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AIMS AND PURPOSES OF THE AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY, INC.

The purpose of this Society shall be: To stimulate and promote interest in Begonias and other shade-loving plants; To encourage the introduction and development of new types of these plants; To standardize the nomenclature of Begonias; To gather and publish information in regard to kinds, propagation and culture of Begonias and companion plants; To issue a bulletin which will be mailed to all members of the Society; and To bring into friendly contact all who love and grow Begonias.

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Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Society, or its officers.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As this is being written, members are just receiving the January issue. Many of the members have responded to my December message, even during the Christmas rush. Some of these letters have included questions already answered by the January message, but other points obviously need to be covered in more detail.

It is apparently necessary to explain why we are now losing money on each membership, yet are still looking for new members. Those of you who have ever purchased printing know that setting type for the first copy is the major expense. One copy of *The Begonian* would cost nearly \$3000 per year. The other 2699 copies would only cost about \$2750 per year together, which is \$1.02 per year each. Of course, this does not include the expense of editing, mailing, and copyright, nor subtract the income from advertising. The *average* annual cost of a delivered magazine for each of our *present* members is \$2.77 (after advertising). Each additional subscription costs only about \$1.10 per year. It is obvious that each new member lowers the *average* cost for all of us.

One of the letters asked why the poor *Begonian* is blamed for all our financial problems. The main reason is that printing costs have increased since 1951. Ask any printer. Also, the costs associated *solely* with publishing and delivering our magazine are expected to total \$7942 this year. Our entire proposed expenditure for the year is only \$9729, so *The Begonian* represents 82% of our costs. This does not leave much for the rest of the

COVER PICTURE

Tuberous Begonia time again! Tuberous Begonias can be the mainstay of the summer garden. Three methods of propagating are: seeds, cuttings, and—the most dependable and simplest method—tubers.

Photo from Winifred Carriere

Aims and Purposes we print each month on the first page.

An increase in advertising income would help. Miss Anne Rose has worked diligently to get new advertisers and will write anyone you suggest. Do you know of a potential advertiser?

Donations are welcome. Unsolicited donations since my December message have already exceeded \$60. Members have even voluntarily raised their dues when renewing. Any amount is welcome, but we cannot depend on charity, and certainly cannot budget the activities of an international organization on such an irregular source.

Rummage sales, ice cream socials, and hamburger dinners have helped, and can in the future, if the members are happy to see their officers devote time and energy to fund raising instead of the jobs they were elected or appointed to do. Even if branches everywhere held rummage sales for the A.B.S., how are the members at large to help?

The library has even been questioned. Is it worth it to provide this source of information to our members? Actually, the borrowers pay postage both ways. Members and branches donate books. The library is not an expense, but makes a profit for the A.B.S. through book sales. The Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund is also an important source of revenue, and the experienced management of Mrs. Florence Gee provides more than income. Many of the letters cited the Seed Fund as one of their cherished membership privileges. Some are more concerned about losing more members from reduced benefits than from increased dues.

A total of three letters have been received from individuals who oppose the increase in dues. One felt that this would make his branch dues too high, making it difficult to get new members locally. One felt that the organization is too California slanted, especially *The Begonian*. One felt she

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BEGONIAS FOR COLOR IN THE SHADE

By WINIFRED CARRIERE, *Belgium*

Tuberous Begonias can be the mainstay of your summer garden, because their brilliant reds, yellows, whites and variations of these shades provide five months of color in those semi-shaded spots where it's often difficult to make plants bloom.

Much of the experimental cross-breeding that led to the magnificently colored double blooms that we prize today was done in the middle 1800's in Belgium. Louis Van Houtte, founder of the flower growing industry in the Ghent area, is credited with the first successful hybridizing of Begonias. And it is from the Ghent area of Belgium that American garden enthusiasts now get many of their best Begonia tubers. In fact, the United States is the largest importer of Belgium's 40-million Begonia tubers, and the Belgian growers carefully adhere to the rigid requirements for plant materials that are allowed to enter this country.

The tubers that come from Belgium are in prime, firm condition, and have been sorted and graded as to size and color before you purchase them. They are ready to start growing whenever you wish from January to March to bloom outdoors from June through October. It takes six to eight weeks from sprouting before they are ready for their permanent outdoor beds, and they should never be set out until all possibility of frost is over.

If, on the day you purchase your tubers, you don't have time to set them into their pots, open the bag to admit air, and store them in a cool but not cold place. As soon as possible, plant the tubers. You need a shallow box or seed tray about three inches deep and large enough so that you can space the tubers about two inches apart. A layer of peat moss, leaf mold, or compost goes into the bottom, and is covered with a mixture of two parts loam, peat or leaf mold and one part sand. Dampen the mix-

ture, but don't soak it so that it sticks together or cakes. It must at all times be light and porous, and slightly moist.

Dust the tubers lightly with a rooting medium that cannot become water-logged, and press them into the soil, hollow side up. Give them a light covering of the soil mixture—just enough to absorb water that might otherwise settle into their hollows and cause decay. Sprinkle lightly with room-temperature water, and cover the trays with paper or with plastic that has air holes in it, until growth begins. In growing tuberous Begonias, it is important that their soil never be allowed to dry out, but equally important not to let them become water-logged, since they could easily become subject to decay.

When you start with newly purchased Belgian Begonia tubers, you have no worry about their condition. When you are reviving your own home-grown tubers after their dormancy, you must be certain to check them carefully for softness (discard those) and for spots of decay which, if small enough, can be cut out so that the tubers can safely be started again.

Until growth starts, there is no need to water again if your soil mixture has been properly prepared in the beginning. The tubers should not be fertilized until they have established good root development and begun to show top growth. The roots grow from the sides and top of the tuber, and will develop more strongly if they are forced to search in the soil for their nourishment. During the sprouting period, they should be kept in a temperature that is fairly consistent, never below 50°, and not much above 60°.

When they begin to sprout, you'll see little pinkish shoots emerging from the top. This is the time to plant them in pots to continue growth until they can be put outdoors. If you live in a climate where there is no frost at this

point, you can plant your young Begonias outdoors directly; but it's easier to keep an eye on their development if you allow them to put forth a few leaves indoors before they are set out.

First potting is in the same planter mixture as used for the sprouting period, and the tubers should be planted no more than a half-inch deep, with the sprout tip showing, to allow the roots to develop normally from top and sides. Root development in sturdy plants will be heavy, so they need only a shallow container that is large enough not to make them pot-bound. A four or five inch azalea pot is appropriate for a single tuber depending on size of the tuber; or you can plant several in a window box, spacing them about eight inches apart, unless they are to be moved again, in which case they can be closer. When the young plants have formed several leaves, gained a height of three or four inches, and are obviously growing well, they are ready for their final transplant, either to larger pots or to the flowerbed. There's no reason why, if you prefer, you can't put the final pot itself into the flowerbed. This makes it an easier matter to lift the tuber in the fall and give it appropriate rest before it becomes dormant.

If you decide to transplant directly into the garden soil, lift the young Begonia carefully from its pot, disturbing the roots as little as possible.

Up to this point, your healthy Begonias have given you few problems. They need to be watered more frequently as they grow larger, but no feeding is advisable until they begin to show flower buds. Now, however, you must make a thoughtful choice of their permanent planting site. Begonias are like very fair-skinned people who sunburn easily but nevertheless enjoy a day at the beach. Just as these people need the protective shelter of a beach umbrella, Begonias need to be planted where they are shielded from the brightness of the mid-day sun. Long-day plants, they welcome the less intense, slanting rays of morning and afternoon light, and

do best on the north side of the house, or under overhanging shrubs or trees that will filter the sun when it is directly overhead.

The soil must be rich, neutral to slightly acid, and consistently moist, but not wet. It must have excellent drainage. Mulching helps retain moisture, but don't pack the mulch around the plant stem, lest it encourage decay. During a dry season, you can gently water the flowerbed where the Begonias are living, but never let water stay on their foliage. And since they are heavy feeders, they will need to be fertilized with a balanced plant food, administered exactly according to the manufacturer's instructions, every three to four weeks until the end of August. Although they will continue to bloom until frost, by withholding the fertilizer beginning in September you are leading them gradually and normally toward the rest period that must precede dormancy. They need water until the foliage dies down.

Begonias are not prone to disease or insect attacks, but are sometimes subject to mildew. This problem can be controlled by dusting or spraying with a reputable fungicide recommended as a mildew control.

Begonias cannot be hurried, either in their growth into bloom or in their resting and eventual dormancy. The plants themselves will tell you when they are ready for their strength-manufacturing sleep that will produce new blooms next year. When their leaves have died down, the lower leaves have fallen off, and no new growth appears, reduce the water supply. Then cut the top growth down to within eight or nine inches from the base, and lift the tubers out of the pots without removing the soil that clings to their roots. Store them, out of weather danger, until the remaining foliage dies down.

Dry in the sun for about a week, and then they are ready to be cleaned and put away. Remove all traces of old stems and leaves, and discard any

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TO FLOWER OR NOT TO FLOWER

By RUTH P. MERRY, *Needham, Massachusetts*

To paraphrase a well-known quotation "to be or not to be," do we always want our Begonias to flower? Other popular house plants, for instance the *Saintpaulias* and the *Zygocacti*, are not too attractive when out of bloom, but the Begonias with the infinite variety of leaf patterns, textures, and colors of their foliage present a decorative appearance at all times.

The rex Begonias are the most striking example of this "no flower" idea. The single flowers are fairly large but sparse on a short peduncle and are often hidden by the handsome leaves. Removing the flowers will throw added strength to the growth of the plant. Of course, the exception to their removal is when a hybridizing program is in progress. The late Ernest Borowski, a commercial grower of thousands of plants under glass and a true plant lover and wonderful horticulturist, always removed the flowers from a huge *B. 'Ricinifolia'* that he grew in his home. This treatment was one of the factors that aided in making this such a remarkable specimen. In the northeast in our modern homes with picture windows, sun porches, and large groups of windows to provide light, and fine heating systems to provide "summer" heat, our Begonias no longer go dormant, not even the rexes, or stop growing, although we do not fertilize in December and January, since any new growth would be too soft.

The flowers of the old favorite *B. 'Erythrophylla'* are not too handsome; they are rather small and unremarkable and do not really add distinction to a well-grown plant with its large dark green shiny leaves. *B. 'Erythrophylla'* var. *helix* in front and below a *Polypodium cristata* is most effective and needs no flowers. Flanked with a large red veined *B. nelumbiifolia* on one side and *B. 'Verde Grande'* on the other, this combination with its contrast in foliage color would make a

most pleasing group. And if you added to the lower center a sprawling *B. manicata aureo-maculata crispa* with its three-color crested large leaves, there would be a group on three levels without benefit of flowers but with eye appeal. The peduncles should be removed at first appearance; incidentally, there will be no boring clean-up of dead flowers.

On the other hand, we grow the tall canes because of their beautiful trusses of flowers, which are most striking. Begonias 'Orange Rubra', 'Pink Parade', and 'Orangeade' bloom almost continuously in their hanging baskets, and are very beautiful; the foliage is not as handsome as any of the rhizomatous varieties and the plants need the flowers. Many of the Kusler hybrids—*Begonias* 'Lenore Olivier', 'Laura Engelbert', and 'Gigi Fleetham', for instance—have as a foil to their handsome dark shiny leaves racemes of pink, salmon, or white flowers for months and are most decorative. *Adiantums* (maidenhair ferns) may be grown between these plants to cover the pots and any bare lower stems. It takes extra good culture and extra feeding of these varieties to keep the leaves from drooping. *B. 'Sophie Cecile'* is another Kusler hybrid that has handsome flowers, which start in late summer whether the plant is either in sun or shade, and whether it is a very young plant or one that is a couple of feet high. *B. 'Dorothy Barton'* blooms practically always. A large specimen shown in the Spring Show of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, March 1967, and then in bloom, has not yet stopped flowering, and cuttings in the sand bench will bloom. Of course, we grow the semperflorens only because of their flowers.

In December the rhizomatous varieties start budding and after Christmas they are flowering in full force. The pink flowers on *B. 'Beatrice Had-*

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NORTHEAST BEGONIAS IN FEBRUARY

By ELDA HARING

February is a cold month in the Northeast. While the days are much longer and the sun much brighter the deepest cold is usually experienced this month and snow storms are frequent. Zero temperatures and high winds can prevail from time to time. It is most important at this time of year to protect Begonias from cold drafts particularly as most of them will be showing signs of new growth now. Those which bloom in winter are either already showing color or are sending up flower spikes and soon will reward good care with lovely and charming flowers.

This is the month to start a watering and feeding schedule in earnest. Begonias like *B. heracleifolia* and *B. 'Erythrophylla'* as well as other winter blooming ones which have been kept on the dry side during the winter months should now be watered thoroughly to be sure that the entire root ball is moist, especially in the case of those which have become pot bound. Take the plant to sink or tub, wash off the leaves and allow lukewarm water to flow over the top of the pot. If it bubbles you may be sure the root ball is still dry. Allow the pot to remain submerged in the water until the bubbling stops and then drain before placing in its proper place at or near the window.

Begonia enthusiasts use a varied assortment of plant foods and each thinks his is the very best. Some are using a "constant" feeding program. That is, they feed a diluted water soluble fertilizer each time they water. Peters' has proven to be very effective for this use. Ra-Pid-Gro and Plant Marvel are my favorites alternated with Hyponex but I feed most of my Begonias every other week during their actively growing season. Those which are being groomed for spring flower shows are fed every week and now and then given a foliar feeding as well, to keep them actively grow-

ing and to ensure that they will be fine specimen plants at show time.

Late in the month you should watch out for sun-scald on those Begonias which are grown close to the window especially in south and west windows. If your Begonias are getting too much sun the leaves may become papery and spotty and sometimes show browned edges. Some varieties can take all possible sun at this time of year but others need only bright light. It is very important to keep a watchful eye and note those which seem to be suffering or whose leaves are becoming pale and yellow from too much sun. In my own collection, the *pustulata* group need protection from the direct rays of the sun except in November and December. This is true of most of the rexes as well. The beautiful dark leaves of *B. serratipetala* and *B. cubensis* also bleach out with too much direct sun. However, if you have found that the hairy leaved types do not bloom in your north windows, try placing them where they will receive morning sun at this time of year in order to enable them to set blooms.

If your 'Hiemalis' Begonias have finished blooming and their tops are beginning to look ragged and unhappy, place the pots where they can be kept quite cool, watering just enough to keep the tuberous-like root from drying out completely. In April or May they may be repotted and started into growth. If pinched regularly to make a good bushy plant, fed and properly cared for during the summer, they will reward you with flowers in early winter and for many weeks to come.

What people don't know won't hurt them.

What people DO know will help them.

Get your meeting notices in on time.

The first of the month is the deadline.

ROUND ROBIN NOTES

Snow may lie thick, but robins fly and Begonias glow! Letters are fatter, richer every round.

New Begonias:

Muriel Perz of Long Beach, California, brought home a Begonia she had not met before. She was told its correct name is *B. xseranta*. Leaves are gray-green or blue-green, with soft red veins, very shiny and clean-looking, two-and-a-half by one-and-a-half inches.

B. lubbersii:

An exotic peltate cane from Brazil. *B. lubbersii* has tremendous blossoms, sets seed freely, with much seed in one capsule, Lily Fine of Brooklyn reports. Seedlings take time to assume their true adult form, are almost like semps at first.

B. dayi:

Thelma O'Reilly of La Mesa, California, finds the mahogany-veined rhizomatous species from Mexico must have lots of light to bloom. From December to July, she keeps hers in a moss-lined wire wall pocket, high and dry. In July, she lowers it to a shady position, to keep leaves from fading. She has bloom from April through July and retains bright green color all year except in June.

B. macdougalli:

Muriel Perz says her giant, large-leafed rhizomatous species from Mexico seems to want to die, but so far she has kept it alive in her glass house, will move it to lath house in the spring. It loses one of the large leaves when a new one begins to show. Hers does not have the deep coloring described in *Exotica*, is just green. Rosetta White of Newton, Kansas, keeps her plant on a plastic-enclosed table with other plants. It is doing wonderfully, without any trouble, and has beautiful shadings on the leaves.

B. kenworthyi:

The ivy-leafed rhizomatous species, also from Mexico, likes dryer soil.

Anita Sickmon of Cheney, Kansas, grew it for a while, then it just folded and died. Trying again from seed, in sphagnum, she waited almost a year for seedlings to grow to small plants—months before round leaves gave way to ivy shape. She lets the medium get so dry it feels dry down into the pot, and the plants look fine. Helen Matsubu of Fruitland, Idaho, grew *B. kenworthyi* from seed also; it did not take quite so long to show mature leaves for her. She lost hers to over-watering when it wanted to go dormant. Hazel Shear of Beaumont, Texas, says it goes dormant in winter, is not too easy for her. Geraldine Daly of Coventry, Rhode Island, has raised these for years, from cuttings and seed (though not leaf cuttings). Seedlings for her show true leaf shape as soon as other Begonias. Rosetta has two plants. One was dormant all summer, but now is putting out new leaves nicely. The other is growing quite rapidly on her plastic-enclosed table, with high humidity. She waters it whenever it is dry. She has had trouble starting it from a leaf.

B. eminii:

Edna Stewart of Tarentum, Pennsylvania, was having trouble with *B. eminii*, the unusual new species from Liberia, until she put it into vermiculite. It began to grow, she potted it, and it is fine now. She often puts an unhealthy plant into vermiculite, removing any brown, dry roots so it can grow a new set.

B. versicolor:

Edna put a leaf of this colorful exotic from China to root in a jar of sphagnum last January. The leaf itself grew and soon filled the jar, then made plantlets. She had to break the jar to remove it. Put into a gallon jar in July, *B. versicolor* was fine in October, with two flower stalks coming. She cannot keep the jar covered, for leaves will rot for her. The mix is very porous and is watered infrequently. The plant gets no direct sun. Thelma O'Reilly grows her handsome *B. versicolor* in a glass bowl, but does keep it

covered. Leaves strike more easily than any other kind, she finds. Hers had just finished blooming in September, and female and male flowers were open at different times, so she could not self-pollinate. She got one capsule on a cross, but feared it was going to drop. Bob Shatzer of Albright, West Virginia, grows his in a jar also.

Seed:

Thelma reports comments from Sylvia Leatherman that Begonia seed capsules have three sections. One section can be cross-pollinated by an insect while the other two sections remain true, self-pollinated species seed. Sylvia has had this show up in species seeds from numerous sources, to add more confusion to Begonia nomenclature. She feels it very important to keep all seedlings labeled and coded, for future followups.

Muriel Perz gets abundant germination when she puts seed in the dark for a week, then under lights. Claire Roberts of Clovis, New Mexico, says her light chamber cuts several days off germination time for all her seeds. Edna Stewart soaked seed of *B. versicolor* till water showed on top, had twelve to germinate, but only one speck lived to transplanting. Helen Matsubu and another member had zero on this seed. *B. parvifolia* germinated and did well for Edna under the same treatment as *B. versicolor*.

To avoid seedling damp-off, Chuck Tagg of Fullerton, California, uses sterilized mix, advises that damp-off, is a fungus easily killed by heat or pantrogen, but is air-borne. Some use milled sphagnum, considered sterile, but not sterilized. He suggests: dampen mixes and pressure cook or bake, or buy sterilized mix for seed; try watering with only distilled water, if your tap water is hard, to avoid moss and algae. Feeding after first true leaf appears will be soon enough—his are transplanted by then. Use pantrogen (an ingredient of many fungicides) on the flat before transplanting into it.

Soil, pH, Fertilizer:

Chuck, having bad luck with curly

leaves, tried attacking his alkaline water (pH 8.6). He had been using very dilute 20-20-20 fertilizer with each watering, year round, and plants loved it. In winter, with less water, they had less food, but had enough to keep vigorous with little leaf drop. Now he tried a new fertilizer mix—0-10-10 (pH 1.4 to 1.7 before dilution) intended for azalea and camelia bloom season, balanced for nitrogen by adding ammonium sulfate (21-0-0). He uses a very dilute solution to water plants, and it does seem to have helped edge curl on leaves, though he feels three months is not enough for full test.

For Begonias, Claire starts with the soil mix she has on hand, adds a third peat-lite, a third leaf-mold. They love it. She feeds them, as she does everything, a little with each watering, 20-20-20 plus trace elements for good growth. She notes that superphosphate is good for roots, and the difference it makes in growth is amazing. For acid-loving plants like azaleas, she adds Sulfa-soil when they start looking anemic.

Carl L'Hommedieu comments that plants will turn pale if soil is too acid, as well as when it is too alkaline for them. He uses a soilless mix he has used over six years for everything he grows, equal parts vermiculite, perlite, and peat moss. To each bushel he adds one-half pound limestone and one-half pound Mag-Amp (slow reacting 7-40-6 fertilizer that lasts six months).

Hybridizing:

Thelma described *B. 'Paulana'*, Wally Watchorn's first prize introduction at the National A.B.S. Show in September. A hybrid of *B. paulensis* x *B. scharffiana*, it has leaves of *B. paulensis* shape, also *B. paulensis* bloom. From the sinus of several leaves grew a miniature stem and leaf, small replica of the adult leaf. Thelma crossed *B. kellermanni* to *B. limminghei purpurea* ('Brazilian Heart') raised six seedlings, three like the mother, three like

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CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND FLIGHT

No. 1—*B. crispula*, Brade—

Produces a short rhizome, and the short-stalked, round leaves, five to six inches in diameter, spread out more or less flat on the surface of the soil. New leaves spread out over the older ones, almost touching them. In consequence, moisture easily stays between them, and the rough surface of the leaves increases still further the danger of leaf rot to which this species is subject. *B. crispula*, therefore, must never be sprayed and water must be applied strictly to the soil, never splashed on the plant, which is otherwise easy to grow if planted in loose humus soil and kept moderately moist.

The inflorescence is reddish, appressed hairy peduncle, six inches high. The male flowers, white inside and pinkish outside, are slightly over a half-inch in diameter. The female flowers are still smaller. The floral display, therefore, is insignificant, but the deeply crisped, shiny green foliage is very attractive and this species certainly represents an interesting addition to the great multitude of different shapes the genus *Begonia* is able to produce. Seeds will germinate readily if moderate warmth is provided. Price \$1.00 per pkt.

No. 2—*B. goegoensis*—

From Sumatra. Growth bushy, compact, ten inches high, with creeping rhizome. Petioles are fleshy, sharply tricornered, bare. Leaves almost round to egg-shaped, closed, saucer-lobe, wavy over the entire surface or rugose; upper side of leaf dark olive-green with lighter shadings, silky gloss, a little lighter at the margin; beneath reddish; both sides are bare. Inflorescence sessile, surpassing the leaves very little in height. Flowers medium large, pink; male flowers four petals; female flowers five. *B. goegoensis* is a treasure for collectors and fanciers of beautiful foliage plants. It thrives best in pots and beds in a well regulated greenhouse. Price \$1.00 per pkt.

No. 3—*B. bradei*—

Brazil. Collected from dense wet forest at 2150 feet elevation. Dainty, slim, arching, soft-hairy green leaf lined with red. Large hairy seed capsules concealed under foliage. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 4—*B. epipsila*, Brade—

Brazil. Fruticose, small sub-shrub, with an erect, branched round, woody stem growing in height from twelve to twenty inches. The dark, shiny green, oblique, ovate leaves are briefly acuminate, cordate and entire. These leaves, though sometimes obscurely angulate, are three to four inches broad and two to three-and-a-half inches long, with the red undersides covered with dense, rusty wool. The red woolly peduncles, scarcely longer than the leaves, are four to five inches long. This species is several times dichotomous and has many white flowers; blooms in spring and makes a good basket plant. Keep dry in winter. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 5—*B. dregei*—

Growth semi-shrubby, twenty to twenty-four inches high, with flat root-swellings. Stems erect, red-fleshy, petioles dark red with a groove, same as the stems, one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half inches long. Leaves are very asymmetric-cordate taper pointed, coarsely lobed, crenate, dentate, dark green, bare on top, glistening like silk with red veins beneath light green, bare on both sides. Inflorescence apical, red-fleshy. Flowers small, white. Favorite plant for hybridizers. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 6—*B. luxurians*—

Brazil. Seeds collected from damp, shady gully in dense forest at 5850 feet elevation. Leaf, palmate fuzzy and limp, flowers white in very large heads. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 7—*B. cucullata*—

Brazil species allied to *B. semperflorens*. Medium, smooth; stolons

green, creeping a short distance before ascending into erect, succulent stems and medium height, purple-tinged at the joints; few branched; leaves green, blunter at the apex, heavier textured, and not as flat as those of *B. semperflorens*, short petioled; flowers white or pink-tinged in terminal clusters. Price 35 cents per pkt.

No. 8—*B. olbia*—

Brazil. Maple-shaped leaf of rich, lustrous, pale green satin-velvet; veins, darker; edge and underside, red. Erect and somewhat branched. Provide protective warmth and high humidity. Flowers white. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 9—*B. heracleifolia* x *B. incarnata*—(Same cross as *B. 'Pseudophyllomaniaca'*)

Deceptively like *B. phyllomaniaca*, but actually a hybrid. Stems robust, thick, with fairly short joints, more or less hairy. Petioles long, slightly grooved, with red spots, covered with hairs, closely below the lamina covered with a coronet of long hairs. Leaf blades asymmetric-cordate, pointed; the lobes are dentate or double dentate; veins on the lower side of the leaf olive-green in certain areas covered with short hairs. Inflorescence is unilateral, particularly when young; the petioles are red at the ramification points. Flowers light pink, fairly large. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 10—*B. humilis*—

Syn. *B. diptera*. South Africa, semi-tuberous. Price 35 cents per pkt.

No. 11—*B. megaptera*—

From India. Leaves unequalled at base. A large number of elongated peduncles rise from the upper axils, bearing pink flowers on each. The flowers completely cover the plant, creating a pleasing effect. Seed from a friend in Brazil who grows this plant. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 12—*B. pearcei*—

Bolivia. Low; stems succulent; leaves broad-ovate, pointed, irregularly toothed, velvet-like dark green with glistening light green veins; flowers

yellow. This species is largely responsible for the numerous yellow tones found in the tuberhybrida group. Price 50 cents per pkt.

No. 13—*B. micranthera*—

Stems are short, stout and succulent; leaves are broad-ovate, soft-hairy, irregularly lobed, green; margins toothed and ciliate; flowers usually in pairs, bright orange-red with masses of yellow stamens. Price 50 cents per pkt.

Listed below are seed of the ever popular Multiflora Begonias. Versatile and easily grown from seed with the minimum of care and can be grown in beds outdoors, in pots or just about any place you wish for masses of color. Varieties offered come from Germany and as our German leaves something to be desired, we cannot guarantee that the colors will come out as given here.

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B. 'Spielarten'—

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Hawaian 'Wood Rose'—

Plant where they are to grow as they do not transplant very well. In about three or four weeks, a sprout will appear with a leaf which can easily be mistaken for a weed, it then grows sometimes ten inches in one night. Yellow flowers appear in November which drop and the fruit begins to grow and later, it has the size and general appearance of a wood

(Continued on Page 32)

I REMEMBER PAPA

By ELSIE BEAN, *Niantic, Connecticut*

Papa's name was Rev. Irving H. Gray, author of "On The Begonia Trail." When you read these articles, remember how your love of Begonias began and review your own "Begonia Trail"—the wonderful people and plants you have met.

Editor

"Go find me a composite flower," Papa said. He was sitting on a stone under a tree in the quiet woods. My mother whispered, "A daisy," and we scurried around trying to be first to bring Papa what he asked. We were probably under school age at the time.

Our family took walks in the fields and woods and Papa always carried a worn Gray's *Botany Book*. I asked him once if he had written it but he shook his head. He always insisted that we call everything by its right name and if we did not know its name, we were to find it from some source. His source was the "BOOK". My mother's source, her own experience. Papa would never let his children be called by any nickname. He named us Elsie, Myrtle and Lloyd and became angry if anyone shortened those names.

I was about six when I was explaining to surprised visitors that one corn was a gladiolus but two or more were gladiolii. The visitors thought I was a very queer child. She asked my sister even younger than I, if she knew

the name of the vines growing on the porch; she thought it a joke that small children could say such big words. Myrtle promptly answered, "Of course, these are Cobeia Scandens."

Both my father and mother loved flowers and growing things. Our house was always full of plants, our gardens always marvelled at by visitors. There was never any money to buy things. How Papa would shake his head in bewilderment if he could see me buying a bag of potting soil or a bottle of fertilizer! We always had a cow and a horse and, of course, chickens. I remember the brown "tea water" that Papa put on the plants. I remember going to the woods to get soil from decayed stumps and rich leaf mold. I don't know whether Papa ever sterilized or not. It would be like him to try it out.

Papa wrote articles to earn subscriptions to the magazines. He kept the "Daily" on our breakfast table by sending in all kinds of brief items. The *Rural New Yorker* was sent to him in exchange for some of his writings.

Papa showed us a beautiful world and taught us to call this beauty by name. He passed onto us a love of nature and a love of learning. I hope that I have been able to continue passing this along to my own five children and eight grandchildren.

SEED FUND . . .

(Continued from Page 31)

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ON THE BEGONIA TRAIL

By IRVING H. GRAY,
Burlington, Vermont

Article dated June, 1933.

Editor

"I guess I can stand it, if you can. Come in." This was the rather curt reply to my request for a closer view of plants in the window which had caught my eye as I drove by the house. But once in, a few words of admiration for her seedling gloxinias, of which she had many, melted her brusqueness into eager enthusiasm and she thanked me for coming.

But it was a Begonia that had attracted my attention; for, in the pursuit of my hobby, I am always watching porches and windows, hoping to find something new. And I generally do find something. Sometimes a new Begonia, sometimes other interesting plants, but almost always a "character"; for hunting house plants reveals a vast amount of what the writers call "human interest stuff." In fact there may be some question as to which gives the greater pleasure—the finding of a new Begonia or the privilege of an intimate contact with a human life.

Sometimes the house gives evidence of wealth and we tread soft carpets as we go from room to room, viewing the different specimens. Then we go into a house of poverty—a crowded, dismal tenement—and find a few plants growing bravely in tin cans in the one or two windows the place affords. Here we are received with great delight because we had noticed the plants. A shabbily dressed woman, smelling of soap suds, exclaims with deep feeling, "I do so love them;" and we sense, in her tone and attitude, an acquaintance with hardship and sorrow and disappointment from which the growing plants have proven such a relief that they have endeared themselves to her.

One dear old lady exclaimed, "Indeed, I'll be glad to show you my

plants." She had a story to tell for each one—one had been given by a choice friend, one had been treasured by a daughter who had died some time ago, and others served to recall to her memory events and friendships and associations out of that precious past that is more real to her than the present.

At one door I was greeted by an old man, smoking a pipe with penetrating odor. He cordially invited me in and led the way through a long dark passage to the kitchen and around through a bedroom into the front room—we had traveled in a circle to come to the windows that were near to the front door. Here among others I found a perfect specimen of *Begonia diadema*. Then I had to admire the old man's handiwork—several tables, a desk, a bureau and a checkerboard in beautiful inlaid work. There were thousands of tiny pieces of wood of many kinds artistically arranged to show to best advantage their differences in color, grain and texture. Here was a fine display of a cabinet maker's skill; but more than this, these pieces revealed the instinct of the artist, and offered an interesting study in woods. When I said, "Good-bye", he insisted on giving me a large bunch of trailing arbutus which he had just brought in from the fields.

At one house on a back country road, so rough that I would not have driven over it had I known the depth of the ruts, I found one of the finest spiral rex Begonias I have ever seen. There were only two young girls at home but they were sure their mother would be delighted to have anyone see her plants. The mother was a nurse, so was away from home most of the time. The father had work some four or five miles away, so was gone all day long. The two girls kept house, cared for the plants, the little

(Continued on Page 38)

COMPATIBILITY

By JAMES WYRTZEN,
Floral Park, New York

Hardly any other two plant families are capable of existing together in the same environment better than Begonias and Gesneriads. Both of these families require approximately the same temperature, light, humidity, growing medium, fertilization and insecticides.

Temperature and Light

Night temperatures of 60° to 65° will accommodate most Gesneriads and Begonias. Those which require the coolest temperature can be placed closest to the glass areas, but be sure leaves don't touch the glass. Those plants which require it warmer can be located away from the glass. Certain Columneas such as C. 'Stananger' and C. 'Vega' need cool temperatures to set buds but many of the newer hybrids can be grown at warmer temperatures and some of these are ever-blooming. C. 'Wonderland' has been in continuous bloom in my greenhouse for fifteen months and is still covered with buds and flowers. C. 'Robin', C. 'Red Start', C. 'Red Spur', C. 'Early Bird' and many others will bloom almost continuously. Aeschynanthus (Lipstick Plant) have beautiful red and yellow, maroon, or green flowers and will bloom freely. *Hypocyrta wettsteinii* and *H. radicans* have small shiny leaves. They and *H. abugillosa* will bloom two or three times during the year and when not in bloom, the foliage is beautiful.

All of the fibrous Begonias, including the canes, require all the light we can give them during fall and winter months if we want them to bloom freely and have vibrant color. Rex Begonias can be placed further away from the windows as they require less light and like a slightly warmer temperature.

Humidity

If the humidity can be maintained between 50% and 65% there should be no problem. There are many ways

to raise the humidity. One of the best is to install a humidifier with an automatic water feed and a humidistat which can be set to 65%. Another method I have used is a tray about two or three inches deep to fit the shelf. It must be water tight. Put in about one inch of stones or coarse perlite and cover with half inch hardware cloth. Keep an inch or so of water in the tray, but be sure it is below the hardware cloth. As the water evaporates it will raise the humidity for the plants sitting on top. A small fan circulating the air will help nearby plants, also.

Air Circulation

A misunderstanding has risen from a statement that plants should be kept out of drafts. The statement refers only to cold or hot drafts, not to air circulation. Air movement prevents diseases before they start and often relieves the need for sprays. In my own case I have three growing areas; two have fans and the other a turbulator to keep the air moving.

Growing Medium

There are many good soil and soil-less mixes which are excellent for growing Begonias and Gesneriads. The most important need is a medium that has good drainage and does not remain wet. The Cornell 1-1-1 mix contains one bushel each of peat moss, perlite and vermiculite with about three-quarters of a pound of ground limestone, and is an excellent mix. Any of the prepared soil mixes are good and can be purchased in any garden center. Many growers like to add coarse perlite to help create better drainage, prevent the soil from staying wet, and avoid root rot.

Fertilization

As there is no fertility in the Cornell mix, it is necessary to add food regularly. This can be done with every watering, using a 15-20-15 or 20-20-20

fertilizer at the rate of a half teaspoon per gallon. If fed every two weeks, use two teaspoons per gallon. When the latter method is used, make sure the soil is not dry, as dry roots can be burned by the stronger fertilizer.

Insects and Diseases

Insecticide can do a lot for us if used properly. It is very important to follow directions. Be careful not to leave them where children can get them. Three sprays will take care of most of the indoor problems. Mites can be controlled with Kelthane. Malathion will eliminate mealybugs if used regularly. Gesneriads generally are not bothered by mildew, but Begonias are, and Actidione or Karathane will eliminate mildew if used monthly. Karathane also helps to control mites.

Conclusion

All the Begonias—fibrous, rhizomatous and tuberous—have been grown successfully along with a large collection of Gesneriads following the methods given above. Some are grown on a porch facing south. Others are grown in a lean-to greenhouse which faces east northeast, and still others in a free standing greenhouse with fiberglass roof and glass sides.

When one looks at the vast number of hybrid Begonias which have been developed, it would seem that nothing more can be done. However, with just a quick look at the Kusler hybrids, which are recent developments, we realize the interest of further development of this family. The number of hybrids within the Gesneriad family are few; only the surface has been worked on. To my knowledge, there isn't a single hybrid of a *Hypocyrtia* and this is true of many other genera of the *Gesneriaceae*. Anyone interested in hybridizing would do well to look into this family of plants.

In the meantime, grow some plants of both families. The pleasure derived cannot be expressed in words. A well grown plant is a sight to behold and a great satisfaction to the grower. God gives us the tools, all we have to do is use them.

GESNERIAD NOTES

Chirita, Gloxinia, Episcia, Columnea—anyone?

Many members mix other shade plants with Begonias, and cultural tips and questions on Gesneriads are widely exchanged in the mails.

Chirita sinensis, silvery-veined cousin of African Violets, just sit for Claire Roberts of Clovis, New Mexico, and Ruth Georgesson of Silver Spring, Maryland. Friends say they are difficult to bloom. Claire has raised two from a leaf from her plant, and they seem to be growing more rapidly, though young still.

Carl L'Hommedieu of Oakdale, New York, had a nice *C. sinensis* in bloom in November. It was in bud all summer, and finally stems elongated and came into bloom the month before, were expected to continue another month. His plant has acted this way for five or six years. He grows it under fluorescent lights, as close to the lights as possible. A contributor to *Gesneriad Saintpaulia News* noted in the November-December issue that she found these plants need more fertilizer than Saintpaulias to bloom, should not be overpotted, should be kept just moist. Flowers are white bells, just faintly tinged orchid.

Claire splits Gloxinia leaves in half for propagation and gets more than a dozen tubers per leaf, although it takes a long time for plantlets to grow to adults. She has finally succeeded in growing an Episcia from a leaf, though usually pins runners to little pots to root. Episcias flower for Carl more in spring and summer, even under lights.

Kohleria 'Longwood' has a beautiful large flower but is a tall grower and needs to be kept pinched back. *Kohleria amabilis* makes a better hanging basket than others. *K. lindeniana* has beautiful foliage and fragrant flowers. Carl has had better luck growing it from seed than from rhizomes.

Columnea 'Stavanger' needs cool treatment to flower, but most of the

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BEGONIAS FOR COLOR . . .

(Continued from Page 25)

tubers that are not plump and firm. Leave any fleshy roots that may still adhere. Dust the tubers lightly with DDT to prevent pests from settling on them during dormancy, and choose a cool but frost-free storage place that is not too dry. The atmosphere of a cellar is ideal if the temperature can be kept at about 55°. They can be stored in old potting soil, dry peat moss, or sand.

Obviously, Begonias are not at all difficult to grow, so long as you provide them with the environment they need, and have a little patience with their slow start. Five months of magnificently colorful bloom is worth the patience and thought that go into their culture. And if you want truly prize-winning blooms, you can do a little judicious disbudding, removing the female blossoms so that the males, which are the ones that produce the big double bloom, will have more strength. The females, which flank both sides of the male and are single, have little seed pods at the back of each flower. They are useful only for seed production; so you can remove them from the plant as soon as they are large enough to handle.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

(Continued from Page 23)

couldn't afford the increase. I am sure there are others, and they may still write.

Twenty-seven members have written to support the increase. They are from Southern California to Washington and from Florida to New Jersey—plus Canada and Australia. The most frequently mentioned benefits of membership are *The Begonian*, the Seed Fund, and the Round Robins. One has been a member since 1934, some are retired and on limited incomes, yet they propose a dues increase to as much as \$5.00 per year. There is no need for the A.B.S. to "get rich off the members," but it would be good for each member to pay his own way. The "Directory to America's Plant Societies," compiled by Suzanne Nelson and published in the January issue of *Flower and Garden* was also frequently mentioned.

Whatever the views expressed in the letters, they are revealing the opinions of members, and this is perhaps even more important to the A.B.S. than money. Let us hope that this communication will continue and will not be confined to this one subject.

Chuck Tagg

*Growing Begonias is not a hobby.
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Marie Turner

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TO FLOWER . . .

(Continued from Page 26)

drell' are very handsome and a well-grown plant is very floriferous. They certainly give one a lift in the winter season with snow and bare branches outside. But before and after blooming the foliage on the "star" Begonias and most of the rhizomatous is most distinctive and will carry the plant without benefit of flowers. All of which proves that the Begonia is most versatile and never has to apologize for lack of or too many flowers.

ROUND ROBIN NOTES . . .

(Continued from Page 29)

the father, and kept one of each kind. The one like *B. limminghei purpurea* has not bloomed; she may self the other to try for a felt-leaved procumbent plant.

Alice Roberts of Encinitas, California, crossed *B. nelumbifolia* and

B. philodendroides about four years ago. From dozens of plants, two were peltate like the mother. The seedlings never bloomed. They go shabby in winter, but recover. She also attempted crossing *B. philodendroides* on *B. evansiana*, but without success.

Ferns:

Vivian Stewart of Redmond, Washington, has a unique planting of Davallia. She removed the lining from an old Florentine lamp shade, inverted it, lined it with woods moss, and filled it with peat, sand, and soil for the Rabbit Foot Fern. The openings allow the rhizomes to grow over and through the planter, forming a ball of fern. Bob Shatzer had trouble with sphagnum moss sprouting ahead of his fern spores, finds shredded tree fern superior so far for spore germination.

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BEGONIA TRAIL . . .

(Continued from Page 33)

garden and the chickens. Lonesome? Oh, no! They seemed happy and contented, filling their place in a very beautiful rural picture.

In one house, where I have called to see Begonias, is a bay window. On either side of the bay, the side windows are narrow and between them and the main wall of the room a little niche has been cut about ten inches wide and eighteen inches high. These niches very likely were designed to be occupied by statuary, but the present lady of the house has placed in 'Paul Bruant' Begonias (B. 'Paul Bruant' specimens) which have grown into fine specimens. I think the living plants are far more decorative than lifeless statues.

What is it all about? Why, a few years ago I tried to find certain choice varieties of Begonias, inquiring of several florists and plant dealers. None of them were able to help me and one sarcastically remarked, "These old fashioned plants are perpetuated mostly by exchanges of one housewife with another." Conflicting emotions were aroused. The tone of his remark was suggestive of ridicule. But if it was true—and it seemed to be, at least in a measure—then someone ought to assume the task of rescuing these unique and beautiful plants from a threatened oblivion.

Accepting the challenge to the extent of my limited opportunities, I set out to collect specimens, to study the family history and to assemble all possible information regarding Begonias. I have found that they are more numerous than the ordinary florist would have us think; that there are a number of commercial growers who devote much space and time to them; that there is an increasing demand, so that some who laughed at my first inquiry are now offering them for sale; that there is a Begonia Club, small in numbers, but extending from coast to coast, which is doing its part to preserve and perpetuate this interesting group of plants.

We must admit that the path of the Begonia grower is beset with many difficulties. These plants do not take kindly to existence in steam heated, gas equipped living rooms of modern houses. Sometimes they grow well and sometimes they do not. Today I may display a specimen with pride, and a month hence it may be numbered among the lost. However, notwithstanding their frailties, they fill a place not held by other plants and some of us are glad to have a share in preserving their race.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

"*The Begonian* is a valuable magazine." I've heard this from many sources but I wonder just HOW it is read. Do you sit down and dash through it as you would a novel or do you actually think about what you are reading?

Do you take time to consider where the articles originate? Does the author live in New England or Southern California? As you all know, this determines the cultural value of a particular article for YOU.

I do not recommend that you ignore articles which do not originate in your area; only that you remember where they originate in order to interpret the advice for use in your own growing conditions.

The best information in any book or magazine is useless unless read. You are the readers. Those who read carefully and utilize the knowledge gained know that "*The Begonian* IS a valuable magazine."

GESNERIAD NOTES

(Continued from Page 35)

hybrid Columneas will flower without cool treatment, Carl comments. He has eighty species and hybrids hanging in windows in winter. Ones like C. 'Early Bird' flower all year long in the kitchen window, where it is not very humid, has 70° temperature. He recommends this one for the house, a good bloomer and not too heavy a grower. Columneas will lose leaves if too wet or too dry, if temperature suddenly changes, or if roots are injured. If they lose many leaves, it is best to cut plants back to make new growth.

"THE BEGONIAN"

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Quarter Page.....	10.00	8.50
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CALENDAR

February 1—Westchester Branch: Don Geissinger will share his knowledge of how to grow better Begonias. Mr. Geissinger is a geranium specialist but knows a great deal about plants in general. Time: 7:30 p.m.

February 4—Redondo Area Branch: Spring Gardening will be the subject of Kenneth Terry. 7:30 p.m.

February 13—Glendale Branch: Henry Zepeda will speak on Mag Amp in the Spring Garden. Time: 7:30 p.m.

February 14—Inglewood Branch: Mrs. Ruby Budd, Hybridizing, Begonias and Shade Plants. Time: 7:30 p.m.

February 16 — North Long Beach Branch: Annual Birthday Potluck Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Mr. Rudolf Zieshenne will be guest speaker.

February 26—A.B.S. BOARD: South Gate City Auditorium, 4900 Southern Ave., South Gate, Calif. Time: 7:30 p.m.

March 1—DEADLINE for all material for the April issue of *The Begonian*.

March 7 — Whittier Branch: Sylvia Leatherman will speak on "Ferns—New, Rare and Unusual." Time: 7:45 p.m.

March 16-24 — Massachusetts Horticultural Society's annual New England Spring Garden and Flower Show at Suffolk Downs, East Boston, Massachusetts.

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