

Gesneriad Culture Information

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Achimenes
xAchimenantha
xAchicodonia
Aeschynanthus
Alsobia
Chirita
Chrysothemis
Codonanthe
Columnea
Episcia
Eucodonia
Gesneria
Gloxinia
Kohleria
Nautilocalyx
Nematanthus
Petrocosmea
Saintpaulia
Sinningia (florist's gloxinia)
Miniature Sinningia
Streptocarpella
Streptocarpus

ACHIMENES, xACHIMENANTHA, xACHICODONIA

These are excellent plants to grow in baskets, pots or in a partially shaded flower bed. Plants are available with blossoms in all shades of blue, red, pink, purple, white and yellow. Most are trailing or semi-trailing.

Temperature – Average to warm, 50 to 90 degrees.

Light – Bright indirect light or partial shade.

Humidity – prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, loose, porous soil that is well drained.

Propagation – By tip cuttings, seeds or underground rhizomes.

Dormancy – Late in the growing season, the lower leaves will dry up and turn brown.

Your plant is not dying. It is going dormant. Then, decrease the watering, cut off the dead stems and store the pot away for the winter. Water very lightly, about once a month, while dormant. Extra rhizomes, which look like tiny pine cones, were produced during the growth cycle of the plants. While the plant is dormant, empty out the soil and harvest them. You will have plenty of rhizomes to share with friends or plant in additional containers. They can be stored for the winter in clear plastic bags. When they show signs of sprouting in the spring, plant them in fresh soil about ½” to 1” below the soil line using one rhizome per inch of the pot’s diameter. When growth starts again, return the pot to light and begin regular watering and fertilizing.

AESCHYNANTHUS

Common name: Lipstick Plant

These are attractive flowering plants with tubular-shaped blossoms. Most varieties grow well as basket plants but some varieties are upright in growth habit. Natives of Central and South America, these plants are usually found growing high in trees and are considered epiphytes.

Temperature – Average to warm, 50 to 90 degrees is optimum.

Light – Plenty of light but not full sun in the summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite works well.

Propagation – By tip cuttings or seeds.

ALSOBIA

(formerly called Episcia)

This is a basket plant, grown best with several plants to a basket. It has a shallow root system and produces stolons. Flowers are white with a lacy edge, sometimes with a freckled throat. They are native to Central and South America.

Temperature – Will tolerate slightly lower temperatures than episcias. Average to warm temperatures from 50 to 90 degrees.

Light – Bright, indirect sunlight. Tolerates partial shade.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite

Propagation – Seeds, or by pinning the stolons down on damp soil.

CHIRITA

Chirita is a large branch of the gesneriad family with about 150 species. In their natural habitat, they are found in China, Sri Lanka, India, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, throughout the southern Himalayan foothills and down through the Malay Peninsula. Most have flowers in shades of purple, often with orange or yellow raised ridges in the throat, but some have yellow or white flowers. The preferred natural habitat is shaded, rocky hillsides or limestone cliffs.

Temperature – Cool to warm, 45 to 80 degrees. Some varieties will tolerate cooler temperatures.

Light – Indirect light or partial shade. Grows well under fluorescent tubes.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil evenly moist but not wet. Can slightly dry out without harm.

Fertilizer – Feed with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer at each watering.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil with added lime.

Propagation – Seeds, rooting offsets or stolons, or “putting down a leaf.”

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Species names: *friedrichsthaliana*, *pulchella* and *villosa*

This tuberous gesneriad is native to the West Indies and Central America. The three species listed above are the only ones in active cultivation in this country. The chief attraction is the colorful calyxes that last long after the flowers have fallen. The species *pulchella* is available in green leaf and bronze leaf form. They will grow in a flower bed during the warm weather in Florida but will die when temperatures drop below 55 degrees. Flowers will develop when the plant is as small as three inches high. When entering in the Blooming Gesneriads class in a show, the colorful calyxes count the same as flowers.

Temperature – Average to warm, above 55 degrees. Will freeze if temperature is lower.

Light – Bright indirect sunlight. Tolerates partial shade very well.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer

Soil – A loose mix of equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite works well

Propagation – Seeds, cuttings, leaf sections or by rooting the offsets the plant produces.

CODONANTHE

Attractive trailing plants with white blossoms. A distinctive feature of some varieties is the appearance of red spots on the undersides of the leaves. A native of Central and South American forests, this plant grows in trees as well as on the ground near an ant hill.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 50 to 90 degrees.

Light – Bright, but protect from full sun in summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite

Propagation – Seeds or stem cuttings.

COLUMNEA

Common names: Goldfish or Flying Fish plant

These plants are native to South America and are found growing in the forest canopy high in treetops. Their flowers are quite colorful. Some also have colorful foliage.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 50 to 90 degrees.

Light – Bright, but not full sun in summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite.

Propagation – Seeds or stem cuttings.

EPISCIA

Common name: Flame Violet, Chocolate Soldier or Peacock Plant

This plant is grown for its colorful foliage in shades of green, brown, pink, red, silver and white in varying combinations. Unlike most foliage plants, episcias bloom quite well in moderate light. This plant produces long stolons from which baby plants appear in the manner of strawberry plants. It can be grown in a hanging basket or as summer ground cover in a shady flower bed in the southern parts of Florida. Some of the pink leaf varieties prefer terrariums for growing.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures above 55 degrees. Will freeze if temperature is lower.

Light – Bright, indirect sunlight. Tolerates partial shade very well.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite.

Propagation – Seeds or root the stolons the plant produces by pinning them down on the soil.

EUCODONIA

These gesneriads produce colorful blossoms above attractive leaves. Some have green foliage and some have bronze. Some have shiny leaves and some are velvety. The blossoms are blue, violet or lavender. Some have white centers and others are solid in color. Some are large; others are small.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 50 to 85 degrees.

Light – Bright, but not direct sun.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Every two weeks, while in active growth, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, loose, porous soil that is well drained.

Propagation – Seeds, tip cuttings or by the rhizomes that the plant manufactures underground. To start plants from scaly rhizomes, plant them horizontally about an inch deep in a shallow pot. Roots are not deep.

Dormancy – After these plants complete their bloom cycle, they begin to die. Then reduce the frequency of watering and stop fertilizing. When there is no additional sign of new growth, let the soil dry completely. Then “finger sift” to harvest rhizomes for the next season.

GESNERIA

A group of shrubby plants that require high humidity. Foliage is long, shiny leaves. Flowers can be red, orange, yellow or white. Natives of Central America and the Caribbean, many of these plants are found in Jamaica near Dunn’s River Falls.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 60 to 90 degrees.

Light – Bright, but protect from full sun in summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher. Some varieties require a terrarium.

Watering – Constant moisture in well-drained soil.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite with added dolomite lime.

Propagation – Seeds, stem cuttings or division of plants.

GLOXINIA

The true Gloxinia is a rhizomatous member of the gesneriad family. Some varieties will grow nicely in flower beds in central and southern Florida. Flowers may be white, lavender, purple or reddish orange. Some are upright and some have a tendency to trail.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures above 55 degrees for optimum growth.

Light – Tolerates partial shade very well.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Equal parts peat moss, perlite and vermiculite.

Propagation – Seeds, rhizomes or tip cuttings. The plant will spread by manufacturing rhizomes underground. Plants are dormant during late winter but re-sprouts in spring.

KOHLERIA

A genus noted for the striking colors of its blossoms which often have spots or striped in their throats. On some varieties, the foliage is colorful with shades of bronze predominating. Some varieties (such as *amabilis*) do well as basket plants, and others (such as *digitaliflora*) may grow to be 4- to 6-foot tall shrubs.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 55 to 85 degrees.

Light – Moderate to strong light with little or no full sun in summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, loose, porous soil that is well drained.

Propagation – Seeds, tip cuttings or by the underground rhizomes.

NAUТИLOCALYX

The chief attraction of this group of gesneriads is the colorful, textured foliage. They are easy to grow but prefer warm temperatures and high humidity.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 55 to 85 degrees.

Light – Bright, but shade from direct sun in summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher. Some varieties require a terrarium.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet. Both over-watering and under-watering can result in brown leaf edges or leaf dropping.

Fertilizer – Sparingly, every four to six weeks, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil. Vigorous root system requires plenty of space.

Propagation – Seeds, stem cuttings or division of the plant.

NEMATANTHUS

A waxy-leaved plant with vibrant pouch-shaped red, yellow or orange blossoms that are sometimes striped. Most varieties grow well as basked plants, but some grow upright.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 55 to 85 degrees.

Light – Plenty of light, but not full sun in summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil.

Propagation – Seeds or tip cuttings.

PETROCOSMEA

Small growing rosette gesneriads. Some have furry foliage; some have smooth, shiny foliage. Flowers may be lavender, cream or purple. They do not like Florida's outdoor summer heat, preferring cooler temperatures.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 50 to 75 degrees.

Light – Plenty of light.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Let the surface of soil dry before watering again.

Fertilizer – Once a month, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil, with added dolomite lime.

Propagation – Seeds or leaf cuttings.

SAINTPAULIA

Common name: African Violet

The original, blue-flowers, single blossomed species of this plant was discovered in Africa in 1982. Sizes of plants range from miniatures to VERY large, with blossoms of blue, red, pink, white, yellow, green and combinations of these colors. This genus of plants, while originally discovered in Africa, has become popular everywhere in the world.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 60 to 80 degrees.

Light – Indirect light or partial shade. Grows well under fluorescent tubes.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet. Avoid water on foliage in sunlight.

Fertilizer – Feed with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer at each watering. Water when dry to the touch.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil.

Propagation – Seeds, division of plant, rooting suckers or “putting down a leaf.”

SINNINGIA

Common name: “Florist’s Gloxinia”

A varied genus of tuberous plants with double or single blossoms, available in solid colors and bi-colors. Here in Florida, they can be grown in flower beds.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 50 to 80 degrees.

Light – Bright, indirect light. Will be “leggy” if not enough light is provided.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil.

Propagation – Seeds, tip cuttings or “putting down a leaf.”

Dormancy – When the plant completes its bloom cycle and starts to deteriorate, reduce the water frequency. The foliage will start to die. Stop fertilizing. Remove the browned

foliage and let the tuber rest for 2-4 months in the dry soil. As soon as new growth appears, replot the tuber in fresh soil, resume watering and fertilizer and give the plant lots of light.

MINIATURE SINNINGIA

Charming little plants with tube-shaped blossoms. They will rarely exceed six inches in diameter. The perfect choice for a terrarium, brandy snifter or window-sill growing.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 50 to 80 degrees.

Light – Bright, indirect light.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil.

Propagation – Seeds, tip cuttings or “putting down” leaf cuttings.

STREPTOCARPELLA

These plants are attractive grown in hanging baskets. Flowers are blue, purple or very pale, almost white-lavender. They are native to Africa.

Temperature – Average to warm temperatures from 55 to 85 degrees.

Light – Moderate to strong light with little or no full sun in summer.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Weekly, with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer.

Soil – Light, loose, porous soil that is well drained.

Propagation – Seeds, tip cuttings or by the rhizomes the plant manufactures underground.

STREPTOCARPUS

Common name: “Cape Primrose”

Plants with medium green, strap-like foliage with clusters of wide, funnel-shaped flowers rising from the base of the leaves. Blossoms range from white to shades of pink, red, coral and blue.

Temperature – Cool temperatures, 50 to 75 degrees would be ideal.

Light – Bright, indirect light.

Humidity – Prefers 50 percent or higher.

Watering – Keep soil uniformly moist but not wet.

Fertilizer – Feed with ¼-strength liquid fertilizer at each watering. Roots do not like to be wet, so slight drying between watering is encouraged.

Soil – Light, well-drained soil with added dolomite lime.

Propagation – Seeds, division or plant or leaf cuttings.