

THE BEGONIAN

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Monthly Bulletin of the American Begonia Society



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JULY



1939

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FOR VARIETY IN THE SHELTERED GARDEN

By Alice Fackelman

Every shade gardener at some time or another has wondered what to grow among the begonias and ferns to give a variety of leaf form and color to the present plants growing there. The answer may be found in growing plants with grass-like foliage, such as the Lily-turf, a modest plant that can be tucked away in the shady garden and forgotten until it blooms, so self-reliant it is! The plant's true name is Lirope, and is found growing in the olive groves along the Mediterranean, where it is used as a ground cover. It takes three years for the plant to become established and bloom in Southern California. The blooms are bell-shaped, and are colored a lovely shade of hyacinthine blue; and blooms in the fall when the color blue is at a premium. There is a variegated form in green and cream that lightens the dull corners of the lath-house like a fairy lantern, and relieves the dull monotony of all-green leaves.

Another grass-like plant that is nice to use in the lath-house is "Jap Grass" or Ophiopogon, a narrower leaved, darker green bunch-forming plant. The flowers on this plant are a creamy white and bloom in the late summer. The plant is called "Jap Grass" because of the fondness the Japanese gardeners have for using this plant in shady spots near edges of their pools. Its unusually deep green gives depth of color and suggests to the mind a lushness of plant life near to the water's edge. Small clumps of this plant scattered throughout the shady garden adds much to its look of naturalness; for always somewhere in every shady planting in the woods there are grassy plants growing among the other plants and giving a look of airiness to the whole.

There is a cousin of Heuchera family known as "Youth on Age," (a Tiarella to be correct); that is very popular in our shady gardens to use as an edging for the begonia beds in the deepest shade. This plant has a charming habit of propagating itself by forming new plants on the base of the leaf just above the leaf stem. One sometimes finds that the leaves of the "child" are as big as the parent leaf. If the leaf is allowed to touch ground it will take root and form a new plant. The writer has seen these plants growing wild in the redwoods around Eureka, California in damp places on the roadside embankment with runners six and eight inches long between plantlets. The flowers are a dingy white and uninteresting.

Another interesting plant to grow in the shady garden are Arums, or as the English call them "Cuckoo Pint," or "Lords and Ladies," a very quaint way of saying Calla. There are quite a few callas that do well in the shade, these are generally secured by the seed route. One member of this family is the Italian Arum, which likes shade and plenty of moisture. The flower is drab, a dirty greenish-white; but the seeds, there is something to gladden the Heart! A shade of bright red on a bare erect stalk, looking like red beads on a stem about six or eight inches in height dramatically standing alone. The leaves die down while the seeds are still green, so that the bright red is quite a gay sight standing there alone.

Another plant liking a cool moist situation is Musk or Mimulus Moschatus, a low-growing fuzzy leaf member of the Mimulus family, this is the plant that has lost scent, doing so simultaneously all over the world when fashion for musk perfume went out. The plant is quite interesting, and many people grow it, hoping that some day the scent will return as mysteriously as it went.

If there are any places that you suspect are too sunny for begonias and ferns in your lathhouse, try Lemon Geranium, Geranium Crispum; now don't throw up your hands in horror, as this plant is quite dainty, seldom growing over two feet in height, having a leaf about one-half inch across and very curly. The blooms are lavender, loose, reminding one of an orchid butterfly. The scent of this plant is refreshing; rub the leaves gently and smell your fingers, it is better than any perfume that has been bottled to date, as it has a "live smell," cool and clean. This is an excellent plant to put next to the lath if there is no cloth on the sides of the lathhouse. It also gives a feeling of solidity to the planting.

The Ventura Begonia Show

By Mrs. F. P. Shaw

The Theodosia Burr Shepherd Branch of the American Begonia Society put on a most successful flower show in the Civic Auditorium, Ventura, California Saturday and Sunday, May 20th and 21st.

There were many perfect specimens of roses, annuals, perennials, iris and other bulb blooms, fuchsias and a complete lathhouse, filled with ferns and various types of begonias.

There was also an exhibit of Exotics

from the garden of Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Wood, Carpenteria, California.

The foreground represented a formal garden, with beds of petunias, bordered with a low hedge of box.

The Commercial exhibits were arranged against the walls around three sides of the room. These exhibitors donated twenty-six door prizes. There were about four thousand visitors, some four hundred of these being from other towns and states.

The City Planning Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce co-operated to the fullest extent with the Society to make the Show a success, and judging from the favorable comments of the visitors, it was most successful.

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EASTERN BRANCH

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Earle A. Sampson, Eastern Editor

The Eastern Community Group are enjoying immensely, and also deriving a great deal of benefit from the regular meetings that are now held monthly.

The last regular meeting, held at Essex Agriculture School, Danvers, Mass., was of unusual interest to all attending members as they were permitted to tour the greenhouses, and inspect the numerous plants which resulted in many new points being brought up for discussion.

A very beautiful Calla Lily Begonia measuring almost two feet across, and nearly as tall was submitted for exhibition and inspection at this meeting by one of the members, and members were informed that the cultivation of this type begonia was fairly simple. However, one unusual feature of their cultivation was mentioned by the owner of the plant who stated that the water used contained eggshells that had been broken up and allowed to soak in it. Whether or not this treatment of the water might produce satisfying results on other types of begonias, your writer does not know, but certainly it is a new method worth trying out.

The Community Group voted the cancellation of its regular July meeting, but the June meeting is to be held at the home of Mrs. Hattie Kent of Beverly, Mass., and a program covering general questions for answer and discussion is being arranged.

If present plans go through, the Community Group is planning to hold its August meeting at Pomfret, Connecticut.

Following are excerpts from Bessie W. Buxton's book, "Begonias and How To Grow Them":

A Begonia to Grow on Rocks

"*Begonia Glaucophylla Scandens* is frequently found in western collections but, apparently, it is rare in the East. Mrs. W. R. Girens of Fort Scott, Kansas, President of the Begonia Club, has prepared the following information: *Glaucophylla scandens* should be grown in a flat pan, about two feet across and six inches deep. The pan is to be filled two-thirds full of rocks, lime plastering and sharp sand, with two inches of sand and leaf-mold on top. The roots are placed in crawls over the rocks, white rootlets starting

from every joint. The rocks must be kept damp. This begonia is hard to grow in the house, as it needs a damp place where there is no dust."

A Begonia From India

"*Begonia Cathcartii* is a very rare begonia, and will be welcomed by many who are interested in something unusual for the decoration of the greenhouse in Spring, or, for that matter, at any season; the beautifully variegated foliage is always ornamental.

"It is a dwarf, compact growing plant with clusters of inch-wide butter-yellow flowers with a very slight scarlet shading externally, these held well above the leaves. I usually place several in a ten-inch pan. Thus grown they make a pretty feature with the drooping foliage nearly hiding the pan, and the entire height is less than a foot.

"*Begonia cathcartii* resembles the rex type of begonia with a rhizomatous stem and fibrous root system and is easily cultivated."

WHAT ABOUT IT?

By Alice Fackelman

Question: Is it safe to use leaf-mold that toadstools are growing in, on begonias and ferns?

Answer: Yes, it is quite safe, but should be rubbed through a half-inch meshed screen, and put away to "ripen" for a short time.

Q: How should one use cotton-seed meal as a food on potted begonias and what amount is safe to use?

A: Cotton-seed meal may be used on potted plants at the rate of a teaspoon to a six-inch pot, worked into the soil well. If it is not, it will mould and sour. Cotton-seed meal should really be mixed into the potting soil and allowed to "ripen" in the pit before using, say, anywhere from six to eight weeks is sufficient, as the meal has to rot, and in doing so has the desired acid reaction upon the soil.

Q: When *Lloydii* run up one stem, should they be nipped off on top?

A: Opinions vary; some like a long single stem to hang over the side of the pot. Others often allow the single stem to get about ten inches tall and then nip the top back to eight inches, thus forcing the plant to branch.

Q: What causes thin white spots on tuberous begonia leaves?

A: Tuberous begonia leaves often get thin white spots on the leaves from over feeding, cut down on the liquid fertilizer that is being given to them.

Following are excerpts from the March 15th edition of "Horticulture":

SEED AND SEEDLING TROUBLES

By C. J. Gilgut, Waltham, Mass.

The soil in which seed is planted usually contains disease organisms known as "damping-off" fungi. These organisms may attack the seed before it comes up and cause it to rot while it is still in the soil; or it may attack the young seedlings at the soil line, causing them to flop over, wither and die. In any case, this trouble which lies in the soil may be prevented by keeping these parasites away from the seed or seedlings.

Damping-off becomes most evident and does most damage when the soil is kept too wet and where the stand of plants is thickest. Obviously it is advisable to keep the plants a little on the dry side, watering lightly only in the morning so that the soil has a chance to dry off before evening. The seed should be planted so that the stand is even and not too thick, thus allowing good air circulation among the plants. In spite of these precautions there is apt to be some damping-off and attention must, therefore, be focused on the source of infection, the soil. If the soil is treated in such a way that the damping-off organisms are killed, then the seed and seedlings cannot be attacked. Several methods of treatment have been devised.

The best method for small pots and flats of soil is hot water. Pour a kettle of boiling hot water on the soil and be sure that all of the soil is well scalded. This is an easy, safe, inexpensive and practical method for small quantities of soil. It has one disadvantage in that it puddles the soil which must be permitted to dry out somewhat before the seed is planted.

Another simple and effective method is to thoroughly mix formaldehyde dust with the seed soil at the rate of one-half pound to each bushel. This dust, which can be purchased or made at home (three-quarters of a pint or pound of formaldehyde to four and one-quarter pounds of screened charcoal or fine dry soil), liberates a gas toxic to the damping-off fungi but of insufficient strength to injure most seed even if sown just after the soil is mixed. Because of its volatile property, surplus dust should be stored in a closed container.

A third method is merely a modification of the preceding and involves the use of liquid formaldehyde. Two and one-half tablespoonfuls of commercial formaldehyde should be diluted to about eight times its volume with water and thor-

oughly worked into each bushel of soil. The seed may be planted 12 hours later and the soil then well watered.

During the past few years the dusting of seeds of certain plants with chemical powders has gained considerable favor. At the Waltham Field Station numerous tests confirming the recommendations have shown that the method is easy and does not require elaborate or expensive equipment. A fruit jar or other container that can be closed tightly, a piece of wire mosquito netting, or better still, an old tea or coffee strainer, and the chemical powder to be used make up the entire equipment. The seed and some of the powder are well shaken together in the container. The excess powder is screened off and the seed planted then or later. The powder adheres to the outside of the seed as a thin coating. After planting, the chemical powder kills the disease organisms in the soil for a short distance around the seed, thus establishing a protective sterile zone. Dust treatments are of value in preventing pre-emergence rotting in the seed but will not protect against post-emergence damping-off.

Excerpts from March 15th edition of "Horticulture," continued:

TUBEROUS BEGONIA FOR POTS

By T. H. Everett, New York

When mention is made of tuberous-rooted begonias, one instinctively thinks of the large-flowered hybrids which are useful as summer-flowering pot plants or for planting in a sheltered and shady spot in the outdoor garden. Yet gardeners may well be interested too, in the wild species of the tuberous section, including *Begonia froebeli*. This is an old plant in cultivation, having been introduced to European gardens as long ago as 1872 or 1873 by Otto Froebel of the Newmunster Nurseries, Zurich, to whom tubers were sent by Roezel from Ecuador. Plants raised from this original importation were sent when in bloom to DeCandolle who named the species in honor of its introducer.

It is as a pot plant that we must consider this begonia, and as such it is a worthy companion and a welcome addition to the list of flowering plants which brighten the fall and winter months. Its bright red flowers and green leaves suggest Christmas and provide a change from the better known holiday flowers. Under rather warm greenhouse conditions, cultivation

[Continued on page 7]

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The American Begonia Society was organized in Long Beach in 1931 with seven members. Since this time, due to the tremendous popular interest that has grown up about the culture and the varied forms of begonias, the Society has grown to about 700 members. Our members are now to be found in nearly every state of this country and in many foreign countries.

During this period of growth the officers of the Society have looked after the begonia interests of non-resident members as well as the affairs of the local group. Now at last the Long Beach group is to have officers of their own, thus leaving the National Board free to give their full available time to the interests of begonias in a national way. This will necessitate some re-organization of the National Society, and this will undoubtedly be brought to your attention before the date of the annual meeting in November.

Your editor expects to be out of town on botanical research work during most of the coming three months. But he will be home for a few days out of each month to go over the mail and assemble much of the material for the summer issues. Much of the editorial detail will, however, during this period fall upon the capable shoulders of Louella Bulgrin, C. M. Kelly, and J. S. Williams.

Summer is the time for vacations and a lovely time to visit the gardens of friends both afar and near. The beauty of your garden depends largely upon work that was done early in the season,

thus you can better afford time to visit now. Of course, if we all went visiting there would be no one at home to welcome us. But we can't all go at the same time, and there is nothing a begonia fan likes better than to have visitors to get enthusiastic over his plants and his whole garden. Let's visit more this summer.

Meetings for July

Friday, July 7, Inglewood, Odd Fellows Hall, 161½ La Brea Ave., 7:30 P.M. Mrs. C. A. Rodenburg will speak on Plants Suitable for Hanging-Baskets.

Tuesday, July 11, Ventura, Coco Cola Hall, Thompson Blvd., 7:30 P.M.

Thursday, July 13, Long Beach, Community Hall, Ninth Street and Lime Ave., 7:30 P.M. Mr. H. J. Rapella of Hawthorne will speak on orchids which he collected in Colombia, S. A. Matter of business: Consideration of proposed by-laws and other features concerning the formation of a local branch.

Wednesday, July 19, San Francisco, 1060 San Francisco Street.

Saturday, July 22, National Board of Directors will meet at 420 Imperial Blvd., Brea. Miss Alice Fackleman, hostess.

Garden Tours for July

Sunday, July 9, three gardens in San Diego: Rosecroft Begonia Gardens, Mr. and Mrs. A. D. Robinson, 530 Silvergate Ave., Point Loma; Montalvo Begonia Garden, Mr. and Mrs. Fewkes, 4453 Montalvo Ave.; and the garden of Miss Constance Bower, 2412 L Street.

At Encinitas: Tyson's Begonia Gardens—opposite Paxton's Papaya Conservatories, Encinitas. This is well-marked on the coast route to San Diego. At Corona del Mar, Cordoza Gardens, Mr. and Mrs. Sloan.

At Rosecroft Mr. Robinson will address the guests at 11 o'clock. Be prompt in arriving. Take picnic lunches.

Directors' Meeting

At the June meeting of the Board of Directors, which was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. N. Nutter, it was decided that unless further action is taken by the local group, there will be no Annual Begonia Show. The show is usually held in August, and it has been found that the labor involved is too great a burden for the few who volunteer their services.

In response to the invitation of Mrs. Florence G. Houghton, of San Fernando, the board will send a committee from the

Society to inspect the begonia herbarium and library compiled by the late Dr. Arthur D. Houghton. This collection of scientific data on begonias is, perhaps, the most complete in this country, and was gathered by Dr. Houghton during the many years of his intensive study of this floral genera.

The Amateur Scores Again

By Mrs. E. T. Boeshar

This year I have grown plants from the seeds sent out by the Begonia Society, advertised in the *Sunset*. This time I used coffee cans on the top of my range. With the top down the heat from the pilot proved sufficient to meet my need. Now they are in flats coming along beautifully.

Being a business woman amateur, with a capital "A," I am apt to try growing anything for the very joy of it. I notice in the June Begonian an article on Fuchsia propagation. Now more power to the experts, but my way may help some other amateur. April seems to be my best month for results. I just take a good slip, put it in a glass of water, and in a little while nice strong roots run along in the water. Then I put them in pots, in leaf-mold and bone meal, and behold! my fuchsias grow beautifully.

(Continued from Page 5)

offers no difficulty and while I have not seen it tried as a sun-room plant I am reasonably certain that it would succeed if given reasonable care. Flowering plants produce seed freely and this forms a ready means of propagation. The seed is very small, of course, and should be merely pressed into the surface of the finely sifted, humusy soil which is prepared for its reception. No covering layer of soil is necessary. The young seedlings are carefully transplanted as they grow and at no time is the soil in which they root permitted to become dry. Shade from bright sunlight is provided until the beginning of November when they are exposed to all available light. From spring-sown seed nice four-inch-sized pot plants are obtainable for fall flowering. Old plants are rested for a few weeks after flowering before being started again into growth.

According to early descriptions individual plants of *B. froebeli* differ in the color and hairiness of the leaves and in the intensity of red of the flowers. All the plants I have seen agree with the follow-

ing description which was drawn from plants grown at the New York Botanical Garden. The plants have each several erect branching stems and form a mass of bright green, softly hairy foliage to about four inches high. The leaves have fleshy petioles and heart-shaped blades which measure to five inches long by four inches broad.

The staminate flowers are brilliant scarlet-crimson. They have two outer and larger ovate petals and two smaller and inner elliptic petals. The stamens are red, margined with gold. The flower is from one and one-half to two inches in diameter. The pistillate flower is smaller than the male and has five elliptic or obovate petals of nearly equal size, the outer ones being hairy beneath and the inner ones glabrous. They are of the same color as the male flowers.

RARE BEGONIAS

By Rudolf Ziesenhenné

(Continued from the June issue.)

Silvadore is a very worthy rare and beautiful begonia produced by Mr. and Mrs. Fewkes of San Diego. It was raised from seeds obtained from begonia *Ecuadoriensis*. The male parent is unknown. The plant is semi-tuberous like *Ecuadoriensis* and grows to a height of four feet. A very complete description of this plant was contained in Mrs. Fewkes' article which appeared on Page 3 of Volume 4, Number 10, October, 1937, of the *Begonia Bulletin*: "The red-veined leaves have irregular blotches of silver, of no particular pattern, on a vivid green background, all entirely covered with white hairs. There are five sharp points on one side of the leaf between which are five small points.

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This, no doubt, gives you a mental picture of extreme one-sidedness; but this is not the case as nature took care of this by the veining. The main veins are decidedly red and very prominent; other veins form a net-work less prominent. Where these join the main veins, they are red, but toward their ends they are gray-green. The color of the back of the leaf is dull red in the center, facing out to gray-green along the edge. Both sides of the leaf have a tendency to be very shiny. The leaf itself is nine inches long and six inches wide." This is truly a very beautiful and worthy plant, and although it does not do well during the winter, as does *B. ecuadoriensis*, and is rather difficult to propagate, when once started, it is truly an outstanding plant. Begonia lovers owe a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Fewkes for their valuable contribution to the begonia genus.

Richard Robinson is a seedling plant of *McBethii*, raised in 1925 by California's dean of begonia raisers, Alfred D. Robinson, Rosecroft, Point Loma. When given a warm, protected place, it is grown to a perfection and is an outstanding plant. It is semi-tuberous, producing fairly thick, fleshy stalks similar to *B. ecuadoriensis*. I have seen one specimen about eighteen inches tall. My plant is only about one foot tall, having a nice compact, bushy habit of growth. Leaves on the individual plant vary although they all have a pink zone and a cuff of hairs at the point where the petiole joins the leaf. Some leaves are perfectly symmetrical, having the center vein running the length of the leaf with three veins on each side, giving the general outline of the leaf the appearance of the conventional Christmas tree. The typical leaf is slanting heart-shaped, with three lobes on one side of the main lobe which runs out to the leaf point, and two lesser lobes on the other side. The veins are slightly tinted red on the undersides. The leaf is pale green beneath and light green above, with silver markings in the areas between the veins. The leaves measure two inches wide and three inches long. Recently I repotted my plant and placed it in a bench with bottom heat. I have before me a leaf which I picked at random which measures three and three-quarters inches wide and five and one-half inches long. The leaf is very much more deeply lobed than the typical leaf. Along with *Silvadore*, I consider Richard Robinson among the finest of our rare begonias. We are all indebted to Mr. Robinson for his well-known coralline and *rubra* hybrids and for his strikingly beautiful Richard Robinson.

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