

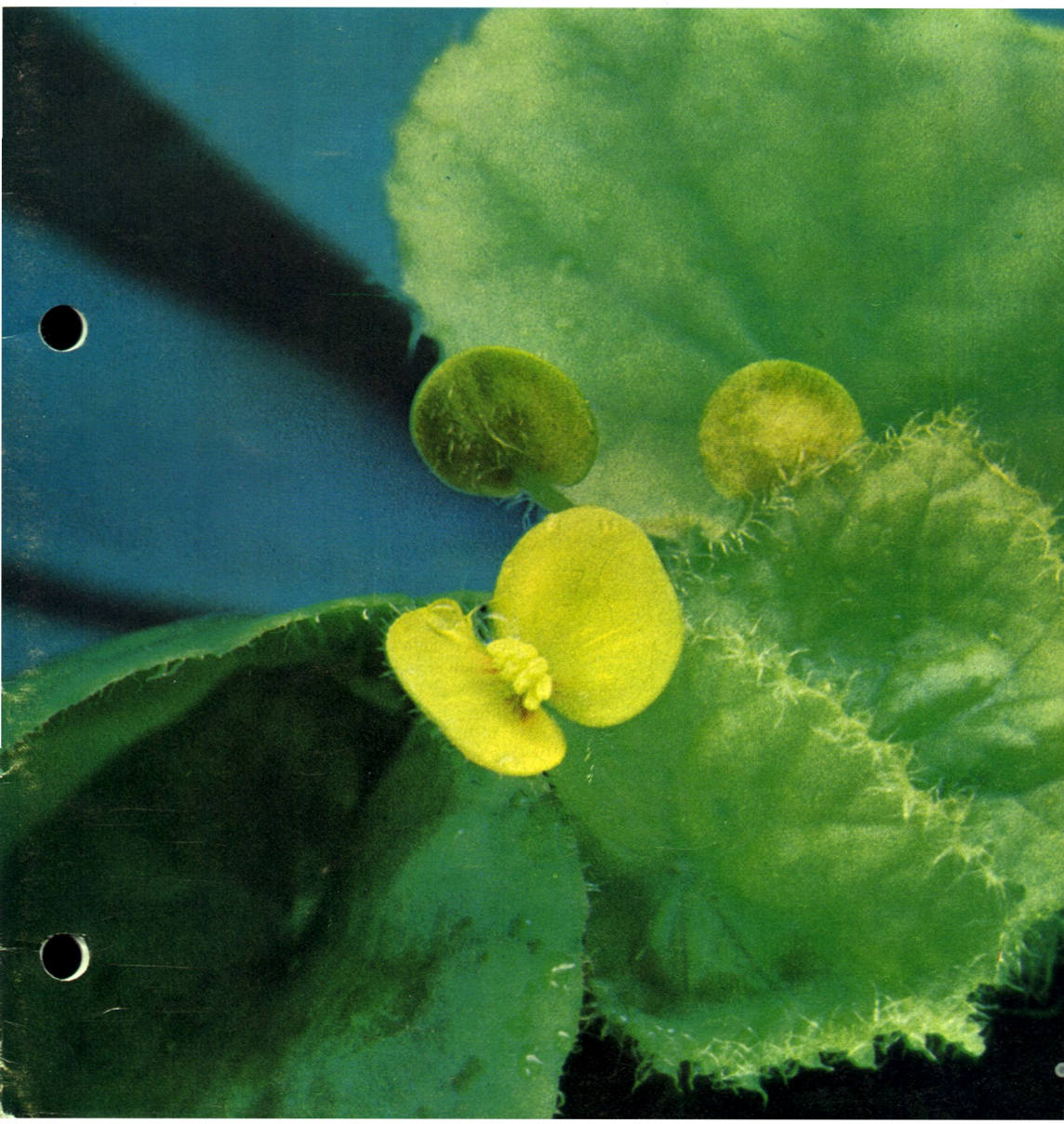
The BEGONIAN



FEBRUARY, 1975

Devoted to the Sheltered Garden

VOL. 42, NO. 2



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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this we're three days into the Happy New Year! The years are marked by the good we accomplish and 1974 is a banner year for the American Begonia Society.

I just talked to Jack Bergstrom of Kandid Litho Co. which is responsible for the gift of the reproduction of the beautiful painting by Alice M. Clark, a holiday greeting from the printers, in the December *The Begonian*. We are grateful to Kandid Litho Co. and to Mrs. Clark whose exquisite painting first appeared in black and white in the April 1947 *The Begonian*. We hope that a full series of Mrs. Clark's paintings may be reproduced for framing and also for use in *The Begonian*.

I am proud to announce Fred A. Barkley's acceptance of the post of Public Relations Director of the ABS. With his professional background at Northeastern University and his long interest in the genus *Begonia* as well as his down-to-earth work on behalf of the ABS and his Buxton Branch, Dr. Barkley should

set a high standard in publicizing the work of the ABS at universities and in newspapers, magazines, public speeches, radio, and television, and other media. His staff includes Hyacinth Smith in San Francisco, Herbert Warrick in Seattle, Phil Seitner in Chicago, Corliss Engle in the Boston area, Millie Thompson in the New York area, and Phyl Setford in Australia. With Chuck Richardson working with members at large and Evelyn Cronin in charge of branch relations, 1975 should result in a great fusing of talents and interests for the betterment of the ABS.

We are sorry to lose the services of Ruth Pease as judging chairman. Her teaching in community colleges

(Continued on Page 51)

ERRATA

In the December issue on page 306 Dayka was misspelled. On the same page an error was made in Dr. Sahyun's name — it should be Dr. and Mrs. Melville Sahyun. Our apologies to William Dayka of Dayka's Nursery and to Dr. and Mrs. Sahyun. In the picture on page 306 Mrs. Geraldine Sahyun is the second from the right.

COVER PICTURE

Begonia quadrialata grown and photographed by Gordon Lepisto, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

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*.

PROPAGATION OF BEGONIAS

By Elda Haring
(Photos by Walter Haring)

It is not possible to set forth one fail-proof method for the propagation of begonias. Experienced growers have experimented until they have found what seems to be right for the begonias they grow under the conditions they can provide. Instructions for propagating begonias are so many and so varied that beginners often become confused and are reluctant to attempt propagation at all. Even though one can not accommodate many extra plants in his plant room it is always wise to have one or two extra plants of the very special species or hybrids that are very difficult to grow or are not readily available. Although I do not have room for all my begonias to develop into show plants, I cannot resist propagating a leaf or stem when repotting plants, for nothing gives me greater pleasure than to present to a visitor a small specimen of a begonia that is particularly admired.

Propagation by divisions of an old plant is an easy method. When they have grown large and the stems fall over, varieties such as *B. semperflorens*, *B. schmidtiana* and the 'Calla Lily' types can be cut back, knocked out of the pot and gently pulled or cut apart to provide a goodly number of new plants. Rhizomes that have rooted within the container may be cut and dug with the roots attached to start new plants. Even old plants of canes or shrub-like begonias can be divided and repotted. However, most of us

do not want to disturb specimen plants in this way. Many begonias are easily rooted in water but these roots are tender and damaged when the plant is potted. If you prefer this method do use a shallow container and cut stems no longer than 2 inches since overly long stems when potted result in a leggy, rather than a compact plant.

Clear plastic bread, shoe or sweater boxes are ideal for propagation of begonias. If you were to visit my plant room or greenhouse you would see many other containers used for propagation—some of them placed in plastic bags with ends left open for air, some left uncovered. Those fragile beauties like *B. rajah* and *B. versicolor* that need protection are always propagated in covered containers. I find that most of the rugged kinds and even the rexes, if properly cared for, will root in open containers such as flower pots, market-paks, aluminum foil loaf pans or cottage cheese dishes, all provided with holes for bottom drainage. Cuttings may also be

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placed in two inch pots if desired, but in this case they may be given protection by placing in clear plastic sweater boxes. If you live in a hot, dry area covered containers are essential to provide constant humidity.

Cuttings of begonias will often root in your favorite potting mix but there are a number of growing mediums that are more suitable. I prefer the mixture I use for seed sowing, consisting of equal parts milled sphagnum moss, vermiculite and small grained perlite (also called Sponge Rok). Mildred Thompson, President of the Long Island Branch, who grows fabulous begonias, prefers to use 1 part perlite, 1 part vermiculite and $\frac{1}{4}$ part Jiffy Mix as a rooting medium. Some growers use equal parts of German peat, vermiculite and perlite. The "Cornell" peat-like mixes such as Jiffy Mix, Sure-Fire Mix, Pro-Mix and Reddi-Earth are also recommended for rooting cuttings. A mix of equal parts of brown peat and vermiculite are used by some although I find in my locality this medium stays too wet. Vermiculite alone can also be used but does tend to become soggy. In humid climates, perlite alone, with a half inch of water always standing in the bottom of the container is used for rooting cuttings.

As all of these materials are very dry as they come from the bag it is essential to place them in a plastic pail or bag adding one quart of

water to each 6 quarts of mix and permit to mellow for a few days. The material should be uniformly moist and fluffy, neither soggy nor dripping moisture. If you, being pressed for time, must use dry mix place container with bottom drainage in pan of water until moisture shows on top, and drain before using. If using a container with no drainage, water lightly and wait a day or two to determine if the material seems suitable.

The depth of the container would determine how deep a layer of mix you will use. The plastic shoe and bread boxes with domed lids can be filled to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the top of the box. In the 5" deep sweater boxes about 2 inches of the mix will allow room for cuttings to grow until they can be potted. Fill flower pots, cottage cheese cartons, etc. to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of top. If a plastic bag is used for covering prop it up so that it does not rest on the cutting, which could cause it to rot. In my greenhouse and under fluorescent lights I leave the end of the plastic bags open but lids of plastic containers are left on. In closely covered containers, cuttings will usually root without the need for additional water. Consequently plastic boxes, with lids are a boon to those who cannot give their plants daily care.

Spring is considered the best time to take cuttings since they are inclined to root more readily, but they may be taken at any time of the year. Choose good sturdy shoots, firm rhizomes or good clean firm leaves and cut with clean scissors. Experienced growers often utilize damaged leaves

(Continued on Page 37)

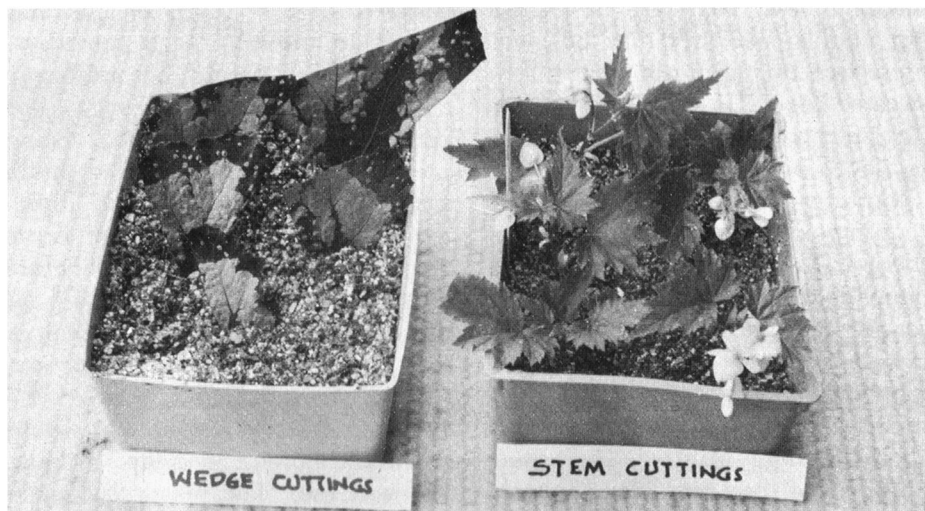
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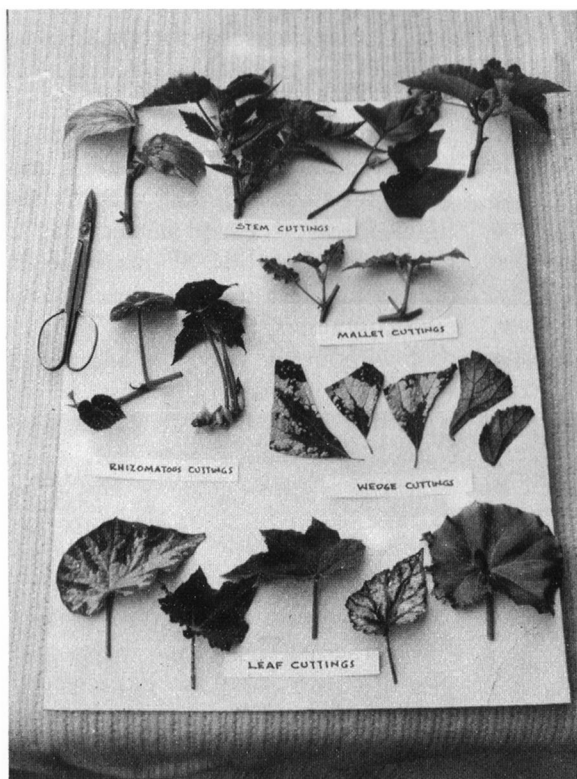
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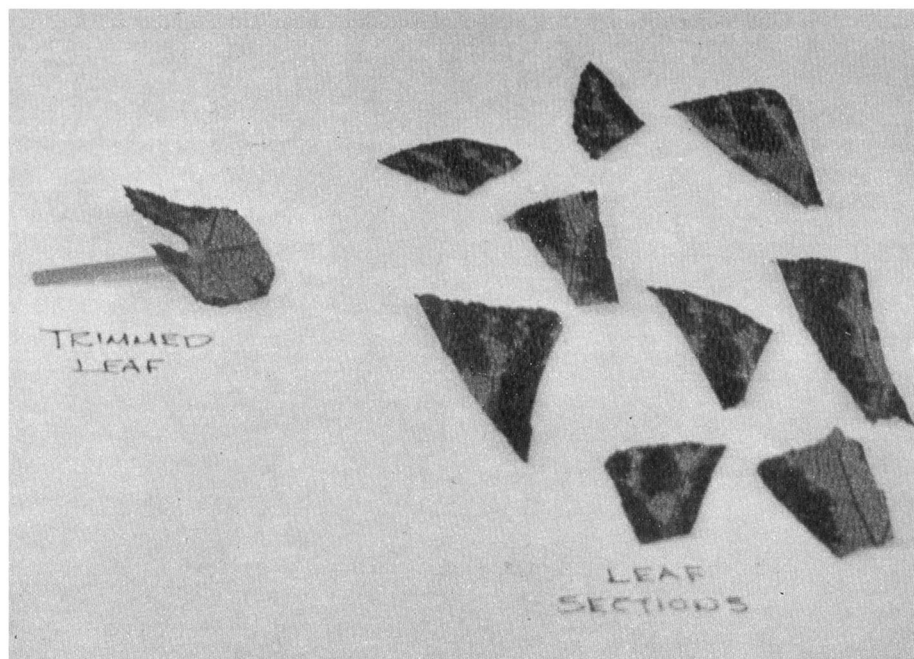
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Leaf wedges and stem cuttings inserted in starting medium in plastic trays.



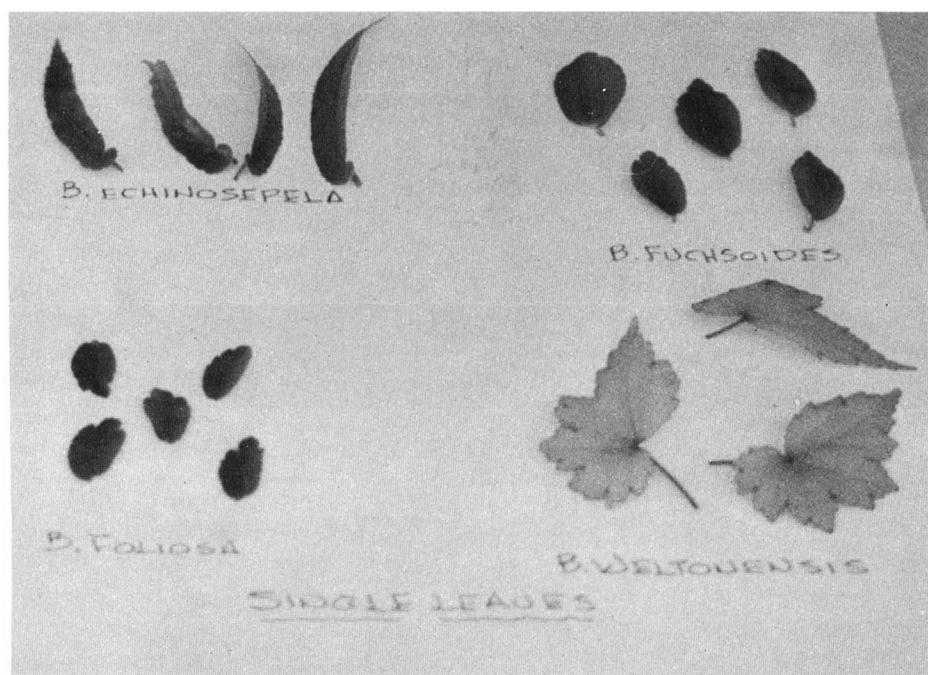
Vegetative cuttings ready for insertion in starting medium.



Various methods to prepare leaves for propagation.

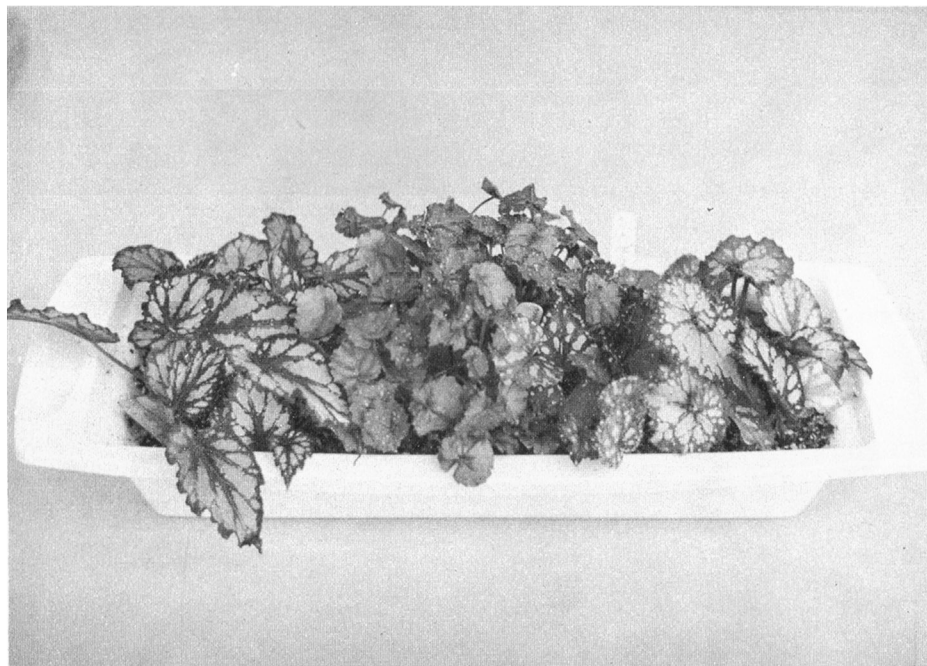
Above — Leaf sections.

Below — Whole leaves.





Two stages in the development of plants
started from cuttings.



PROPAGATION

(Continued from Page 33)

by trimming them to quarter or half-dollar size with one inch of stem attached. Cuttings should be crisp, showing not the slightest sign of wilting. Condition them by placing stems ends of cuttings in water for a few hours or overnight before inserting in rooting medium. This is especially important if you have received them through the mail or have obtained them from another hobbyist and transported them out of water. After cuttings have been inserted in the mix, water each one very lightly to settle the mix around the stem. The medium should be lightly moist at all times but never to the point of soggy as too much water in the root area will cause rotting. Place the prepared containers in strong light but not in direct sunlight. If you live in frost free areas and must root your cuttings out-of-doors put the containers in a shaded spot protected from sun and wind.

STEM CUTTINGS

Stem cuttings are taken from the ends of the branches whether they are horizontal or upright. Cut about three to six inches of stem depending upon growth of the plant. The stem should be inserted from one-half to two inches into medium removing any lower leaves only if they will be buried in the mix. If flowers

and buds are evident they should be pinched out to encourage the cutting to produce side branches for a more compact plant.

RHIZOME CUTTINGS

Rhizomes are thickened root stems some being quite large and rope-like while others are quite slender. Cut rhizomes, preferably with one or more leaves on each piece, and insert the pieces slantwise in the rooting medium. Rhizomes with no leaves attached may be cut into pieces and laid flat with rhizome pushed into close contact with the mix. Although rhizome cuttings of many types can be buried, covered with a half-inch of mix, my own experience has been that difficult types like *B. masoniana* can just be pressed into the top of mix with excellent results.

MALLET CUTTINGS

This is one of the easiest ways to propagate many of the cane-like trailers and shrub-like begonias. If you have a spreading plant like *B. 'Richmondensis'*, you will note the long stem will have developed new branches along the entire length of the stalk. Cut the shoot so that there will be approximately a half inch of stem on either side of the developing branch. Push this "mallet" into the soil so that the leaves stand upright.

LEAF CUTTINGS

Single leaves of most species and cultivars except a preponderance of

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the cane-like group may be used for propagation. Take single leaves with $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches of stem inserting it upright into the mix. If the leaf tends to fall over, prop it up with a toothpick. Large leaves as well as small ones can be trimmed to quarter or half-dollar sizes with stem attached and, if extra plants are desired, each leaf may be cut into wedge shaped sections inserting cut edge $\frac{1}{4}$ inch into medium. Even the small practically stemless leaves of *B. foliosa* will root.

POTTING ROOTED CUTTINGS

Depending upon your growing conditions, cuttings should be well rooted in two or three weeks. Some growers pot their cuttings as soon as they have developed roots. I prefer to wait until small plants have emerged and I think this is good advice for beginners. If the cuttings have been grown in covered containers they are tender and must be hardened off for several days by propping up lid of the plastic box or opening the closed bag and finally removing altogether for a few days prior to potting.

Use your regular potting mix for rooted cuttings. Lift the plant carefully so that tender roots are not damaged. Depending upon the size of root systems, transplant to 2 or 3 inch pots. Over potting, that is, placing small plants in pots too large for the root system, results in many losses. A large and vigorous growing begonia like *B. purpurea* may need a 3 inch pot while a small one like *B. prismatocarpa* will likely want a $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch pot. Place a thin layer of soil in the bottom of the pot, positioning cutting in the center, and

fill in around crown or stem with lower leaves at pot level. Keep soil at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch below top of pot to facilitate watering. Soil used for potting should be slightly moist, never dust dry. Water newly potted begonia, let drain and do not water again until soil is approaching dryness but never let it dry out completely. After 4 to 6 weeks check pots and if they are filled with roots shift to next larger size. If there is still a layer of mix in bottom of pot replace plant and permit it to grow on until the root ball retains the shape of the pot when removed. If shifted promptly to the next size pots as they grow the plants will quickly attain specimen size.

CALENDAR

February 10, 1975, Monday, at 7:45 p.m. The Hampton Branch will meet at Parrish Memorial Hall, Herrick Road, Southampton, N.Y. Program: Semperflorens by Henry Andreasen. Begonia of the Month: *B. luxurians* by John Bradley. Library and Plant Sales precede the meeting.

February 18 — Sacramento Branch 27th Birthday and Past Presidents dinner at Stroh's Neptune Table, 5900 S. Land Park Drive. Social hour at 6:30 p.m., dinner at 7:30 p.m. Margaret Ziesenhenné will speak about the National Organization; Rudolf Ziesenhenné will speak about New Developments in the Culture and Study of Begonias. Contact President-elect Munroe L. Mundell, 2324 Connie Drive, Sacramento, CA 95815, phone (916) 925-3647 for information and reservations. ASAP!

February 28 — Redondo Area Branch 6:30 P.M. at Dana School, 135th Street and Aviation Blvd., Hawthorne, Calif. Jitney Dinner (bring your own table service). Henry Meyers will conduct a Propagation Workshop. Visitors welcome. Door Prizes. Refreshments. Plant Table.

Rudolf Ziesenhenné

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*Indicates plants which are new introductions.

**Indicates plants which may or may not be used in terrariums.

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BRAZILIAN SPECIES IDENTIFIED

By Rudolf Ziesenhenne

Nomenclature Director

Ralph W. Spencer of Palos Verdes Estates, while traveling in Brazil several years ago, collected a begonia which because of its roughish leaf texture is often mistaken for *B. paulensis* A. DC. Seed was offered by the Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund in the March 1974 *The Begonian* as "Mr 6—*B. paulensis*" on page 60.

A good picture of this plant appeared as an unidentified species on page 280 of the November 1974 *The Begonia*.

Although there are two Brazilian species which are quite similar and

could be this plant, it is truly *Begonia gebertii* Irmscher, while the similar plant is *B. moysesii* Brade. Both of these plants have similar growth and leaves, the interesting thing about both being the leaves which produce elongated basal lobes which overlap to form a small opening at the leaf sinus. The critical difference between the two plants is in the petioles. *B. gebertii* Irmsch. has cylindrical petioles which carry recurved, scale-like hairs. *B. moysesii* Brade has four-sided petioles and no scale-like hairs.

RESEARCH — WHY DO WE NEED IT?

By Carleton L'Hommedieu, *Research Director*

Why do we need Research? Today's answer to most questions like this is 'Why not?' But this is not enough for scientific people.

A plant society without a research department would be a society that accepts itself as being 'status quo'. This would mean that we accept everything as it is and are satisfied without having anything new, and without finding the answers to the unsolved phenomenon of *Begoniaceae*.

Everything that you do with your begonias is a result of research. The plant foods that you use, the insecticides and the fungicides that are available, have all gone through intense research before you receive them. Many of the methods of propagation are the result of research. Research is continuous and is never

finished. We have been trying to find some of the answers to leaf stem propagation. Why do some begonias propagate easily by this method while others do not respond to this method? Rutgers University is still working on this problem for us. Any systematic investigation of our begonia problems by the experimental method should be of importance to all of our members.

Research not only takes time but it also costs money. It is something that you can not put a price upon. The funds for our research activities have come from members, individually and collectively through the Branches.

The Research Department is grateful for all of the donations that have made it possible for us to carry on the research for the ABS.

WHAT IS BEGONIA 'FIREFLUSH' ? (2)

By J. Doorenbos

Dept. of Horticulture, Postbox 30, Wageningen, The Netherlands

In *The Begonian* of October 1972, I wrote an article under this title in which I tried to show that *Begonia* 'Fire Flush' should be called *Begonia* *x leopoldii* 'Bettina Rothschild' and that it is a hybrid between *B. robusta* (I should have added: var. *rubra*) and *B. annulata*. Two puzzles remained: where was it raised and by whom, and how to explain the high chromosome number (about 52-55). I can now present some new evidence on both subjects.

As to the origin of this begonia, Mr. Rudolph Ziesenhenné kindly sent me some references I had been unable to find myself. The oldest of these is on page 209 of *L'Horticulteur français* of 1866. Here the editor of the magazine, F. Henricq, reviews the catalogue of plants offered in exchange by the City of Paris. He writes (I translate from the French and leave out some irrelevant passages): 'The nurseries of the City of Paris are divided into twelve sections. . . . The second section is devoted to rare or new plants. As such, we find mentioned in the catalogue: . . . *Begonia* 'Bettina Rothschild', with foliage covered by a crimson red velvet when young, and large pink flowers; . . . *Ficus chauxvirei*, a splendid new spe-

cies introduced by Mr. Rougier, Parisian horticulturist, . . . ' !

This clears up one point: in the Buxton Check List the naming of Rougier as the hybridizer of this *Begonia* is an error; he is only the introducer of a *figus*. *Begonia* 'Bettina Rothschild' may well have been produced (for at least, named) at the nursery of the City of Paris. In fact, this is what Mrs. Helen K. Krauss already wrote in 1947 in her famous book, which I had not seen when I wrote my first article but has now become available to me through the generosity of Mr. Jack Golding.

The second point is the chromosome number. In 1972 Dr. R.A.H. Legro and I had seen neither *B. annulata* nor *B. robusta*, but we had already studied a good number of Asiatic species and found low chromosome numbers to be prevalent. I believed therefore that *B. 'Bettina Rothschild'* with a chromosome number somewhere between 52 and 55 must be a tetraploid. The most plausible hypothesis appeared to be that *B. annulata* had 22 chromosomes (it is known to have been crossed — and produced fertile hybrids — with several other Indian species in which 22 chromosomes

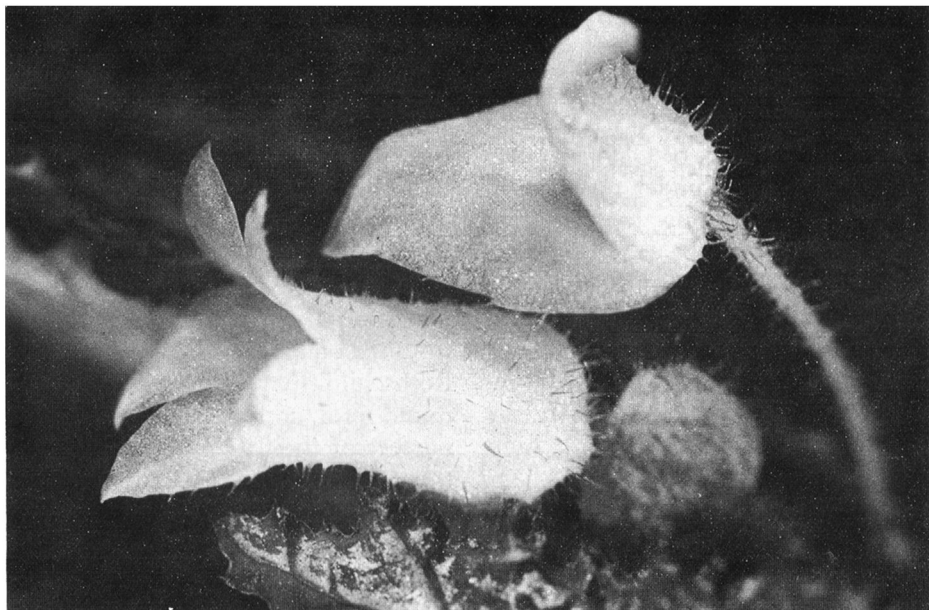
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Male and Female Flowers of *S. fulva-villosa* Warb.

Photo — R. Jansen



Dr. Jon Doorenbos, Laboratory of Horticulture,
Wageningen. Netherlands

Photo — Jack Golding

ANOTHER SYMBEGONIA

By J. Doorenbos

In *The Begonian* of June, 1971, I reported on an unknown symbegonia collected in New Guinea, and in subsequent issues, some more information about these rare and interesting plants was presented, i.e. a colored cover picture of *S. sanguinea* on *The Begonian* of May 1974.

Last year Mr. J. F. U. Zieck sent me some seed of a plant found at a height of about 4000 ft. near Karamui in the S. Chimbu district. Although he had not seen the flowers, he suspected it might be a symbegonia. Plants from this seed are now in flower and it appears that Mr. Zieck was perfectly right.

This symbegonia, the fourth I have grown, is a shrub about 30 cm (1 ft.) high. The leaves, which are green without markings, stand in two rows on branches which arise from the centre of the plant and then spread outwards and downwards. These branches are densely covered with upright red hairs. On the leaves these hairs appear only at the back on the veins. The shape of the leaves is lanceolate, up to 10 cm (4 in.) long and 4 cm (1½ in.) wide, with an asymmetrical base and a pointed tip, doubly serrate at the edge. The flowers are white, the female ones tubular with five slips, the male ones with two tepals which are fused at the base.

It appears that this plant is very similar to *Symbegonia fulvo-villosa*, the first species to be described in this genus. It is also close to the related *S. mooreana*. Both species have stems and petioles densely cov-

ered by red hairs, lanceolate leaves and white flowers, 1 to 3 together in an inflorescence. However, *S. fulvo-villosa* has acuminate leaves which are 'inaequaliter subdupliciter erosodentatis', to cite Warburg's original description, whereas the leaves of *S. mooreana* are drawn out in a long tip, lobed and doubly serrate. The present plant seems more or less intermediate between the two, possibly somewhat closer to *S. fulvo-villosa* than to *S. mooreana*. A difference from both species is that the wings of the fruit are blunt, not pointed.

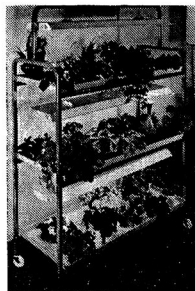
Like the other species of symbegonia, this plant is hard to grow. It has to be kept strictly at 100% air humidity; in drier air it starts to wilt within minutes. It freely produces pollen, but it is too early to tell if it will also set seed.

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ROUND ROBIN NOTES

There is always something new to learn from the Round Robins. If you aren't a part of them, you are missing a big bonus that is yours for belonging to the American Begonia Society.

Last February Nancy Cummins, Kentucky, taped a soil cable on a 4' x 8' asbestos board and put it on her dining table. At the time her lights in the basement needed to be rewired and she wanted to try the cable. She sowed about 20 different kinds of seeds in small flats and aluminum foil pans, put plastic bags over them and set them on the cable. Germination was excellent and much faster than she expected. The sphagnum moss in which she planted them stayed light brown with no sign of algae. Where seedlings were too crowded she was able (with plastic toothpick) to separate them easily. Out of one tiny packet of mixed gesneriad seeds she had 65 plants. Two factors were present, bottom heat and high humidity. The only light they received came from two windows and one overhead 100 watt incandescent light bulb. Since then she has started them under fluorescent light and hasn't had nearly as good germination. She found the latter seedlings coming up with "coolie hats" when she used milled sphagnum. Some seedlings couldn't break through these "hats" and toppled over. She tried Park's Sure-Fire mix and it turned green and had a hard crust. She had to prick out tiny seedlings so they could grow. After going to 1-1-1 mix of perlite, vermiculite, peat moss she has had better luck. Two factors were present

here: good light and high humidity, but no bottom heat. She thinks that bottom heat and high humidity are more important than the amount of light received when seeds are germinating.

Dora Lee Dorsey of Florida said when she fails to get the chaff from her begonia seeds she has trouble with mold forming on the soil surface even when she uses a detergent and wonders if a mild solution of Clorox (such as used for orchid seeds before flasking them) wouldn't prevent this. She'll try it and let us know.

Elda Haring, North Carolina, opens her seed pods over a little tea strainer onto a piece of bond paper and finds that most of the chaff stays in the strainer while the seeds fall through the mesh. If a bit of chaff does fall through with seeds, it can be removed easily with tweezers.

When Elda receives a shipment of new plants, especially when they are in a mix different from hers, she waits two or three days and then puts them into her own soil mix.

Arline Peck of Rhode Island says even if she buys soil mix that says "sterilized" she bakes it just the same. Putting some water in the soil, she bakes it for 1/2 hour or so in the oven. She had many slugs until she started doing this.

Rosetta White, Kansas, reported her husband's idea of mixing up potting mix in a small cement mixer. He thinks this would make it a much easier job.

Ann Bello, New Jersey, passed along a fine growing tip: when it is time to put plants outside for the

summer season she always makes cuttings and puts them in a shady part of the garden. By the end of summer when it's time to bring plants in again, she takes the cuttings and pots them up. Before putting cutting in the pot, she makes a hole in the center of the mix with a pencil or dibber, putting a teaspoonful of bird gravel right in the hole so it makes a cushion for the new root ball. This gives real good growth of roots. She's done this on many plants with very good results. Sometimes when it is time to pot up a cutting, she will find a very fine root. Using this method, she can pot it on up anyway and after a few weeks turn the cutting out of the pot to find an excellent root system.

For those having trouble with cane begonias (angelwings), Elda advises them to use some sterilized soil in the potting mix. Hers always do better if put in a rather heavy mix. She is using sterilized top soil (bought from garden nursery), two parts, with 1 part peat and 1 part sand, with an addition of a 2" pot of lime and a 2" pot of Mag-Amp to each bushel of mix.

Grant McGregor, Ontario, started using crushed egg shells in his mixes some months ago. He said he is using much less than the 1/2-1 cup per quart of mix as advised by Pat Morrison, Oregon. Grant suspects some types of begonias would bene-

fit more from lime than others, depending on the original type of soil in their native area.

Dorcas Resleff, Washington, received some cuttings wrapped in nylon quilt filling, dampened, which helped them to withstand shipping, arriving in good condition.

Ruth Ihara, Washington, D.C., bought three plants of *B. 'Smidgens'* to experiment with. One has been in her 20 gallon terrarium since early spring (about five months), its leaves remaining tiny and its pedicels short, with the whole plant slowly climbing up a piece of driftwood in the tank, but still only about 3" high, rhizomes vertical instead of horizontal. If the plant was flat, it would not be more than 1 1/2" tall. Another of these plants shares a 10" bowl with *B. 'Peridot'* and *B. prismatocarpa*, and is only 2" across and about 1 1/4" high. The third one is in her greenhouse. It was fine until the heat of summer came; then it began to dwindle away so she hurriedly put it into a bowl she uses for propagating, where it appeared to be recovering. She gets better results when the plant is planted directly in the terrarium mix than she does when the pot is concealed in the mix. She finds she has a tendency to forget to water these pots seperately, with the result that the poor thing dries out.

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Hazel Snodgrass, California, feeds her plants in bowls with a tablet form, mainly fish. One friend of hers' foliar feeds her bowls and seems to have just as good luck.

Ed. Note — The following paragraphs were held over from last month's Round Robin Notes.

Yvonne Wells, Texas, finds *B. rubrovenia* silver much harder to grow than the green variety and the spotted variety is even harder to grow than the silver. These plants do great for her until the heat of summer sends them into a dormancy from which they never recover.

Elda Haring, North Carolina, had a plant of *B. 'Granny'* that she almost lost when they moved. The friend from whom she'd received her original plant visited her recently and noted it was a lovely plant now with lots of CURLY leaves on it. Since this was the original plant that had no spirals, something must have happened to it—maybe the new mix Walt prepared for her! They do use dolomite lime in their potting mix. Now and then Walt tests the mix to see how it is doing. Since she hasn't had time to repot all her plants into it as she would like, she has worked a little of the new potting mix in the top of the pot among the rhizomes and it seems to have helped. Walt also used Mag-Amp in the mix. At one of the seminars in California, she heard that Mag-Amp breaks down much more slowly than Osmocote.

Debi Miller, California, taped some of the seminars to share with the robins. One horticulturist ad-

vised using a slow release fertilizer such as Mag-Amp or Osmocote in the potting mix and providing additional feeding by overhead feeding of a liquid plant food such as Rapid-Gro, etc., spraying or misting it on the leaves.

Rosalie Ehrlich, Connecticut, said the favored mix of many of the Long Island Branch members is a soilless mix plus top soil, 3/1, constant feeding with weak solution of Peters fertilizer—a very light fluffy soil mix. There were gorgeous plants in all categories in the show, she said.

Mildred Rowland, Oregon, said the Robin is just like having company. After reading the letters, she begins to tidy up her plants, looking them over and deciding maybe they are somewhat the same as others have.

Join us SOON!

Mrs. Mae Blanton
Round Robin Director
118 Wildoak Drive
Lake Dallas, Texas 75065

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A COUPLE OF REQUESTS — OR ARE THEY SUGGESTIONS?

By Fred A. Barkley,
Public Relations Director
104 East Highland,
Tecumseh, Oklahoma 74873

In order to get the maximum possible spread of knowledge about *Begonia* and our Society, I would like to make two or three suggestions.

If you are knowledgeable about any phase of *Begonia* information and would be willing to write an article about it, please send me a title and an indication of what photographs and other illustrations might be available to illustrate the proposed article. I will then try to contact journals (other than *The Begonian*) to see if it can be used.

When you publish an article or give an interview, please always mention that you are a member of the AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY.

When you see an article on *Begonia* in publications other than *The Begonian*, please send me a post card with the author's name, title of the article, when and where published.

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BEGONIA SEMPERFLORENS - CULT. — PIED PIPER

By Ernest Kimball Logee, Danielson, Conn.

Reprinted from *The Begonian* — July 1950

This is the story of *Pied Piper*, one of the forerunners of our new *Thimble* and *Double Red Leaved* hybrids. This plant was a stray seedling of Professor W. D. Holley's original working of crossing *Indian Maid* on his *Double New Hampshire Hybrids*, the first having dark leaves and the latter green foliage.

In a flat of seedlings of many green leaved doubles and semi-doubles, were found a number of red leaved single and semi-doubles. In transplanting these interesting seedlings to the field, a very small, spindly plant with a bud promising to be a red double was salvaged and potted into a 2½ inch pot. As the plant developed the flower was unique, quite unlike any other begonia we had ever seen, having little pink quills or crested imperfect petals of very good form, very deep pink in winter, paling to almost white in summer. It is dwarf, almost a miniature, compact and of good form, flowering persistently and continually. Visitors, spotting the little

prize, wanted to take it with them to add to their collections. As it was the only one of its kind, all requests were refused, but we promised cuttings when sufficient stock could be produced and when it was named.

The little plant has so many fond admirers and such a following that it made me think of the *Pied Piper* of Hammelin, which is the reason for its name.

There is no begonia quite like it in flower formation. The habit of growth is erratic, as some plants tend to spread out, covering the pot with graceful hanging branches. The flower clusters are on very short stems, tucked in among the leaves, giving the effect of being upright and sturdy.

For bedding it has quite an appeal, doing well in full sun or partial shade. Culture is the same as for any of the *semperflorens* — a loose friable soil, water well, allowing to become a little dry before applying the next watering. This produces more flowers and stocky growth.

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All material for publication — articles, notices, photographs — should be sent to the Editor, preferably six weeks before date of publication. Deadline is the first of the month preceding month of publication.

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B. 'FIREFLUSH'

(Continued from Page 41)

have actually been counted) and *B. robusta* 30 or 32 (a number already found in several Asiatic species, although not in the section *Sphenanthera* to which *B. robusta* belongs). Such a cross would normally give a hybrid with 26 or 27 chromosomes; after chromosome doubling (a common occurrence in *Begonia* hybrids) a plant with 52 or 54 chromosomes would arise.

There were of course other possibilities. Both species could have high chromosome numbers, (for instance, 44 and 66) or one could have a low and the other a very high number (e.g., 22 and 88). In both cases, the hybrid would have the required number (in the examples given, 55). However, as in studies by Dr. Legro and myself on 17 species of the sections *Platycentrum* and *Sphenanthera* we found 16 species with 22 chromosomes and only one with 44, I discarded the hypothesis involving a species with 66 or 88 chromosomes. However, I was dead wrong.

This spring we received, through the kind offices of Dr. E. F. de Vogel, a couple of rhizomes of *B. robusta*, collected in Java on the Gunung Gedeh. The rhizomes produced young shoots which were taken off and rooted. Recently we could start cytological investigation, and much to our surprise we found 88 chromosomes. This means that *B. robusta* is an octoploid species with 8 sets of 11 chromosomes. (The ordinary diploid species of this section of *Begonia* have only 22 chromosomes, i.e. 2 sets of 11).

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Now I have to discard the hypothesis that *B. 'Bettina Rothschild'* arose through a doubling of chromosomes, and to assume that it is a direct result of a cross of a species with 22 chromosomes (*B. annulata*) and one with 88 chromosomes (*B. robusta* var. *rubra*). This hybrid is a pentaploid with 5 sets of 11 chromosomes.

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4th Tuesday, Noon Homes of Members
Mrs. John W. Watson, Secy.
209 Pembroke Ave.
Wayne, Pa. 19087

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(Continued from Page 31)

is taking her full attention. Margaret Lee has assumed the duties and the many members who are working on the judging course should get their lessons in so they may swell the ranks of accredited judges for our and other shows. We regret Gene Daniels, who worked so hard on the 1974 convention show, has had to give up his post; he has come up with good suggestions for future shows.

Until we are sure where the 1975 convention will be held, we will not fill the Show Chairman job as it is essential that he be convenient to the place of the show. We Santa Barbarans hope that it will be decided soon where we will meet; a tentative reservation for Francisco Torres, Goleta, has again been made for the weekend of September 4 through 7. We have had some very enthusiastic letters from many who enjoyed the 1974 convention, but we wish the branches to know that if Santa Barbara must host the convention again, each branch will be assigned a definite activity so all branches will be involved in putting on the convention and show.

Our seed chairman is urgently in need of seed of the different *Begonia* species. Keep your donations coming to her so that we may all share in the joy of growing begonias.

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