

Newsletter



See letter from Mary Saunders

British Streptocarpus Society Chairman's Comments

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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



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



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 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 plants. 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 were not the only ones with that in mind. For more than 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 contrast 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 beautiful. 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 sometimes 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 were 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 protectng white cloth, the plants that would soon to be on display on the Chelsea flower show was kept. They were given extra protecftn 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 soluftn

is to send leaves to laboratory, and by a technique called micro propagaftn; 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 had 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 waitng 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 sftl 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 unjustified 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.

Meefng 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 liffle 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



Frank and Mary's Swedish visitors

seedpods, a cross between Frank's hybrid Samantha and the red unifoliolate *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!

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 Leafopper 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 potted 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 setting 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 questions 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 Mal-

let.

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 its judging system of society stands, and under the new criteria we were awarded a silver medal which considering the time 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 time of the year is, it does not last very long owing to the shorter days, extra light at this time 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 attended our society day on August 22nd in the morning session, we had quite an assortment of plants for sale, and after a few words getting 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 cutting, potted the cuttings into small pots, grew them for 10 to 12 weeks, potted into the next size pot, by this time they are in flower so we died them, then when this pot was full of root we potted into another pot the next size up, trimmed leaves and took off those that had stopped flowering, went on to pest prevention. This took me two hours and twenty minutes; it only takes about ten minutes in the greenhouse. I think all had a good time and I hope most of you that turned up haven't forgotten yet.

I found Keith Capper's article very interesting in the last newsletter, and Mary's going to grow a few plants this way, starting with some cuttings 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 time you read this we will have added a few more and the dates of most of the shows the society hopes to attend 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 little 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 attended, 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 than you notes this year, as secretary I get most of the post. Ken as chairman has had a few as well. Thank you for letting us know we are doing it right.

You have read some of the comments from some members, now it's YOUR turn can we have some comments on growing in the house, how you do your cuttings, what time 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 little 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 Burt'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 propagating, but never wanted to take things any further, as with a two acre garden I had lots of work.

Then I stumbled across The British 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 creation of these

beautiful flowers so I had a chat to Ken and Mary and others on the stand put my name on two plants for collection 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 times. Newly rooted and cuttings 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 cuttings. In supermarket polythene containers with raised lids, the sort that hold Strawberrys Grapes etc. Not the deep ones. I use good quality potting 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 newsletter very interesting and would like to order the back copies.

You asked in the letter 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 fantastic 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

beautiful plants.

I look forward to receiving the newsletters 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 information 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 newsletters.

PS. Please could you send me some membership application 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 noticed 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 Newsletter.

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 window-

sills beneath velux windows, with reflective 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 potential 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 attention to the blind position, 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 noticed quite a difference with the plants on the north side, particularly 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 Charlotte 11 with the other 4 varieties 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 still had no flowers, and the best plant (white) had 10 stems. Even allowing for variety or age differences, I would estimate 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 & British Streptocarpus Society.

Dear Bob.

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

Please, also convey our thanks to the hybridizer-

SWOP SHOP

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

Our intention is to utilize the seed in a number of ways, all of which are designed in such a manner as to maximize their value and distribution. 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 expectations 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 streptocarpus society very long about 2.1/2 years I think, but this has been beautiful, some plants from the society grown from leaf cuttings. Now, waiting to see if they don't all take but I am pleased with those I have set some more to grow, they are very well. I am enclosing a few copies so do not you like them.



Best

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

**Franks comment.
They are very well**

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wishes.

Beti Coles.

grown and I have used a

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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.