‘Constant Nymph’ Updated

There was considerable response to the article “Streptocarpus ‘Constant Nymph’ and Its Mutants” published in the May/June 1973 issue of Arnoldia. Since recent developments have occurred of interest to indoor gardeners, it seems desirable to bring things up-to-date.

Several nurserymen throughout the United States have requested and received propagation material from us. At some of the Open Houses held for Friends of the Arnold Arboretum, ‘Constant Nymph’ and its mutants have been given away when stock was sufficient. This has led many indoor gardeners to tell us that these Streptocarpus are among the most satisfactory and exciting house plants they have grown. The author has
seen several very fine specimens that prove these plants can become quite large with a bounty of remarkable blue flowers if given proper care. They seem to be superior to other *Streptocarpus* used as house plants. An item of additional interest has been discovered by indoor gardeners: These plants set seed readily and the easily grown seedlings flower at an early age in an assortment of types, colors and sizes that best can be described as "motley." Home growers therefore can make selections of their own favorite seedlings and propagate them with ease.

The five new clones introduced by the Arnold Arboretum were 'Blue Nymph,' 'Cobalt Nymph,' 'Mini Nymph,' 'Netta Nymph' and 'Purple Nymph.' They were carefully described in an article called "New Streptocarpus Varieties" by Carl D. Clayburg in *The Gloxinian* for September-October, 1970, where the fact was mentioned that the Arnold Arboretum was propagating them at that time.

When the first *Arnoldia* article was written it was pointed out that there was "more to come." At that time a fine white clone called 'Maassen's White' was causing a sensation in Europe. Soon after it was available in this country the demand was so great that growers found it difficult to keep it in stock. Its snow-white flowers are strikingly beautiful, making it a good companion for the various shades of blue of the earlier clones. 'Maassen's White' propagates readily, matures rapidly, and should be as popular as its blue relatives.

Continuing development in both England and Holland makes it clear that the best is yet to come. A Christmas card from the John Innes Institute in 1971 showed a remarkable mixture of new *Streptocarpus* seedlings obviously of 'Constant Nymph' alliance. Since the card was in color the startling new shades of soft pink, rose, dusty red and blue-violet had considerable impact. In the May, 1973, *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, an article called "Hybrid Streptocarpus" by A. G. Brown of the John Innes Institute, Norwich, England reviewed the previous work done on *Streptocarpus* and described the new work in progress at the Institute. The whole article was reprinted in *The Gloxinian* for July-August, 1974. The plates accompanying the original article were in color; those used in the reprint appear to be the same but are in black and white.

Mr. Brown confirmed what we had found. He pointed out that 'Constant Nymph' or any one of its derivatives makes "an ideal flowering house plant not only tolerating but thriving in the
climate and conditions of the average house.” He rightfully concluded that a much greater color range than the various shades of blue would be very desirable.

The cross that produced ‘Constant Nymph’ was remade several times but each time the *Streptocarpus × hybridus* parent used was in a shade of pink or red rather than blue. Nearly 3,000 seedlings were grown and evaluated in the second (F2) generation where the variation is great in a cross of this sort. The color range went from white through various shades of pink to red, to purples and new shades of blue. New flower patterns and markings resulted also. The same habit of flowering almost constantly from April to October was inherited. By using supplementary lighting to counteract shorter days in November through March, it would be possible to have bloom throughout the year, according to Mr. Brown.

Nine clones have been named so far. They are ‘Diana,’ a deep cerise with a white throat; ‘Fiona,’ a good pink; ‘Karen,’ a magenta-pink; ‘Louise,’ a deep blue-violet; ‘Marie,’ a dusky purple; ‘Paula,’ a reddish-purple; ‘Tina,’ bright magenta and pale pink; ‘Olga,’ described as “a bold cerise”; and ‘Helen,’ a pale blue.

A recent letter from Mr. Brown in answer to my request for propagating material from the above clones indicates that we may have a wait. He states that “we are a Government financed research station and so we have to take out Breeders’ Rights on our new cultivars and the distribution is undertaken for us by a Government sponsored company... They relieve us of all the business side of propagation and distribution.” Apparently, a two-year lapse is required from the time the “Government sponsored company” receives the plant material until it is released so that adequate testing may be done. The writer is waiting now to hear from this organization with the hopes that the Arnold Arboretum may be the means of bringing this whole new crop of fine plants to the American gardener.

In the meantime, news of an excellent “mini white” clone has come from Holland. Another, a tetraploid form of ‘Maassen’s White’ called ‘Albatross,’ has been described as “very fine indeed.”

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References

Brown, A. G. Personal Correspondence

Arnoldia Reviews

Ximenia americana. From A Flora of Tropical Florida.


John Kunkel Small's work on the vegetation of the southeastern United States culminated in the publication in 1933 of his Manual of the Southeastern Flora, an impressive volume of 1576 pages. Small was regarded as a "splitter" since he emphasized minor variations in form, structure or distribution as the basis for describing new genera and species. In the genus Chamaesyce Small recognized thirty species, seventeen of which he described.