

Sinningia pusilla

Carie Nixon

By far my favorite Gesneriads are the microminiature *Sinningias*. I find *Sinningias pusilla* the easiest to grow, and almost always have several in bloom. Their charm is hard to beat, and I love showing them off to people who have never seen such a tiny flowering plant. The entire blooming plant often as small as 1 ½ inches in diameter. The root system of



S. Pusilla

Photo by Carie Nixon

Sinningias pusilla is tuberous. A tuber often produces several stems or crowns. It can bloom year round if kept at room temperature with 12 to 14 hours of light a day. They can, and often do, go dormant. Their stems and foliage will dry down, leaving the bulb-like tuber. After a resting period, they will begin growing and blooming again. Many *Sinningias* have been thrown out by their owners because they thought they were dead, when they were really only resting! Dormant tubers are more susceptible to rot. Care must be taken not to keep them too moist. Dry tubers can be stored dry for a couple of months. To wake a tuber back up, place it in a warm, bright area and water it lightly until new growth is apparent. I grow *Sinningias pusilla* in terrariums where they are much less likely to dry out and go dormant. I place the potted plant in a clear plastic or glass tank or box. The box should not be air tight, but does not need large air holes. The *Sinningias* can also be planted directly into the terrarium, in a loose potting mix over coarse, well draining material, such as perlite. *Sinningias pusilla* will often self-seed in such a terrarium. While direct sunlight should be avoided,

bright, indirect window light, or florescent lights are good. The glass on a properly functioning terrarium will fog up part of the day, and be clear part of the day.



Mini *Sinningias* Growing in a Terrarium Photo by Carie Nixon

Sinningias pusilla are easily propagated by seed or cuttings. *Sinningia* seeds are very tiny. They should be lightly sprinkled over the surface of a pre-moistened, fine, soilless mix. Do not cover the seeds. Place the pot in a plastic bag or a clear plastic container, and place it under florescent lights. Tiny plantlets will appear quickly. Water them with a fine mister with a weak, balanced fertilizer solution. They should be moved to individual pots with a fine African violet mix as soon as they are large enough to handle. The sooner they are moved, the quicker they will grow. Using a toothpick as a tool to lift the seedlings works well for tiny plantlets.



Note Condensation on Terrarium Wall. Photo C. Nixon

The easiest way of starting new *Sinningia* plants is to take crown cuttings. Since *Sinningias* often send up several crowns from one tuber, some of these crowns can be removed and rooted in their own pots. Do not remove all of the crowns from a tuber or it may go dormant. Fill the pot with potting mix, and make a small hole for the stem. Then plant the crown. Place the pot into a plastic bag or clear plastic container until new growth is obvious. A new tuber is formed very quickly.