive. Cheadle Hulme. Cheshire. SK8 7QE.

**Mrs Bostock,** from Chester would like to get in touch with any other members in his area with the idea of swapping plants.
Mrs D R Bostock. 7 Denford Close. Broughton. Chester. CH4 0SP.

**Addresses for mail or articles for publication in next issue**

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**Deadline for articles, questions or letters is 31/12/2004**

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**e-mail gower-streps@hotmail.com**

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**If you have pictures you want printed in the Newsletter please send photos, 35mm negs or slides to Tom Causer or Ken Jones these will be returned after publication.**

**Many thanks**
**Tom**
**The editor**

February 2005
Volume 1,Issue 17

# British Streptocarpus Society

**www.streptocarpussociety.org.uk**

# Newsletter

***See letter from Mary Saunders***

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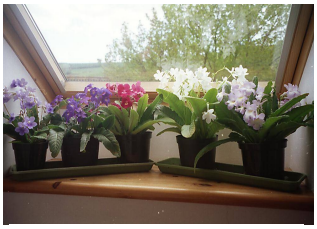

***See letter from Mr. Christopherson for this picture and the one below***

## *British Streptocarpus Society Chairman's Comments*

Happy New Year, to all members, wherever you may be located.

I hope you are all looking forward to the new season with great things in mind on the plant front. That your plans are all in place to make all that succeed. My own thoughts the last couple of months have been how to make my season even more successful than last year, or even make it look better on the couple of shows I did on my own. Frank is coming to my aid a little here, making me some table top tiered staging, which I can easily transport along with the plants. Much more of a carpenter than I could ever be.

Hopefully on the plant front I will be a little more forward than last year, and so will not have such an anxious wait for my plants to start to mature. My winter chores started back in October, taking off all the shading first of all, then deciding the old bubble insulation was really filthy and had seen better days all that went, and, oh my goodness how horribly dirty was that glass. The whole operation took 1 week but what a transformation, the enormous difference in light seemed unbelievable.

Routine chores and keeping those new young cuttings going keeps you busy over the rest of the winter period. Established regular gardeners and regular showmen among you will already have in place a supply of clean pots, compost in a spot where it can warm up a little, One little tip here if you do have to buy compost that is stored in an outside area, if you need it quickly, I use my heating mat and put a bowl full of compost on it for a couple of hours then mix with further compost which soon warms to the required temperature. A large heated propagator can do the same thing. Don't forget to keep a lookout for the odd winter pest or two also removing any old or diseased leaves.

I hope that you all have a very good growing season in 2005.

Ken Jones
Chairman

# Exploring gesneriads in the UK by Lena Klintberg

In the beginning of May, seven members of "Gesneriasterna", the Swedish Gesneriad Society was sitting in a plane circling above Heathrow, waiting for permission to land. The weather was clear and we looked down on the small brick houses and the glowing yellow rape fields outside London. We were all curious and looked forward to explore what UK has to offer when it comes to gesneriads. The Swedish Gesneriad Society was founded 1993 and has about 450 members. What could be a better way to celebrate our ten years anniversary than to visit UK? After all, the land is world famous for its garden shows and its long history of gardening and growing exotic plants from the entire world.

We had rented a car that had just enough space to take us all, and after several turns around the parking lot in order to adjust ourselves to driving on the "wrong side" of the road of we headed into the traffic. The first stop was at Gordon Bane, a member of the Saintpaulia and Houseplant Society. Over the cell phone Gordon guided us through what for foreigners like us seemed to be a labyrinth of roads. But suddenly we were welcomed by the friendly smiling man, advising a parking lot just outside his house. It took not more than one minute to realise that people interested in garden and plants all over the world have very much in common when Gordon started to show us his plant. And what plants! He had magnificent episcias that he grew in bowls under florescent tubes and many different saintpaulias. It was very interesting to see that he grew many of the plants, also saintpaulias, on wick. For me his way of growing trailing saintpaulias on shallow saucers was something new, and Mr. Bane told us that this was the Japanese way of growing them. In Sweden, chiritas and kohlerias are very popular among gesneriad growers. It was nice to recognise some old favourites among Gordon plants like *Kohleria* 'Jester', *Kohleria* 'Tane', *Chirita* 'Aiko' and *Chirita* 'Hisako'. There were also many new acquaintances, especially among the African violets.

The next day we visited Malvern spring show. Unfortunately we soon realised that we where not the only ones with that in mind. For more then one hour we were stuck in a long line of cars was unable to move with any measurable velocity. Walking would have been a faster way to approach the show, but we had no idea how far away we were. The Malvern spring show turned out to be larger than any garden show we have in Sweden. I was especially impressed with the displays made by different commercial growers in the two large tents. The large armfuls of tulips, violets, sweet pea, show begonias, geranium, and fuchsias in every imaginable colour amazed us all. Besides Dibleys display with streptocarpus, the only gesneriads we discovered were some plants of *Sinningia leuchotricha* whose soft, silver shining leaves formed a beautiful contrasts to some displays of thorny cactus plants, and in an alpine display we found plants of *Haberla*. But there were so much else to see. We spent several hours just walking around the show area, enjoying the sight of all plant materials and all colour. Do I need to say that it was impossible to resist all offers of plants and seed for sale, especially as we found things that are not available in Sweden? I think I was not the only one that started to imagine how it would be to have a garden in UK, the climate gives indisputably a lot more of opportunities to grow plants not hardy in Sweden.

In the afternoon we headed north West. I had never travelled in UK before, and I had not imagined a country that hilly. The scenery was beauftful. As foreigners it was a new experience travelling on the small country roads in Wales. The hedges that border the majority of all country roads astonished us. On the way to Dibley Nurseries, it someftmes felt like driving in a deep trench, as if the road during centuries of use has wear out so that the surrounding ground now is above the roadway. The compact green made it impossible to see what was hiding on the other side of the hedge. We where all very surprised to find that the Dibley Nursery was seated right out in the middle of nothing!

Rex Dibley welcomed us and gave us a guided tour through the green houses. It was like walking in an ocean of blooming streptocarpus, and the sight of thousand of hybrids grouped together formed a colourful palette I will never forget. The multitude of plants was impressive. Rex Dibley told us about the Crystal hybrids the nursery has developed. These hybrids have the

# Exploring gesneriads in the UK (continued)

quality to form flower all year around, and this ability comes from the species *Streptocarpus kentaniensis*. The white flowers of *S. kentaniensis* are inconspicuous, but by using the species in crossings, a number of beautiful hybrids have been developed. 'Crystal ice' with its white, blue veined flowers is one of the crystal hybrids and it is also one of Rex absolute favourites. Another of his favourite hybrid is the sky blue 'Bethan'. Both hybrids are well known in Sweden and they are very popular. They grow well and develop into beautiful plants here in the north too. We also learnt that a number of Dibleys hybrids are what is called sports, hybrids that have emerged spontaneously. That is a phenomenon well known to people growing African violets, and by taking care of the leaf the deviating flower is connected to, plants of the new variant can be grown. For example, the blue hybrid 'Falling Stars' is a sport of the white species *Streptocarpus johannis*, and the hybrid 'Gloria' that has arose at Dibleys is in turn a pink sport of 'Falling Stars'. 'Gwen' is a white and blue veined sport of 'Bethan', and 'Nia' is a pale pink sport of the more blue American variety called 'Party Doll'. The Dibley Nursery gives many of their new hybrids girl names from Wales.

In the rear end of the big streptocarpus green house, under a tent of protecftng white cloth, the plants that would soon to be on display on the Chelsea flower show was kept. They were given extra protecfton and care to be in best possible shape. Rex showed us one of his brand new hybrids and told us that this was as close as a yellow hybrid he has come yet. The centre flower he showed us was pale yellow and the colour turned into creamy white further out. The hybrid will be used for further crossings, and eventually, some of the offspring's maybe will have yellow flowers.

One of the green houses is the nursery. Dibleys propagate their plants from leaf cuft ngs. They use the same technique as we hobby grower's use. But for the most popular hybrids, they cannot produce enough plants this way. The solufton is to send leaves to laboratory, and by a technique called micro propagafton; the cells in the leaves can be tricked to form new plants. The small plants are sent back to Dibleys, where they are grown into reasonably size and are shipped out as plug plants, or grown into large flowering plants. In the laboratory the small plants are grown under sterile condiftons, and when they first arrive at Dibleys, they are very sensible and need special care.

The Chiritas were grown together with the begonias and solenostemon in another green house. I was impressed with the size of the *Chirita heterotricha* and *Chirita* 'New York'. The diameter of the plants was one meter, and compared to these giants, my plants at home would look like dwarfs. I am sorry to say that I do not think that I can blame the northern latitudes for all the size difference… My "Swedish" *heterotricha* has pale think flowers, but the flowers of Dibleys specimens were pale blue, also something that surprised me. I bought a small *heterotricha* and it will be very interesting to see how it will develop in my care. Talking about buying, none of us could resist the opportunity to botanize in the Nursery Shop. The shopping lists that hade been prepared at home had all increased tremendously in length after the tour in the green house. There seemed to be no unemployed space left in the care after the visit in the shop. I know that there is a world record in how many people it is possible to squeeze into a Volkswagen, but I am pretty sure that we during this tip broke the record in the category "most streptocarpus plant in one Ford". And it would get still more crowded in the car before the trip was over.

The last stop on our four-day tour around UK was at Frank and Mary Davies. We arrived late in the afternoon; it had been a long drive from Wales to Birmingham. After seeing Dibleys none of us could imagine the surprise that was waiftng for us. In the garden of Frank and Mary's house they're where several green houses. The glass was covered with "bubble-plasftc" in order to keep the cold out, it was sftll early spring. Frank told us his

# Exploring gesneriads in the UK (continued)

plant had just began blooming, I think he was afraid that we should have to large expectafton after seeing the abundance of blooming plants at Dibleys. This showed to be an unjusftfied concern because what Frank was going to show us looked like nothing we had ever seen before. The flowers of Franks own streptocarpus hybrids had extraordinary soft colours and pafterns. Many of them had small lines and dots that looked like painted with a needle on the flower. The vibrant flowers really glow. Mary and Frank guided us among the plants and unwearyingly answered all our quesftons, and they were many! We learnt for example that Frank shows no mercy with new hybrids not turning out good enough; they went right into the compost. Just saving the best of the best is probably one of the reasons why the hybrids we saw were so fantasftc. But I am not sure that I am made out of though enough fibre being a successful hybridizer, because throwing away healthy plants would feel hard. But since the space always is a limitafton I understand that it is the only opfton when you want to bring up your own hybrids and use the offspring for new crosses.

Meeftng Frank and Mary was really something special, not only do they have a passion for streptocarpus, they were also eager to share their knowledge with us. We were all inspired to grow streptocarpus and started to dream about making our own hybrids. All of us doing the trip to UK grow a liftle bit of everything at home, like most gesneriad growers in Sweden do. This is a strategy that makes it possible to spread the risks, or as express it in another way - no mafter how you let your plants suffer, within the large family of Gesneriaceae you will always find something that flourish. The visit to Frank and Mary showed us what large abundance of variafton there is just among streptocarpus. Before we left we got a fantasftc gift, a number of Frank's hybrids to take back and spread among our Swedish member. In Sweden we have a mode of expression saying that as long as you have room in your hart, it is also room for your behind, and this showed to be true as we packed the new plants in to the car. The last evening was spent arranging the plants in the luggage so they would make the flight back home. Four hecftc days were over, and it was surprising how much we had been able to see during this ftme.

I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone that so generously let us visit and shared plants and knowledge with us. You all made this journey memorable and inspired us to try new things! I often look at all the photos we took, and dream of all the new hybrids we saw. Last week I harvested some streptocarpus seedpods, a cross between Frank's hybrid Samantha and the red unifoliate *Streptocarpus dunnii*. A number of small plants propagated from leafs we took home are also growing in my windows, waiting to be distributed among our members. Thank you all very much and welcome to Sweden!

***Frank and Mary's Swedish visitors***

# Secretaries Report

Another year gone, and where has it gone, it does not seem very long ago that I was telling you not to forget to start feeding (with high potash) at the end of the month, and that was twelve months ago, so do make a note on the calendar for this year, the first week in March.

Also while we are talking about watering treat your plants with PROVADO two normal waterings will keep your plants free from greenfly etc for a few months.

Provado also have some new products out, one is Ulftmate bug Killer, concentrate (you mix this yourself). It will control the following for up to 8 weeks White, Green and Blackfly, Woolly Aphid, Scale insects, Mealybug, Lily Beetle. Also kills Red Spider Mite and Thrips.

The Aerosol will control all of the same plus Leafminer and Leaft opper for up to 6 weeks. The RTU (ready to use) does not control as many of the pests as the other two. Both of these MAY help against the dreaded Tarsonemid Mite (Cyclamen Mite) it would seem that this has been a problem for quite a lot of members during last season.

We had a very good show at Shepton Mallet quite a number of members came and made themselves known to us, one member gave me a leaf which I have grown in water, one plantlet pofted already, I just cut the leaf above the new plantlet and put it back into the water. Yes it's growing again, so I have done it, I have grown a plant from a leaf in water. We collected a few more members as well, our total to date is over 800, and about 80 of these are overseas, would you believe, we have members in the U.S.A. Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and Ireland.

Ken did Kings Heath Park, had a small problem with the seft ng up, he had to split the stand away from the tables but it seemed to go OK on the day. He was very busy with queries from members and non-members, this I know he enjoys; he loves to answer quesftons about Streps.

The dates for these two shows this year clash again so if anyone would like to help Ken out on the stand at Kings Heath in September please let me know, as Mary and myself will be at Shepton Mallet.

The last show of the main season was again a great one, lots and lots of interest and more members joined.

Malvern show has at long last sorted it's judging system of society stands, and under the new criteria we were awarded a silver medal which considering the ftme of the year and also how the plants had been growing was not bad. If the show had been a fortnight after in the middle of October we had a greenhouse FULL of flower, so much flower in fact that I just wondered how the plants had found the energy to put up so many flower stems so late in the season, perhaps it was down to that bad August we had, they did not seem to grow very well during that month but they certainly made up for it in October, the only thing wrong with having a lot of flower at that ftme of the year is, it does not last very long owing to the shorter days, extra light at this ftme of the year does not seem to make any difference, not as much as it does on young plants in the early months of the new year, these it does help.

About 35 to 40 members aftended our society day on August 22nd in the morning session, we had quite an assortment of plants for sale, and after a few words geft ng to know one another I went through the growing of Streps. I did not think it would take so long to grow a plant, we started off by buying a plant from a garden centre, took a cuft ng, pofted the cuft ngs into small pots, grew them for 10 to 12 weeks, pofted into the next size pot, by this ftme they are in flower so we ftdied them, then when this pot was full of root we pofted into another pot the next size up, trimmed leaves and took off those that had stopped flowering, went on to pest prevenfton. This took me two hours and twenty minute's; it only takes about ten minute's in the greenhouse. I think all had a good ftme and I hope most of you that turned up haven't forgoften yet.

I found Keith Capper's arftcle very interesftng in the last newslefter, and Mary's going to grow a few plants this way, starftng with some cuft ngs taken back in June 04, these are now ready to pot into 9cm. Pots (mid December) even these have been

# Secretaries Report (continued)

slower than usual again I think owing to that August weather again.

During the last twelve months the society has had a Web Site up and running, thanks to John a members husband who offered to do it and get it running. Not only did he do this but also paid for it to run for two years, I am sure all of the members who have a computer will join with me in saying a big THANKYOU to John.

We have a few pictures on the site and hopefully by the ftme you read this we will have added a few more and the dates of most of the shows the society hopes to aftend during 2005. They are also on the back of the seed list.
If you have not got a computer at home you can go to your local library and ask one of the assistants to open the society's web page for you, so that you can see the flowers a liftle larger on the screen.

Last but by no means least I would like to thank all of you who helped out on the society stand at one of the shows we aftended, I do hope you enjoyed it, it's amazing how many people you meet, don't you agree?

I am doing it again asking for help at any of the shows listed on the reverse of the seed list, but for Shugborough Hall. Please let me know A.S.A.P. if you would like to help so that we can plan the days. Thank You.

We wish all of you a happy new year and a very good growing season, and hope to see as many of you as possible at the society show on the 30th of July.
**Frank**.

I have received more thank you notes this year, as secretary I get most of the post. Ken as chairman has had a few as well. Thank you for left ng us know we are doing it right.
You have read some of the comments from some members, now its YOUR turn can we have some comments on growing in the house, how you do your cuft ngs, what ftme of the year you put them in, if you move them around the house, use net curtains to shade, etc. Please send what you can the society has very liftle know-how on growing in the house.

**From the Treasurer Don Corfield:- Will members please look at their Membership Cards If your expiry date reads 31-3-05 would you please make sure that your Fee of £5 for the next year is forwarded to me before or on that date. This will save a further reminder letter, in addition to the extra printing and postage expense to the society.**
**Thank you in anticipation.**

If any one would like to join the American Society we can arrange this for you.
American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society. Cost for membership is $25.00 per year; they put out 4 booklets a year and run a seed fund as well, if you are interested contact Frank Davies.

# Scents and Sensibilities
## by Chris Rose

It hasn't been the greatest year for new seedlings here in Bristol, and lack of good light in the latter part of the year has meant that a lot that should have flowered didn't – even those put outside in cold-frames.

The main advance has been a bunch more scented hybrids, this time incorporating genes from both *S. vandeleurii* and another species which has contributed attractive palate markings to many of the seedlings. Now scented *Streptocarpus* are not (yet) everybody's favourite, as evidenced by the note from Frank Davies in the October 2004 newsletter. This may be understandable if, like Frank, one experiences the scent as being 'more like creosote'. To my mind, however, the scent we are talking about is something like ripe banana. Others have described it as vanilla-like or sweet with a hint of smokiness. I certainly don't find it unpleasant, quite the opposite in fact.

It's fair to say that advances are needed in the growth habit of scented hybrids, but I see no reason at present why that shouldn't be possible. My *Streptocarpus* 'Biscentenary' (scent plus RHS bicentenary ……) was launched at the 2004 Chelsea Flower Show. It's a first generation (F1) scented hybrid from a 'standard' unscented hybrid pollinated by the unifoliate *S. vandeleurii*. It is reliably perennial and develops several growing points. Enough, at least, to mask the slight untidiness of each individual one. I like the multicoloured effect resulting from the ground colour fading from red-purple to a sugary pink and the large lemon yellow eye. I have to admit that some of my scented F2 hybrids derived from 'Biscentenary' tend to develop a mass of somewhat narrow leaves. But I've now got my first F3 scented hybrid: [(unscented hybrid x *S. vandeleurii*) x unscented hybrid] seedling x [(unscented hybrid x *S. vandeleurii*) x unscented hybrid] seedling (where both seedlings crossed were scented). As far as I know no one else has got scent beyond a first-generation (F1) cross. In so doing I have also circumvented the problem of male sterility in the F1 seedlings. The 'red' of the unifoliate *S. dunnii* was bred into 'standard' hybrids of today's 'neat' growth habit so I hope that the same can now be done with scent. At any rate, scent is natural characteristic of several *Streptocarpus* species so this won't be like trying to produce a 'true blue' Rose, *Pelargonium* or *Helianthemum* - which somehow doesn't seem quite 'right' to me.

Which brings me on to yellow *Streptocarpus*. These may not be everyone's cup of tea either! Now I don't expect to see an all-yellow hybrid anytime soon. Not without genetic modification (to which I'm opposed) anyway. But I have been able to increase the amount of yellow by crossing selected seedlings with large yellow areas. So far the maximum extent is up to two thirds of the way into all the lower lobes and to just above the uppermost main vein on the side lobes. The critical thing is the fade-resistance of the yellow, which is good in a number of these seedlings. To my mind these 'enhanced yellow' flowers really help to 'light up' my display.

Material due to flower for the first time next year should help drive forward my quest for even smaller hybrids. Some three-quarter *S. meyeri* hybrids are already coming into flower. There are some interesting yet-to-open buds showing purple-violet tubes as well as areas of purple-violet wash and dark purple-violet spots on the outsides of the lobes, which look as if they'll open to give a white face.

Meantime I've been asked to write an article on my *Streptocarpus* hybridizing for the Russian African Violet Society magazine - a very professional full-colour publication packed with excellent quality photographs. The Society was formed two years ago and has more than 2,000 members following something of a boom in AV growing there. Perhaps Streps can now start catching up!

# Letters from members

**Dear Tom,**

A couple of suggestions if I may:

1) Species names. Reference to Hilliard and Burtt's 'Streptocarpus an African Plant Study' (kindly made available to members by Frank Davies in the past) for 'pre-1971' species, the net/our South African contacts for more recent ones and the disabling of spell-checking/auto-correct software should help us avoid some of the errors that have crept into previous newsletters. These have the potential to send less experienced members chasing after something that doesn't exist, or to cause confusion. In the last issue *S. eylesii* got garbled into 'elsie' which some might have thought really meant the commercial hybrid 'Elsi'. This has a fine colour and velvety sheen to the flower, but scent is most certainly not one of its attributes!

1) Show results. It's good to see the names of our annual show prize-winners, but for those of us unable to attend, could we please also publish the names of the species/hybrids (seedling numbers where necessary) that were placed by the judges? This is standard practice amongst other specialist societies. I appreciate that there will be a certain degree of randomness depending on who shows up, what they grow and which plants they can physically get there. But over a period of time such details should give us some idea of which varieties can be relied upon to perform well at that particular time of year and that also appeal to the judges.

**Yours, Chris Rose. Bristol.**

**Dear fellow Strep fans.**

I've been fond of these plants for about 13 years now after seeing them at Shrewsbury Flower Show. I bought a few, Heidi, Falling Stars, Kim and dabbled a bit with propagaftng, but never wanted to take things any further, as with a two acre garden I had lots of work.

Then I stumbled across The Briftsh Streptocarpus Society's stand at the Malvern late show about three years ago, and to coin a phrase " it had the WOW! Factor". I just stood staring, **GOBSMACKED** for a good few minutes.

I wanted a bigger share in the creafton of these beauftful flowers so I had a chat to Ken and Mary and others on the stand put my name on two plants for collecfton at the end of the show, CR24 and Hannah Ellis, joined up and have not looked back.

A new greenhouse meant that my ancient 8' x 6' (which I grew all sorts in) now houses about 100 Streps at peak ftmes. Newly rooted and cuft ngs go under staging in the new 15' x 10' greenhouse and another small greenhouse is planned for 2005 (Site is cleared).

Perhaps you would like to know how I do the bulk of my cuft ngs. In supermarket polythene containers with raised lids, the sort that hold Strawberrys Grapes etc. Not the deep ones. I use good quality poft ng compost 2/3 to 1/3 Vermiculite, label replace lids, pop in a propagator, which I always put kitchen paper, about 2 layers thick under streps, keep an eye on them and they'll soon strike.

**Mary Saunders**

**Membership 560.**

**Dear Mr Davies.**

Thank you for the prompt despatch of my membership pack after joining at the Amateur Gardening Show at Shepton Mallet. I found I found the newslefter very interesftng and would like to order the back copies.

You asked in the lefter if I would tell you about my Streptocarpus, so here it is.

Streptocarpus and I have only recently been introduced, I am a Post lady and on my round an elderly lady had lots of these wonderful plants in her porch. She decided that, as she was no longer able to manage all the watering etc. that she would have to get rid of some the streps so I was asked if I wanted any. I came away from her house with fifteen of the most fantasftc plants and now I am HOOKED!

The biggest problem first of all was finding out about them, their likes and dislikes.

Thank heavens I found the Society stand at the show and Dibleys Nurseries.

I am now on a very steep learning curve and reading everything I can lay my hands on. I also have increased the number of plants to twenty and have a 10' x 8' greenhouse arriving soon (I have a sneaking suspicion that it might not be big enough!).

I am amazed at the incredible range of colours that are available and I think that they are the most

# Letters from members

beauftful plants.
I look forward to receiving the newslefters and I will let you know how we are all faring.
**Frances Bolt. (724)**
***Franks comments***.
*Regarding Frances's greenhouse it will NOT be big enough it will never be big enough, whatever size your greenhouse is, it is always full.*

**Useful tip for you hybridizers.**

After reading your informafton leaflet, breeding new plants (I use the brush without the flower cut) I found using the corner of a paper bag very fiddly. I now use the long cylinder sugar bags you get when you buy a cup of tea or coffee. Snip the end off with a pair of scissors empty out the sugar and trim to the length required and slip over the seedpod.
**Regards Pete Wilson. (382)**
*Franks comment*.
*Very good idea and as you say so easy to do, have already put some of these in the greenhouse for this season's breeding. Thanks.*

Thank you for my membership pack, I really look forward to future correspondence. Please could you send me the copies of the back newslefters.
PS. Please could you send me some membership applicafton form as I have a friend who is a bit of a Streptoholic.
PPS. Thanks for the ftp on feed. Since I've joined and found out my Streptocarpus don't like Baby Bio, I have been feeding them Phostrogen and have noftced a change already.
This is another thank you, from **James Collier (527)**
***Franks comment.***
*James joined us in July and his letter was dated the end of August, that's four to five weeks of feeding with Phostrogen, I'll bet he had a lot more flower as well.*

**Dear Ken**

As a new member, I would like to thank and congratulate the Society on the quality, interest and professionalism of the Newslefter.

For the last three years I have grown about 20 streptocarpus as houseplants, in a 200-year-old barn. Prior to this, a glasshouse or conservatory had been enjoyed.

I was interested in our chairman's comments in Issue 15 (June 2004), when he said his plants were rather behind. He believed one of the main reasons was a lack of light. About half my plants are grown on three windowsills beneath velux windows, with reflecftve blinds, when needed. The sills measure 43"x17" and face south. We have four windowsills facing north in a 34ft lounge, and one facing south.

Although the velux were great for catching the sun from October to March, with the blinds not often required, what a potenftal problem in the summer. The previous owners had no blinds, and when we arrived, we found the three pine doors opposite the velux were all so warped, that we had to discard.
With careful aftenfton to the blind posifton, we have had good results, even in the hot weather of 2003, when the temperature was 90f (32c).

Returning to Ken Jones comment on light, we have noftced quite a difference with the plants on the north side, parftcularly as the barn has walls 26" thick, with some stonework overhang. The south (velux) plants had many stems and flowers on April 18th. The white was best, with 21 stems and 39 flowers. Bethan had 9 stems and Charlofte 11 with the other 4 varieftes averaging 8 stems. On the north side, 7 plants had no flowers, and only the first sign of any stems. By May 25th, 2 plants sftll had no flowers, and the best plant (white) had 10 stems. Even allowing for variety or age differences, I would esftmate the north side was 3 to 4 weeks behind the south (velux) plants.

A few further comments. We have magnificent soft water, from Dartmoor. I am a great believer in liquid feeding, with its flexibility. When we arrived in Devon, a friend kindly looked after our plants for 8 weeks, but they had no liquid feed. The plants very soon picked up with a Miracle Grow type of feed, at every watering. No diseases have been encountered. Aphids have been the only pests. Consistently good results have been obtained in the past with ' Rapid' but as this is no longer available, Provado has been an excellent replacement.
**Mr. C. Christopherson (51)**

*Bob Counsell went over to Toronto (Canada) early in 2004 before he went he asked if he could have some society seed to give to the society over there. This is a letter we received in April. (I, Frank, forgot it in the last N/L) It is addressed to Mr B Counsell & Brittsh Streptocarpus Society.*

**Dear Bob.**

On behalf of the Vancouver African Violet & Gesneriad Society I have been directed to convey the society's thanks and appreciafton for the seed packets which were recently donated to us by yourself and the Briftsh Streptocarpus Society.

Please, also convey our thanks to the hybridizer-

# SWOP SHOP

members of the Briftsh Streptocarpus Society who were responsible for producing such a valuable commodity.

Our intenfton is to uftlize the seed in a number of ways, all of which are designed in such a manner as to maximize their value and distribufton. We plan, for instance, to include some of the seeds in "thank you" packets to the judges at our 2004 show. (One packet has already been offered as a prize at our Society's recent monthly raffle, and I was the proud winner of it.)

One of the Society's goals for the coming year is to have produced enough plant material from "the packets" such

## *Letters from members*

that we can provide plants to all of our members with a view to them being the 2005 project for our annual show.

All of us are very much looking forward to possibly having the chance to grow-on these seeds and all of us, who are lucky enough to obtain some of the seed, have high expectaftons for the resultant plant material. Pictures and comments will be forthcoming once we have blooming material. Once again, thank you to all of those who were involved.

Yours sincerely,
**Iain James, Secretary.**

**This one is from (as she puts it) club member 587.**

As you will know I have not been a member of the strep- tocarpus society very long about 2.1/2 years I think, but this year my plants have been beauftful, some I have bought as plants from the society and others I have grown from leaf cuft ngs. I have set some more now, waiftng to see them grow, they don't all take but I am pleased with those that do. I am enclosing a few photo's for you to see, I have copies so do not need them back, I hope you like them.

Best wishes.
**Betiy Coles**.

*Streptocarpus variabilis. See Chris Rose's article in the October 2003 issue. Picture by Ron Muhr.*

***Franks comment. They are very well grown and I have used a***

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**If you have pictures you want printed in the Newsletier please send photos, 35mm negs or slides to Tom Causer or Ken Jones these will be returned atier publication.**