



THE BEGONIAN



DEVOTED TO THE SHELTERED GARDEN

Monthly Bulletin of the American Begonia Society

DECEMBER, 1939

Annual Report of the Research Department

By C. M. Kelly

The Research Department of our Society is at present under the direction of the Research Editor. It is a pleasure to submit this report of the activities of this department, and of the work accomplished during the year 1939.

Special Bulletins

The Special Cultural Bulletins which had previously been issued by this department, were this year revised, considerably enlarged, and printed to conform to the size and type of the *Begonian*. There are three of these bulletins, each treating of one of the three classes of begonias—tuberous, fibrous, and Rex. The exacting work of compiling and editing this material was done by Mr. M. B. Dunkle.

The publication of the bulletins was financed by the Research Fund, which had been established at the first of the year by allotting to it 5 percent of each \$1.00 membership fee received. Our Special Bulletins are offered for sale at a price slightly above cost, and as there is at present an adequate supply on hand, fully paid for, future sales should substantially replenish the Research Fund.

Expedition Contribution

Small amounts of money derived from the sale of plants grown from seed imported under the administration of the Seed Fund, and from the sale of seeds, were from time to time deposited in the Research Fund. Thus the Society was enabled to contribute \$60.00 to the sponsors of the University of California's Second seed and plant collecting Expedition to South America under the direction of Dr. T. H. Goodspeed, an Honorary Director of the Begonia Society.

This contribution was made in recognition of this worthy scientific enterprise, and in appreciation of the seeds and tubers of Andean species of begonias collected by Dr. Goodspeed on his expedition of '36-'37 which had been generously presented to our Society.

Department Assistants

Realizing that the work of the department could be better advanced with the help of a few assistants, the Research

Editor assigned to Mrs. F. M. Harrison, of Inglewood, the duty of soliciting and assembling photographs of the gardens of members of the Society, or of their specimen begonia plants. A large number of pictures have this year been added to those previously placed in our collection.

Miss Edna Ziesenhenné, of Long Beach, was placed in charge of our limited library. These books and bulletins may be borrowed for short periods, either directly from the librarian or by mail, when postage is furnished.

Miss Alice Fackleman, of Brea, has secured publicity for the Society through the publication of information of our activities in various garden magazines.

Translation *Die Begonien*

Through the interest and influence of Mrs. Margaret Locke, Secretary of Dr. Goodspeed at the University at Berkeley, we have obtained a copy of the translation of *Die Begonien*, by Karl Albert Fotsch. This treatise on begonias was purchased of the publisher in Germany. The Society donated to the Botanical Library at the University a copy of the German text, and in return received a typed copy of the English translation, which was made under a W.P.A. project.

This is a very valuable addition to our begonia literature, and the Society, through its President and Board of Directors has expressed to Dr. Goodspeed, Mrs. Locke and to Mr. Scломka, the translator, its deep appreciation.

Our copy of the translation is at this time loaned to the New York Botanical Garden Library. For this courtesy we will receive an additional typed copy which will be available for circulation among our members.

Library

Other books added to our collection this year and which, likewise, may be borrowed by members, include "*Les Begonias*" by Charles Chevalier, in French, a gift to the Society from R. Moerman, La Pinte, Belgium; and "*Begonias and How to Grow Them*" by Bessie Buxton, one of the foremost American begonia authori-

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ties, a member living at Peabody, Massachusetts. Also articles in various magazines, and pamphlets pertaining to begonias and related plants for the sheltered garden.

The complete set of articles published in the "Flower Grower" on "Orchids and Orchid Culture" by Dr. Norman C. Yarian, has been preserved and placed in the library, and it may be consulted by members who may be contemplating the culture of these greenhouse subjects.

Seed Offer

In an effort to extend the interest in begonia culture and the influence of the Begonia Society, the Board of Directors sanctioned the offer of free seeds and bulbs to the readers of "Sunset Magazine" who replied to the notice in the January issue of that magazine. Over 5000 requests were received. With the help of volunteers this department was able to send to each seeds or bulbs, together with informational circulars concerning the Society and its purposes. Begonia seeds of several kinds, and bulbs of *B. evansiana* and *B. sutherlandii* were donated by members for this purpose.

As a result of this undertaking the Society has received wide publicity on the Pacific Coast, and has added a large number of new members to its list. Part of the expense incurred in this campaign was offset by the sale of a portion of the mailing list.

New Branches

The establishment of new branches is not a duty of this department, but it was through contacting persons who responded to the above offer that the East Bay Branch at Berkeley was organized, and through the efforts of Mrs. L. J. Green of Inglewood, several other groups are planning to affiliate with the Society as branches in their respective localities.

The Seed Fund

This year for the first time the management of the Seed Fund has become a duty of this department. This work has received the personal attention of your present Research Editor since its establishment, and it now requires more of his time than any of his other duties.

The purpose of this activity of the Society is to secure seeds or plants of the species of begonias that are not in cultivation in our lathhouse gardens. We try to obtain them by contacting commercial seed collectors, plant expeditions or amateur botanists in those countries where begonias grow as wild plants, or from botanical institutions which have introduced them.

A Fund for this purpose is maintained by contributions from those members who wish to promote this endeavor and who desire to participate in the distribution of the seeds and plant material secured. At present there are about forty-five sponsors of this fund.

This season we have received and distributed seeds of five species of begonias from India; some twenty kinds from Mexico; nine from Brazil, and eight from Costa Rica.

Unfortunately, the seeds of the six or seven species of begonias collected by Dr. Brass of the Archibald Expedition in a district of Dutch New Guinea seldom penetrated, have proven to be unfertile.

We have also distributed seed of seven other species which was gathered from California grown plants of a former importation, making a total of about sixty kinds sent out this year.

When the seeds are received they are divided into small portions, placed in seed envelopes, and mailed to the contributors to the Fund. The envelopes used for this purpose have been made and donated by Mr. Ziesenhenné. A complete record of the distribution is kept; a report on their success in growing them is requested of the recipients; and the reported results are tabulated.

It is our purpose to place specimens of those species that possess horticultural value in the hands of our commercial members so that these plants may become widely distributed. We also encourage hybridists to use those kinds that show promising characteristics.

In this connection we desire to mention two species collected by the Goodspeed Expedition of '36-'37. I refer to No. 36-1041, the orange flowered fragrant tuberous species; and No. 36-1773, a tall growing, winter blooming fibrous species—which we have tentatively identified as *B. bractiosa*. Both of these have proven to be valuable as parent stock in hybridizing and as commercial plants. Through the efforts of this department these two species have had a wide distribution among members of the Society, and should, hereafter, be listed in begonia catalogues.

In addition to the seeds obtained we have secured plant material—roots and tubers—as gifts and by purchase. Two rhizomes each of six or eight rare species of India begonias came as gifts from G. Ghose and Co. of Darjeeling, India. Dr. C. A. Purpus, of Vera Cruz, Mexico, also sent us roots of three kinds, one of which is definitely different from any in our

gardens. The Botanical Department at the University of California has again generously sent us tubers of species collected on the recent Expedition, some 165 dormant tubers of about eight species.

In each of the above cases the plant material received has been so limited in quantity that it has been found necessary to place it in the hands of two of our members to grow for the Society rather than to make a wider distribution of it at this time. With the approval of the Board of Directors we have entered into a contract with Mr. Rudolf Ziesenhenné and Mrs. Ella Fewkes to propagate these plants on a share and share alike division of the surplus stock and seeds. The share coming to the Society will be distributed when received.

Mr. H. Britton Logan, Jr., of Beverly Hills, has recently given us about thirty tubers of the rare representative of the Begoniaceae—*Hillbrandia sandwicensis*, a native of the Island of Molokai. These tubers have been allotted to representative members of the Society, in the Eastern States and on the Pacific Coast, for experimentation.

Financial Report

All money received and disbursed by this department, through both the Research Fund and the Seed Fund, is handled by the Treasurer of the Society, and a statement of the financial condition of each fund will be found in his annual report.

India Expedition

In response to our appeal for subscriptions to a special fund for the purchase of an interest in the syndicate proposed to be formed by the New York Botanical Garden to finance a seed and plant collecting expedition to Central India, to be under the direction of Capt. F. Kingdon Ward, noted English explorer, we received promises which would permit us to buy two shares at \$100.00 each. However, because of the unsettled international situation it is probable that the expedition will have to be postponed indefinitely.

To the Board of Directors and to all who have assisted us in the performance of the duties of this department, and to all members of the Begonia Society, we wish to express our sincere appreciation of their loyal support and courtesy.

The Treasurer's report at the annual meeting shows that the receipts for the year had been \$1,336.66, and expenditures so far \$1,008.08. The Begonian has cost \$607.52 out of a budget allowance of \$726.88.

A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

To the Members of
The American Begonia Society
Fellow Victims:

I am writing you this letter because, somewhat belatedly, I have realized that I should act my age and not run around trying to give a demonstration of "how to be young tho old."

If I were among those present I should want to congratulate you all on being members of this highly successful organization with special reference to the admirable work of its officers past and present. I have never contacted any organization that made such a record in so short a time. A definite adjournment for a hearty "HURRAH FOR US!" would be perfectly legitimate.

By whatever name an organization functions, in whatever field it works, it has as its ultimate object, the good of humans either as a class or in general. Many are frankly formed to fight other organizations or individuals, others disguise this motive, but it is there, nevertheless. This BEGONIA SOCIETY should have the special favor of The Gods, as it is all FOR rather than AGAINST. Although it is a fair assumption that the great majority of those present, if not all of them, are bitten by the Begonia Bug. Wherever two or more of them are gathered together, they discuss, when they don't cuss, Begonias. Admitting that the dissemination of knowledge, the exchange of plants, etc., is the main object of the Society, there is also another important feature and that is the bringing to the benighted outside world, which knows not the Begonia, a chance to come into the fold. Of course, a long step has been taken in this direction in the issuing of the excellent BEGONIAN and cultural bulletins, but the most of these go to the addicts, and the people that should be reached are those who know not the joys and sorrows of hooking up with the Begonia. I purposely put down that sorrows, for straight success can lead to boredom; however, there is not too much danger of that.

We have grown the old favorites imported new and forgotten varieties and raised countless hybrids and seedlings, till these latter strain the long list of available suitable names and add to the confusion of an already very confused nomenclature, and tend to discourage the neophyte. A vast supply and a varied one of begonias is here for distribution. Signs point to a great revival, let us hope not a boom, in interest in the Begonia, and I

dare to suggest that it would be well to try to psycho-analyze the state of those who would but don't.

First, we must be honest and admit that the Begonia is rather a particular lady who has moods and won't grow anywhere and anyhow, though there are members of her family that might justly be termed almost rugged; for instance, the bedding type that will almost do that.

The introduction to the Begonia usually occurs at a Flower Show or in a lathhouse, and so often brings out the remark, "Oh! but I could not grow them, I have no lathhouse!" Admitting that there is something in this, I arrive at the point I want to make: SHOULD WE NOT LAY MORE STRESS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE LATHHOUSE?

Sometime back I worked up members of this Society to the point where they made a valiant effort to interest the City of Long Beach in having a real lathhouse with a Begonia slant, and city officials were piloted down to Rosecroft for preliminary discussion, and actually went as far as selecting a site. Apparently, there the project died or was holed up under the oft-repeated alibi: "THERE IS NO MONEY." My suggestion that an oil well be dedicated to the project was not even considered, so now I am revamping the idea. Let it be promoted as a W.P.A. endeavor with a suitable band of members enrolled as workers. Much less worthy and public benefitting objects have been thus fostered.

In the magazine "Southern California Homes and Gardens" for November is an article under the heading, "Inexpensive Lathhouses for Amateurs," with illustrations of three small houses and working plans for these are said to be available. I cannot whole-heartedly endorse any of them, but this is a step on the way.

I shall endeavor to draw a concrete example to illustrate the point that the lathhouse is the very foundation on which to build more and happier Begonia fans, and I am drawing on an oft-repeated experience to make it.

I set out electioneering with a nice Begonia plant as bait and I call on a good prospect, Mrs. Jones, feeling that a Jones might listen to a Robinson. I hand or try to hand over the Begonia, but Mrs. Jones backs away, saying, "What shall I do with it? I have no lathhouse. Of course I love flowers and have always admired Begonias, but I have been told they are difficult to grow." Well, what can I do, give a lecture on Begonia culture? Mrs. Jones may have programmed her day,

but supposing I could say, "Visit the City Lathhouse, see how Begonias grow, how many kinds there are and get the attendant to tell you some of their story," that would be something.

As to a lathhouse demonstration. Today many building firms lure prospective customers to their doom by building for them to scale, in miniature, intriguing houses, furnished. Very few grownups have outgrown completely the doll house stage. Now, why should not these people be persuaded to add to their outfit miniature lathhouses in a back garden arrangement. Or why should not this Society get some of its mechanical members to make these doll lathhouses and display them. It would be a good idea to show such houses to builders and get figures on their construction, full size.

What a feature for a show would be a miniature lathhouse complete, planted. Begonias in bloom can be had in very small sizes. Supposing the Society offered a prize for the best plan.

It may well be that among the hard-working members will be some who feel that they have more than they can do already, and so look coldly on suggestions for additional labor. My sympathies are with such, but I have an idea that no organization can flourish that rests content with its labors, and further I may so cheerfully map out more work knowing that others may have to do it.

Perhaps I have been encouraged to write my ideas because Long Beach has proven not only receptive to such, but has put forward rather weird ones of its own and, arguing from the outcome of a recent election, it would seem that Californians can be trusted to do a good job of sifting, and I shall not be unduly chagrined if the verdict on all this is "BOLONEY!"

In conclusion and most sincerely once again, HURRAH FOR US!

—Alfred D. Robinson.

Mrs. Alice Drant, of Long Beach, visited the Eastern Branch at their last meeting, and spoke about the construction and use of lath houses.

Begonias have suffered from hurricanes, frosts, "Santa Ana" wind storms, and floods. Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Flaitz of Ojai had their begonias threatened by a forest fire recently, but the fire was stopped after the cloth covering on the lath house had been burned off. However, their splendid collection of begonias was practically unharmed.

RAISING BEGONIAS FROM SEED

This is the time of year to thinking about planting your begonia seed. Raising begonias from seed is an exacting procedure, but not too difficult for any amateur. It is the only way in which new forms may be originated and is a most fascinating undertaking as new variations may almost always be looked for if a large number of seedlings are grown.

Full details for seed growing may be found in all the special bulletins of the Society, and these bulletins should be secured if the complete details are desired. However, the main steps of the process will be outlined for those who have not yet tried seed raising or do not yet have the bulletins.

Seed should be planted during the winter so that strong plants can be developed during the following summer. Soil should be prepared well in advance and should consist of leaf mold and sand, or any similar light soil mixture, slightly on the acid side. Use a shallow seed box and provide good drainage. Cover the top of the soil with a finely sifted $\frac{1}{8}$ inch layer of well decayed leaf mold. Set the box into a pan of water until thoroughly soaked, and then allow it to drain for a time.

Scatter the seed evenly over the seed bed, first mixing it with a little clean sand to secure uniform distribution. The seed box should then be covered with a piece of paper or cloth and finally with a sheet of glass. Put the seed box into a shaded, well ventilated place where it may be kept at a uniform temperature of from 65 to 70 degrees. The seed should germinate in from 5 to 20 days, and if the soil becomes dry it should be again watered from the bottom. Rain water, with a few drops of clorox, is best for watering.

When the seeds have sprouted remove the paper or cloth, and in four or five days remove the glass, also. After the plants show their second or third leaves the individual plants should be pricked out and set an inch or so apart in another flat. When well established the plants may be set into a small pot, using a richer and coarser soil. Repot as the growth increases into slightly larger pots, using a richer soil with each repotting.

We are pleased to note that the bulletin of the American Fuchsia Society, under the capable editorship of Mr. G. Niederholzer, has increased in size and improved in quality.

THE BEGONIA

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Membership Fees
1050 E. Nineteenth St., Long Beach
Burdell Bulgrin *Corresponding Secretary*
Bulletins, Information
1732 Temple Ave., Long Beach

This issue includes another year in the work of our Society. New officers, in the main, will carry on the work for another year. Each year the incoming officers are able to do more effective work by examining the mistakes and experience of the past years. Thus look forward to a better Begonian for the coming year. Your present editor regrets that the pressure of other activities prevents him from taking an active part in the work of the Society for the next few years. However, the friendships formed, and the interests aroused will continue his interest in the future developments of our Society.

Now that it has been definitely decided not to raise the dues, it is hoped that every member will work for increased membership in order to more adequately finance the increased activities. The Begonian has kept within its budget, but other expenses have reduced the balance of our finances to a dangerously low point.

Our larger branches have reached such a size that the informal questioning and discussion of the smaller group has been lost. It may be wise to organize additional neighborhood branches that will be small enough to meet in the homes. Then when outstanding programs are arranged, a hall can be secured and several branches join together for the occasion. Or perhaps better the large branches could organize into smaller sections to take up the study of particular aspects of begonia culture, and the entire group called together several times a year for special occasions.

DECEMBER MEETINGS

Friday, Dec. 1—Inglewood meeting.
Tuesday, Dec. 5—Long Beach, Dyckman Ranch. 7:30. At the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Erlewine, 4007 Elm Ave. Installation of officers, Christmas party and gift exchange.
Tuesday, Dec. 12—Ventura Theodosia Burr Shephard Branch. Guest speaker, Mr. Walter Harrington, of Santa Paula, with moving pictures.
Thursday, Dec. 14—Long Beach Parent Branch. Geo. C. Warner, of the California Institute of Technology will speak on Vitamin B1 and how it is used. Mrs. Lucy Graham, of Inglewood, will speak on "Plants Other than Begonias and Fuchsias for the Lathhouse."
Thursday, Dec. 21—National Board of Directors for both 1939 and 1940 will meet at the home of Mr. and Mrs. M. B. Dunkle, 4543 Colorado Street, Long Beach.
The East Bay Branch and the San Francisco Branch will hold no meeting in December.

Annual Report of the Corresponding Secretary, 1939

By Burdell Bulgrin

We have handled 885 packets of mail this year. (Last year there were 555 packets sent out.)

We mailed 1871 monthly bulletins and 404 cultural bulletins, making a total of 2275 bulletins sent out.

There were 122 letters written; also many cards.

Expenses	\$24.18
Stamps from last year39
From Society (\$24.00)	24.00
	\$24.39
Postage	24.18
	.21
Postage on ret. bul.02
Stamps on hand19

QUESTION BOX

By Alice Fackelman

Question: Please tell what causes these achimenes leaves to look so rusty, and what can I do about it?

Answer: They are going dormant, sometimes the leaves start dying at the edges, but in this case the cells are dying one by one.

Q.: If pure leaf mold is used; is peat moss necessary?

A.: No, but peat moss is generally used to act as a sponge to hold the moisture longer.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

Over 400 members attended.

Mrs. Arthur D. Houghton read a few extracts from the late Dr. A. D. Houghton's masterly work on "The Native Begonias of the Americas."

The Long Beach Parent Branch prepared a very interesting exhibit of specimen begonias.

O boy! was the dinner good!

The Ventura Branch had a large and lively delegation. The next annual meeting will be held at Ventura. They have the cooperation of their Chamber of Commerce in arranging a good time for everyone who attends.

A. D. Robinson, who was unable to attend, sends a very interesting letter, boasting for more and bigger lathhouses, particularly municipal lathhouses.

The Inglewood Branch reported a very splendid growth for the year and showed their interest by a large attendance of members.

The reports of various officers were very illuminating. It is too bad we can't publish them all.

Nearly the entire membership of the Long Beach Dyckman Branch was present at the meeting.

The scholarly address of Rudolph Ziesenhenné, of Santa Barbara, was the high point of the meeting. He explained the mysteries of hybridization, and passed through the audience young plants of new importations and other new introductions. He emphasized care in keeping accurate records of all crosses made so that the parentage may be known.

At the November meeting of the Dyckman Branch, Mrs. A. B. Sim, of Manhattan Beach, gave a very instructive talk on ferns, their habits and their uses.

If any members of the Society have Caladium seeds available they are asked to communicate with Floyd Bushnell, 915 Ordway, Berkeley, California.

Make your plans now for a big meeting at Long Beach in February, as Frank Reinelt of Capitola, the world famous tuberous begonia specialist, is planning to be down at that time with lots of information for all of us.

MRS. O. P. PALSTINE

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BOOK REVIEW

Growing Plants Without Soil, D. R. Matlin; Chemical Publishing Co., Inc., 148 Lafayette Street, New York City. \$2.00.

So much has been written and said about growing plants without soil, in a general way, during the past few years that a book telling more of the details is welcomed.

This volume gives a general view of the major process, including the formulas, construction of housing, and general cultural rules. Attention is also called to the use of root-growth substances. Unfortunately, however, nothing is said of the use of nutrient agar solutions for growing small seeds.

There is a wealth of tables in the appendix that are of real value to those interested in scientific chemiculture. Yet many of the tables are rather aside from the general theme.

The whole book is rather sketchy in places where more specific information should be given to the amateur who is not versed in chemistry. The author seems to have in mind many details which would explain themselves in the presentation of actual equipment but which the book audience cannot properly visualize.

Yet enough is given to enable any amateur to make a good start in this delightful hobby. For hydroponics must really be taken up as a hobby. Just as in growing begonias, one must master the fundamentals and then experiment around until a practicable procedure is worked out.

OFFICERS FOR 1940

The following officers were elected at the annual meeting for the coming year and we extend to them our congratulations and best wishes for a successful year.

Frank M. Harrison	President
	Inglewood	
Herbert P. Dyckman	Vice-President
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823 Walnut Ave., Bellflower, Calif.
- Dr. C. M. Tompkins
Hilgard Hall, University of California
Berkeley, Calif.
- Mr. Brydon
Botanical Gardens, University of California
Berkeley, Calif.
- Mrs. Wm. Boyd
Camarillo, Calif.
- Mr. Henry Werle
Bungalow Nursery, Colma, Calif.
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362 Virginia St., El Segundo, Calif.
- Mrs. F. B. Forbes
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- Mrs. Leila R. Schlimmer
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- Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Thompson
603 Cedar Ave., Hawthorne, Calif.
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We are still in need of good photographs of specimen plants. There is quite a knack to good plant photography. For example, small plants usually show the characteristics of the variety better than large plants, as the large plants make for too much repetition of detail, and are more difficult to focus. Use a plain background, also, that will contrast with the plant and bring out its characteristics better.

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