

THE BEGONIAN

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Monthly Bulletin of the American Begonia Society



BEGONIAS AT THE NEW YORK SHOW

Courtesy New York Botanical Garden



MAY



1939

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MAY NOTES

Now is the time to repot your begonias, especially Rexes. Your rooted cuttings of Fibrous begonias, and your seedlings of semperflorens may now be set out in the open ground. Hanging baskets should be worked over, put in new moss and fresh soil. Be sure that your fuchsia baskets are large enough for their extensive root systems. Get after those slugs and snails with your poisoned bait, get rid of them before they ruin your new leaves. This is the ideal time to start cuttings of both begonias and fuchsias, bottom heat is no longer necessary and the new growth is just right for cuttings. It is not too late to shape up your fuchsias by judicious pruning for their summer growth. Do not worry if your tuberous begonias are late in starting as late starting plants often are the best.

Mrs. H. H. Buxton gives the following description of the illustration of the front cover. "The bushy plant in the right hand front cover is *Argentea guttata*. Behind it are the white flowers of *Dichotoma*. To the left of *A. guttata*, in front, is an eight inch pan of *Alba scandens*; I cannot recall what the six clusters of bloom close behind it are, but the tall plant just behind it is *B. glabra*. Down front again, just left of *Alba scandens* is a large blooming plant of *Bertha von Lohringen* (*Perle de Lorraine*). Above that, *Templinii*, full of bloom. To the left of *Templinii* is another blooming plant of *Dichotoma*, and high in the background against the ceiling is a red *rubra*. Between that and *glabra* is *Dorothy Grant*. In the extreme left hand upper corner, against the wall, is a six foot seedling of *Druryii*, a seedling produced by Miss Constance Bower of San Diego."

The Journal of the New York Botanical Garden for March gives a list of their begonias and descriptions of those from which selection was made for the International Flower Show. The Garden won two gold medals and a special prize for their exhibits. In the article accompanying this list, Mr. T. H. Everett says: "I am indebted to Mrs. H. H. Buxton, Mr. C. M. Kelly, Mr. Theodore Gruenbaum, Mr. A. D. Robinson, and Mr. Rudolph Ziesenhenné for assistance in securing information regarding the origin of American-raised varieties."

RANDOM NOTES

From A. D. Robinson's Long Beach Talk
Reported by L. Jamison

The material given in this talk was chiefly taken from a garden magazine started in England in 1870; there are 34 immense volumes. An extract from an encyclopedia published about 1870 says in part, regarding begonias: "The order contains about 160 known species, all of which have pink flowers . . . They are almost tropical . . . the leaves have a reddish tinge . . . They are used as pot-herbs or in tarts . . . The roots of some are used as an astringent." It was about that time that the yellow came into the begonia with the pearcei from Ecuador (as I have told most of you, although now it seems that it came from Bolivia).

This evening I want to take you on a journey; I want you to get as young as ever you can again and let your imagination loose and forget about keeping your feet planted on the ground. In your imagination you can see a world and have adventures that you could never have with your bodies. I can no longer go hunting the begonia in its native lair. But through these magazines I went on a big adventure; I went on a long journey. I never got out of breath and I never sweat and I never was bitten by mosquitoes or snakes. It took me back to school days and a book I got as prize which was just one series of roars from page to page—we should have another big begonia whenever we go a step further, a series of begonias in our adventures.

It is a queer thing about the location of begonias. They are either fairly close to the Equator on the north side or they are south of it. There are no begonias native to this continent or Europe.

First we will go to Mexico, where **most** of the begonias are without stems; this is not a absolute law; . . . I never saw a batch of seedlings that did not have some variations, and in those variations lie the forward strides of the family.

The first one I came across was a begonia named Roetzli, which seems to be the same as our Lyncheana. The names of begonias are a snare and a delusion when they are not actually tongue-twisters. It appears that the scientists just produce a title that nobody can pronounce or name them after someone who had nothing to do with finding it. It is described as having three-foot fleshy stems that branch reluctantly. The blossoms are bright red like our Rosea gigantea, which is a cross between Lyncheana and Semperflorens.

In the early days Fuchsioides appears again and again. It seems to have been the main begonia at that time. They grew Fuchsioides 30 feet high; they made arches of it 10 feet high and more. This is a native of Granada and resents wet or sour soil and must have perfect drainage. We grow it well when we place it on a high place with drainage all around, but it wants a considerable quantity of water. We find it a very poor pot plant and are trying it in a redwood box. We find that nothing will grow confined plants as well as a redwood box.

Multiflora Rosea and Miniata Rosea are two of several names for the same thing; there are also several corrections to be made in the spelling of the names. We must remember that these items were written by responsible people and edited by responsible people at the time that they were named, and the information is more authentic than in books that have been written since. The books that are written today, particularly as to the early history of the begonias, are written from material that has been dug out of these books. Also, in the material that we have from books that are written in Europe, for the greater part their specimens are not in any sense to be compared to ours.

In Mexico most of the begonias are gathered in rather warm and dry regions; to my knowledge none of the begonias come from the real tropical, damp, sticky country, and it is fact today that very few of the begonias will grow under real tropical conditions. Cool culture is always to be preferred to warm culture. Rex begonias grow perfectly well outside where temperatures drop to 20 degrees. In England they grow tuberous begonias outside and leave them in the ground where they freeze.

The material that is brought to us as to whether begonias grow, showing the kind of plants they were surrounded with, how much rainfall, the kind of soil, when they bloom, etc., is so meager as to be worth almost nothing. The information reminds us of the contradictions in "The Walrus and the Carpenter," from Alice in Wonderland.

In the ruins of the Mayan civilization, Machu-Picchu, a place high in the mountains, seeds were collected that produced plants with leaves quite normal in shade and color; they originally grew in very little soil, and no leaf mould.

Cuzco is 12,000 feet high. At 11,500 feet they found Davisii Vechii. At 8,500 feet they found Rosaeflora. They all belong up there . . . In these notes in this book it

[Continued on page 7]

EASTERN SECTION

Earle A. Sampson, Eastern Editor

"As a Hobby, Begonia Growing is Only an Infant . . . Help it Grow."

It will perhaps be of interest to all members of the Society, particularly the Californian group, to learn the difficulties Easterners have to contend with in order to hold meetings. The day before the Community Group meeting held March eleventh, we had a real, old-fashioned snowstorm, which wasn't too bad, but on the day of the meeting—which, by the way, was held at the home of Mr. Lloyd E. Marble, Lexington, Massachusetts—nothing would suffice but a raging blizzard, in fact, one of the worst storms of the year. At that, however, seventeen members attended within a radius of thirty miles, and the meeting proved a fertile ground of constructive information concerning the growing of begonias.

A portion of the meeting was conducted in the form of a questionnaire with each member receiving a written question to which he was to reply verbally with the result that spirited discussions issued pro and con on the problem of begonia growing in the East. During the discussion it was revealed that one member had never been able to root successfully President Carnot. It would be of considerable interest in the Eastern Division if we could hear from members elsewhere concerning their experience with the rooting of this particular begonia. Another significant fact was brought to light by one of the members who spoke of the unusual success obtained in the controlling of insects by the use of the Hot Water Method; that is, using water at a temperature of 110° to 115° Fahrenheit, and immersing the plant for a period of ten to twenty-five minutes according to the condition and vitality of the plant. Space does not permit a more detailed report of this meeting inasmuch as this article must also include, in brief, a review of the Boston Flower Show in which the Eastern Division had two displays.

The members of the Eastern Division feel justifiably proud to think their first exhibit should turn out to be a prize-winner, taking no less than the first prize, while the North Street Greenhouses of Danielson, Connecticut, carried off the second prize with their effective display.

In the displaying winning the first prize there were approximately forty-five to fifty plants strikingly arranged against a background of *Greveillia*. A generous amount of *Pteris* ferns were used as fill-

ins, and the pictorial effect was enhanced by a border of these same ferns.

To select any one outstanding specimen would be rather difficult as all of the plants appeared to be in splendid condition, and when one takes into consideration the fact that no less than ninety percent of these plants were grown in private homes, to win this coveted prize was indeed a remarkably fine achievement.

Many of the plants were well in bloom, and among the unusually fine specimens were *Argyrostygmata*, *Isoptera*, Mrs. Fred Scripps, *Compta*, *Ulmifolia*, *Preusen*, *Undulata*, Dorothy Grant, *Sunderbrückii*, *Dichotoma*, *Crednerii*, *Acutangularis*, *Rex*, *Peltata* as well as a splendid variety of others.

Mr. H. Linwood White of Danvers, Massachusetts, assisted by Mrs. H. H. Buxton (whom you all know so well) were responsible for the setting up of this display, and a great deal of credit is due them.

The Logees, representing the Danielson, Connecticut group, and who are also members of the Eastern Branch, set up the second display which contained almost as many plants as the first, and had for a centerpiece a huge *Rex Fireflush*, flanked on each side by a splendid variety of plants well in bloom, while in the background towered a five foot *Anabelle* covered with multitudes of blossoms. Outstanding, was a large *Scabrida*, well in bloom, *Venosa*, Mrs. Wallow, a fine *Dregei*, Mrs. Kimball, *Abel Carriere*, and many others.

In addition to these two displays, there was exhibited by Mr. Francis W. Hunnewell of Wellesley, Massachusetts, an unusual specimen of *Begonia Kellermanii* Guatemala. This plant, which was covered with blossoms, looks very much like a *Peltata* but it does not have quite as much tomentose on the leaves. Also, the leaves are of a lighter green and of a thinner texture.

BEGONIAS AT THE NEW YORK SHOW

By Bessie R. Buxton

It is to be expected that the begonias would be the most important thing in the New York Show to a member of the American Begonia Society, but it was a delightful surprise to meet one of the judges outside and hear him say he considered it the outstanding exhibit of the show, since he is a horticulturist and a very critical judge. This opinion was confirmed in Boston by a representative of a horticultural magazine who had been

sent to New York to report the show for his paper. Sustained by the judgments of these professionals, a mere amateur may be forgiven for waxing enthusiastic. Really, the plants would equal anything that sunny California would produce, an achievement, when one considers the cold, cloudy weather of the past three months and the artificial conditions under which plants must be grown in this climate.

There were many six-foot specimens, and much bloom, and every plant was in vigorous health. Outstanding was a magnificent specimen of *B. Glabra*, trained on stakes to six-foot height, each branch tipped with buds. Below stood a large pan of *Scandens alba* in full bloom. A seven foot *Druryi* was in the background, with tall specimens of *Dichotoma*, *Scabrida*, Mrs. Fred Scripps, Lugano, and the red *Rubra*, all in full bloom. Dorothy Grant was so richly colored that flowers were not missed, as was *Haageana* var. *Drostii*, with dark olive green leaves, frosty with tiny white hairs, deep red beneath. *Perle Lorraine* (*Bertha* von Lothringen) made a low spreading mass of dark veined leaves and pink flowers, and *Gloire de Jouy*, although comparatively small, was brilliant with rose pink flowers. Three foot specimens of *Elaine* were richly colored, the folded leaves showing the dark under surface and the pink flowers hanging in large clusters. *Acutangula* was truly magnificent, even without flowers, the huge leaves shining like watered silk, the young leaves crisply folded, deep crimson, emerging from the creamy sheath.

The flowers of *Lobulata*, *Scabrida* and *Dichotoma* are similar, but the leaves quite different. *Scabrida*'s small, simple leaf is like *Dichotoma*'s in texture, while *Lobulata* and *Dichotoma* have large lobed leaves, but *Lobulata* has a glossy leaf, *Dichotoma* a pubescent one. The deep red flowers of *Rosa gigantea* and the clear pink sprays of *Verschaeffeltiana* gave brilliancy to the entire exhibit. The new begonia from Peru, grown from seed collected at the ruins of Machu Picchu, showed masses of pink flowers, a pleasing contrast to the smooth green leaves. *Margaritaceae* was conspicuous, a four-foot mound of silvery leaves and pink flowers, as was *Corbeille de feu*, with bright, scarlet flowers.

Of special interest was a new species, discovered last year in the mountains of Chiapas, Mexico, by Mr. T. MacDougall, and now flowering for the first time. The flat, five-pointed leaves, are light green, silver flecked, and the clusters of white flowers are borne at the level of the leaves. It has not yet been named.

The ground cover of sword ferns and ivy, and the moss-covered pots, made a natural setting for the fine plants and the judges showed their approval of the exhibit by awarding a Special Prize and a gold medal to Mr. T. H. Everett, and through him to the New York Botanical Garden where the plants were grown. Credit should also be given to Mrs. Hildegard Schneider, under whose care the plants have been grown.

MORE INDIA BEGONIAS

By C. M. Kelly

In the March issue of *The Begonian* we reported the receipt of a shipment of begonia roots or rhizomes from Darjeeling, India, a gift to the Society from G. Ghose and Co. At this date these roots are making satisfactory growth, and give promise of developing into lovely plants. They came to us un-named.

Another lot of roots comprising specimens of *B. rubro-venta*, *B. cathartii*, *B. roxburghii*, and a species having spotted leaves, has since come to us from the same firm, likewise a present to our organization. Some of these roots were showing growth when received, and are now developing new leaves.

In the past we have had seeds of a number of the begonia species of Northern India, but their germination and the growth of such seedlings as did result was not always satisfactory. So we anticipate better success with the roots, and are pleased with their present progress. From the seed we have produced specimens of about ten species.

Supplementing those we have had from the Darjeeling section, we now have seeds of five species of the Kashmir district. These are of *B. gigantea*, *B. carcartii*, *B. ovalifolia*, *B. xanthina*, and *B. satrapis*. This lot of seed has been distributed among the sponsors of the Seed Fund.

The collector from whom we purchased these seeds, Mrs. P. Kohlie, of Baramula, comments on the environment of the Himalayan begonias as follows:

"Almost all of the begonias grow in the shade of trees, in soil rich in leaf mold, and at times in crevices of rocks. This is especially true of *rubro-venia*. They flourish where there is a plentiful rainfall during the summer months, shade and humidity, and where the temperature varies from a low of 35 degrees in the winter to 100 degrees in the summer. They require perfect drainage and constant moisture."

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At the Spring Flower Show held in Mechanics Building in Boston, the American Begonia Society won first prize for begonias. The exhibit was made by the Home Study Club organized by Mrs. Buxton. Second prize was won by the North Street Greenhouses of Mr. Logee. The best way to acquaint the general public with begonias is to exhibit your plants at the local shows in your vicinity.

If you have any new information about begonias or kindred plants, or if you know any little tricks that would be good for us amateur begonia growers, write up your ideas and send them to the editor.

Our begonia meetings are both educational and inspirational, as well as lots of fun. If you would like a branch in your vicinity, write to Mrs. J. L. Green, 1317 Chester Street, Inglewood, California.

May California Meetings

May 5, Friday. Inglewood, Odd Fellows Hall, 161½ La Brea Ave.

May 9, Tuesday. Ventura, Coco Cola Hall, Thompson Blvd., 7:30 p.m. Mrs. Fewkes of Montalvo Gardens, San Diego, will be the speaker.

May 11, Thursday. Long Beach, Community Hall, Ninth and Lime, 7:30. Mr. Baake will speak on fuchsias and Tuberos begonias.

May 17, Wednesday. San Francisco, 1060 San Francisco St.

May 25, Thursday. National Board of Directors, 1050 E. 19th St.

BOOK REVIEW

Mexican Plants for American Gardens, by Cecile Hulse Matschat. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park St., Boston. \$3.50.

Most Mexican homes you see here in the Southwest are adorned with a setting of our most colorful flowers. What must be the background of their homeland? With Mrs. Matschat's volume we can explore the haciendas and the casitas of Mexico; the mountains, the deserts, and the jungles of that variable land. We are carried far back to days of the Mayan, Aztec, and Toltec civilizations. From the days of the Huastec garden, whose glory has long since departed, of Moctezuma I, which was the first botanical garden of America, to the patios and walled gardens of Mexico, through all the vicissitudes of conquest and revolution, the Mexican people have retained their love for flowers.

Perhaps this is not unrelated to the fact that Mexico has perhaps the greatest variety of plant life of any country in the world. Mrs. Matschat takes us from the tropical jungles to the alpine flora of the highest mountains. She states that the southern edge of the great central plateau is the meeting place of South American flora with that of North America.

Hundreds of outstanding plants are described as she has seen them in their native settings, habitat conditions are noted and cultural notes are given. Begonias and fuchsias are described and of the begonias she says they grow in such glorious profusion as almost to dwarf the other wild flowers.

The book is not technical and the story is told in a delightful narrative style that makes the reading a pleasure, though the pages are so filled with a mass of factual information that one cannot hurry through. The word charming can scarcely be applied to a volume that is so exhaustive, but every page is truly charming with word pictures that are so carefully drawn of Mexico and its wealth of glorious plants that can give so much to the brilliant coloring of our own gardens. It is, indeed, a book that every gardener should own.

The North Long Beach Women's Club is holding their fifth annual Flower Show at the Houghton Park Clubhouse on May 6-7. This is always a delightful show, and if in Southern California you should not miss it. If you have any show plants they would be delighted to have your entries.

(Continued from Page 3)

says that you can grow bigger plants, you can stimulate growth with heat, but when you do so you do so at the expense of the constitution of the plant. They wanted to grow them so that they would have a dormant period: the temperature went down to 40 degrees, and they got no soft growth at that temperature. The watering should be on the light side. You should be hardening them . . . Vechii they take down to a temperature of 25 degrees; it is the best of all the tuberous and has a cinnabar red flower with leaves four to six inches across.

From Lima we get Octopetala, which has a greenish white bloom like an anemone. Its flower stems grow from six to eight inches long.

That No. 1773 of ours has been identified as Bractiosa. This name refers to the fact that the new growth commences outside of the junction of two bracts.

Then we go to Brazil. It gives us over sixty species. Dichroa is a temperamental, beastly-habited thing, but it has one of the most gloriously colored blooms . . . It is a winter bloomer or a spring bloomer, and it blooms over a long period. In the hope of putting some orange color into the fibrous begonias, Mrs. Robinson made a cross with Rosea, and the resulting plant which we call Annie Laurie was strong. She did not get an orange, but we grew three or four hundred plants in which Dichroa was the pollen parent, and they all show a definite influence of Dichroa.

No plant collector has ever gone out to collect begonias; explorers have stumbled over them. Lugarsi was introduced just by accident on the stem of a tree from Brazil; it is a handsome plant with deep olive leaves mottled with White and gold flowers.

Too much could not be said about . . . pearcei. The time will come when we shall raise blooms that balance the plant . . . We once had a plant that had a 9-inch bloom on it, but it was coarse and had no business there . . . The trend to smaller blooms is shown by the fact that there has been more call for Helen Harms of late.

Baumanii is spoken of as an extraordinarily large thing. It is supposed to have a tuber as large as a small melon, but we have had no luck so far. It comes from Cochi-Bamba, which is in the eastern Andes at 8395 feet . . . the flowers are very large (about 3 inches)—you must understand that in those days the overage of the tuberous family was below two inches. The largest tuberous bloom that I

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found mentioned was five inches, and that was a phenomenon. I think that is large enough for any tuberous plant I ever saw.

There are no begonias reported from the extreme tip of South America. They are all up in the mountains where the climate is at least moderate, where there is nearly always frost in the winter . . . There is no place in the world at 8000 feet where you can go without a sweater. The articles speak of temperatures from 20 to 25 degrees for all of these things. We have been growing our begonias too warm, and what we are getting is a forced growth.

From South Africa we get the semi-tuberous Dregei and Macbethii. They are delightful and cheerful growers and are symmetrical. They have the largest tubers I have ever had. There is one called Port Natal Geranioides. It is almost like a scented geranium and has a white bloom. There is one called Geranifolia that has red and white flowers, and the leaves are fringed like a scented geranium. These accounts were given from the actual plants that were introduced . . . but so many have been lost in the rush for new varieties.

The members of the Inglewood Branch are certainly rustlers. Their Secretary, Mrs. Pauline Ney has made arrangements with several of the garden magazines so that the agent's commission goes to their local branch treasury for all subscriptions that she sends in. These magazines include Better Homes and Gardens, Flower Grower, The American Home, Sunset, and House Beautiful, while others will probably be added to the list later. If you are intending to subscribe to any of these magazines help out the Inglewood Branch by sending your subscriptions to Mrs. Ney, 3112 W. 81st Street, Inglewood.

Mrs. Bernice Sim, of Manhattan Beach, will speak on "Planning and Arrangement in the Lath House." This is the last date for Charter Members to sign up.

The first garden tour of the 1939 season will be made on Sunday, May 21. Gardens to be visited will include H. C. Baake, 2616 Sawtelle Blvd., West Los Angeles; the Rodenburg's, 1111 Yale Ave., Santa Monica; and the Bernheimer Oriental Gardens, 16980 Sunset Blvd., Pacific Palisades. Present your membership card in the American Begonia Society for free admission to the Bernheimer Gardens.

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