

November 3, 2020 *Sinningia macrostachya* by Gloria Utzig



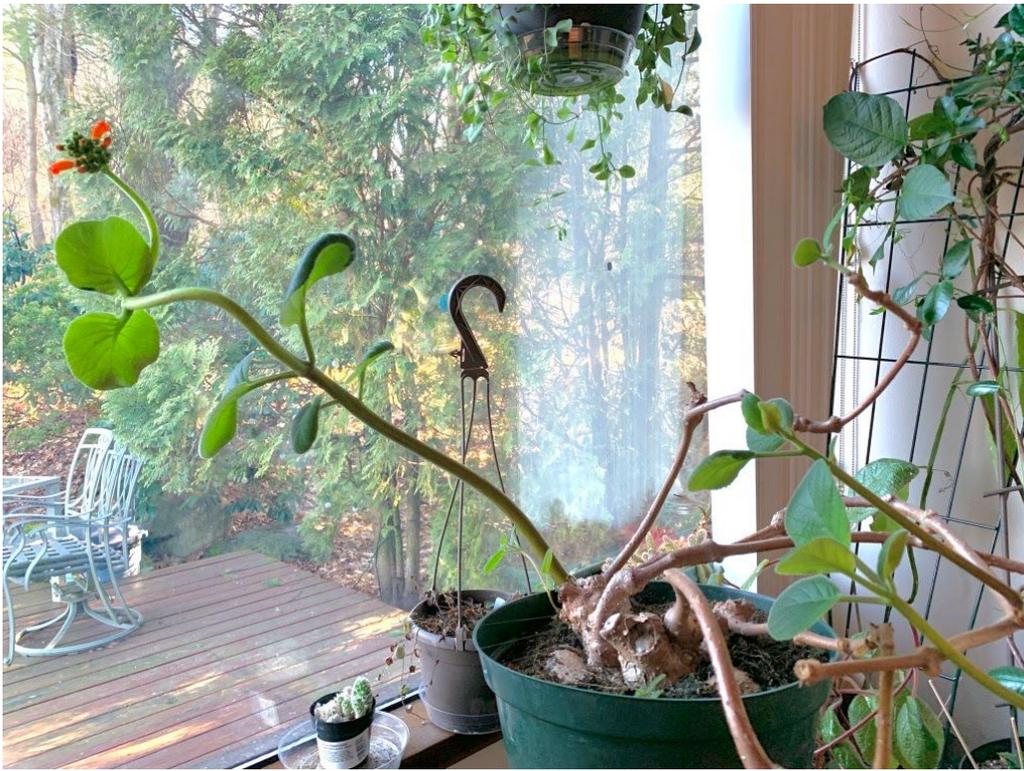
I bought this plant at the end of our September 2019 Annual Plant Show and Sale. It was the last plant sitting on one of our sold out plant tables.

The plant was huge, and the caudex had grown so much in its plastic pot, that it distorted the pot and made it bulge out on the sides and bottom. Apparently the plant looked so intimidating, that no one purchased it during our entire two day sale, and not even at the extremely reasonable price of six dollars!

The plant was obtained from a collection of plants donated to our chapter, NETGS, by the family of the late Judy Becker, who was a NETGS member, and an awesome gesneriad, begonia and orchid grower, as well as commercial grower who ran the business Lauray of Salisbury, in CT.

I knew Judy, and I felt bad that the plant was being ignored, and I knew she had a really eclectic taste in plants, but I too was intimidated by this big plant. Would I be able to grow it inside my home, without much daylight or humidity controls as it might need, plus, I didn't want it to wither away. I went ahead and purchased it, and shared a branch with another NETGS member for 'just in case' insurance.

When I took it home, it had one tiny flower bud that produced three flowers on it. It sat in my dining room, and did not get direct sunlight, and little humidity, and it began to lose some of its leaves.



Plant spreading out in new location- a big window with some morning light

I kept watering it and moved it towards a big window that gets a little morning sun that streams in between the trees outside. By December 2019, stems started to reach out in all directions and a new flower bud appeared.

In the early Summer, I started to see leaves budding on the existing branches, and tiny new branches popping up from the caudex, so I decided to repot it.

I worried that I might not have enough soil in the pot it is in, but I found when I transplanted it, that the roots of the big caudex were not that long, and the top of the caudex, while exposed on the surface, seems pretty happy and keeps sending out new stems, so I left it uncovered. .



Caudex tilted back to show roots



Plant in new pot

I did not know what this plant was, as it did not have a label to it. I tried doing image searches looking for similar flowers or similar leaves, but all I could deduce was that maybe this was yet another hybrid of some sort.

But lo and behold, as I was removing it from its old bulging pot, I found that the label was embedded in the soil! It was labeled in pencil as *Sinningia macrostachya* AND it had the date it was acquired 5/12. Thank you Judy! It pays to always label your plants, even if you don't want to see the label sticking out of the soil.

The plant name *S. macrostachya* means macro = large plus stachy = stem, large stem!

Previous nomenclature:

*Gesneria macrostachya* by Lindley, in 1828

*Gesneria latifolia* var. *Gaudichaudii* DC.

*Gesneria latifolia* Mart. ex Otto & Schltdl.

*Rechsteineria latifolia* (Mart. ex Otto & Schltdl.) Kuntze

*Rechsteineria macrostachya* (LINDL.) L.B. Sm., in 1955

*Sinningia macrostachya* by A. Chautems, in 1990 (The current accepted name)

This plant is found in Brazil and Uruguay, growing in well drained peat with some to lots of water and some sun. The caudex has been known to grow up to 40cm in diameter. My plant's caudex is now about 23cm or 9 inches in diameter. The whole plant can reach up to 130cm high-- the longest stem on my plant is about 91cm or 3 feet.

The stems seem to grow inches overnight, and they will curl and spiral towards the light in a very short time. .

The tubular flowers are red/orange, and while some people say they are not much to speak of, I found them very interesting.

As the very first bud cluster appeared in January 2020, it was quite full, before the flowers opened.



First big bud



Subsequent bud from the first



Seven buds appeared

When this first bud's flowers started to open, an additional bud cluster grew out on top of the existing cluster. As this second bud cluster's flowers opened, a new bud cluster was sent out and so on, until by the end of April, I was able to count the seventh bud cluster on just this one stem! Very Dr. Seuss looking!

It seems to me that each of the bud clusters kind of visually separate into two halves as they grow bigger, and perhaps this is where the botanic description of most all Sinningia inflorescences being a "pair flowered cyme" makes sense. But what I do not understand is that for the definition of a cyme, the terminal flower bud develops/opens first, and in this case, the initial or bottom-most flower buds were the ones to open/flower first, which is the definition of a raceme- like a gladiolus where the flowers at the bottom flower first on up. So which is it, cyme or raceme?

I noticed that the flower clusters where a few flowers had fallen had little round drops of nectar on them that were not immediately inside the flower. Per the great website on all things Gesneriad, <http://www.burwur.net/sinns/sinns.htm> the nectaries for this plant consist of "two, separate, dorsal, usually with a blob of nectar remaining on each one after the corolla falls."

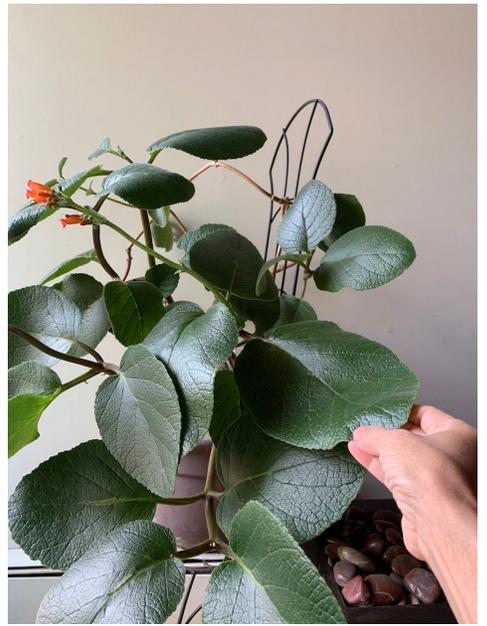


Flowering & stretching stems



Robust growth after repotting

It has done quite well, and while I've only had it for a short time, it seems to follow a South American summer schedule, as it started getting robust from October on, then buds formed and blooms started to open from January on and were long lasting, still blooming until the end of April, which for me, makes my winters look less bleak and I appreciate that.



The stems can be quite easy to break off, and I found I was able to take a few that broke by mistake and stick them into water and they sprouted roots, so I now have more of this incredible plant!



*S. macrostachya* on January 12, 2021

Looking at that huge caudex and the big leaves is quite unbelievable, never mind seeing the flowers in Winter! I hope I can continue to make it happy.