



*The* BEGONIAN

January-February 1996

# The BEGONIAN

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Publication of the American Begonia Society

## American Begonia Society

Founded January 1932 by Herbert P. Dyckman

### Aims and Purposes

*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 that will be mailed to all members of the society.*

*To bring into friendly contact all who love and grow begonias.*

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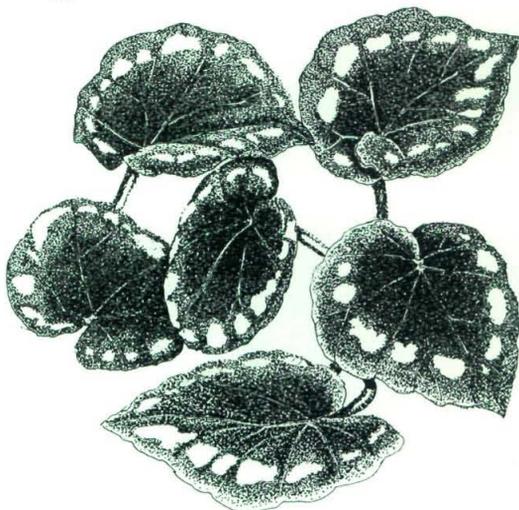
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## COVER PHOTOS

**Front & Back** - Virginia Jens snapped these unidentified begonia species along the collecting trail in Mexico. See article, p. 4



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*B. annulata*,  
a velvety charmer from India  
drawing by Kit Jeans Mounger

### Quick!

Check your mailing label. If it says  
1/96 or 2/96, your membership is  
about to expire. Please renew! We  
don't want to lose you!

Collecting Begonias  
in Western Veracruz, Mexico,  
or  
“The Begoniac Who Climbed a Hill  
and Slid Down a Mountain”



Text & Photos by Virginia Jens

Okay, okay - it was more like a ridge off a mountain, and it was my own fault. When the guide inquired “*arriba ó abajo?*” (up or down?) my hosts Bruce Pearson and Michael Marino of Tropical World (in Boynton Beach, FL) and Fortín de las Flores (Mexico) looked to me for a decision. In retrospect, for a person with a sedentary job at sea level whose main exercise is watering begonias and walking sedate poodles, “*arriba*” was probably not a good answer. However, I have a sneaking suspicion that “*abajo*” may not have been a big improvement!

The question was asked in Nogales, a city approximately 1 hour west of Veracruz

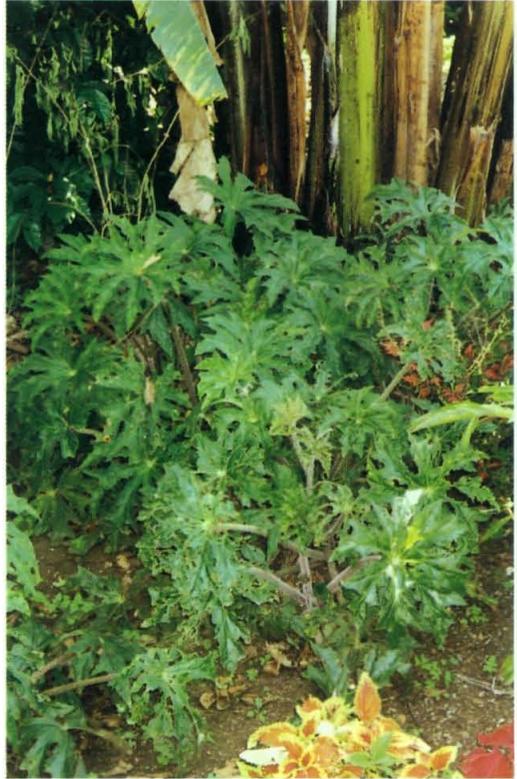
by car, not far from Tropical World’s Mexican operation at Fortín de las Flores. Both cities are in the area of Mt. Orizaba, a twin of Japan’s Mt. Fuji. The climate is cool and damp, close to that of Hilo, Hawaii, according to Bruce, an ABS member and begonia enthusiast. It felt something close to heaven to a Floridian at mid-summer.

Bruce and Michael hope to turn their property at Fortín de las Flores into a botanical preserve. They currently have eight guest rooms to lodge collectors visiting the area. On this day in July, 1995, our guide Alfredo had promised begonias “*arriba*”, so up the clay and rock-filled arroyos we went in a light rain and mist that later cleared.

Our trip up the mountain yielded at least two interesting begonia finds. The first was a small red hairless-stemmed specimen, found by a small shrine. Its leaves alternated on the stem, and it had stipules - it sure looked like a begonia to me, but it was not in bloom to confirm. Plus there was no rhizome or tuber on the very succulent stem, although it was jointed. What little root system there was seemed to find enough support in a thin layer of humus covered by moss in a damp shady location, although I found it hard to believe it stayed erect. The lobed leaf was bright green and shiny, with a red spot at the petiole, ovate with a dentate margin and cordate leaf base. The leaves of the specimens measured no more than 3" and the plants themselves were under 12" tall.

With a great deal of encouragement toward the end of the climb and after a long rest, I found myself negotiating a wet clay-filled trench with steep sides, finally emerging in our guide's corn field. It was truly worth the effort for all along the edge of the corn field, which was nestled between 90 degree rocky slopes, were giant-leaved rhizomatous begonias in bloom. The leaves measured 24" to 36" across, and the flower spikes were shades of pink (see back cover). The variance in color may relate to age of the spike or exposure to sunlight, but the day was overcast, so it was difficult to judge maximum sunlight received. Although Alfredo had planted the opposite slope to lilies, he reported that the begonias occurred naturally. The species is similar to *B. barkeri* (syn. *megaphylla*).

Once we had seen the top, the fun of descending began. Fortunately, Bruce never found his camera to record my mud-



encrusted backside when we returned to our starting point 5 hours after our initial ascent.

More collecting followed in the next few days on the road to Oaxaca and back through the Juarez Mountains to the southern spur of the Sierra Madres. To the southwest of Valle National, the road is cut into the mountain side. The primary trick to collecting in this area is finding a place to pull off the road once a good site is spotted. For the most part, the begonias and other vegetation cling to the mountain side, which runs at an approximate 90 degree angle to the road. The thin layer of humus covering the rock is constantly damp, if not outright wet, from the run-off of the mists and rains. Raising the trailing foliage up and peering up the mountainside, I found a brilliant

green carpet of *B. imperialis* var. *smaragdina* with perfect heart-shaped leaves appearing to cascade down toward me. Among others, we also found *heracleifolia* var. *nigricans*, and an unidentified rhizomatous begonias with black leaves.

Fortín de las Flores has a row of small nurseries, called "viveros", covering one block, and every owner knows "begonia". Tuberous begonias abound, but rexes and other locally collected species are available as well.

Bruce reports new genera, species, and varieties of a wide range of flora and fauna are being found in Western Veracruz every year. He is trying to assemble reference materials on Mexican species as well

as photos and specimens of locally collected plants. Kelton Parker has generously offered to copy his materials on Mexican begonia species for the reference library at Fortín de las Flores. All Bruce needs now is a stream of enthusiastic collectors to search "arriba" and "abajo" for those new begonia species.

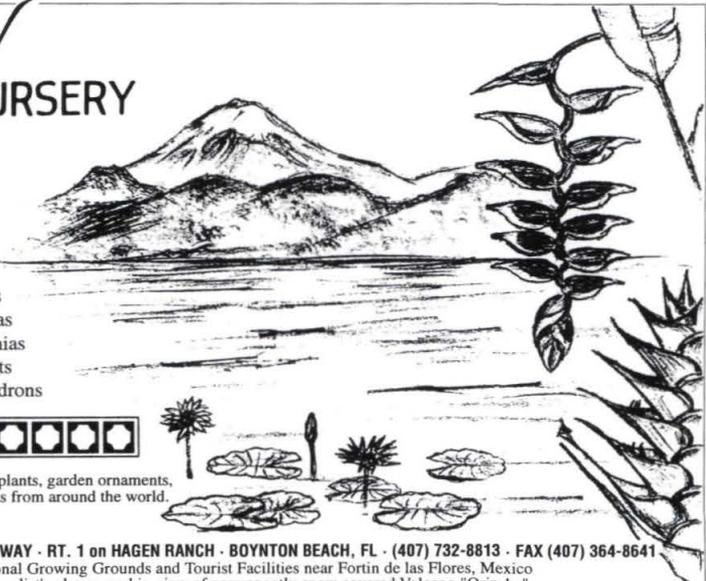
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*Virginia Jens is President of the Begonia Society of Palm Beaches, a foster mother for Stray-No-More (a private animal rescue group), and a dispatcher for Palm Beaches County Fire Rescue (911 and radio). Her address is 922 Upland Rd., West Palm Beach FL 33401-7550.*

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# Seminar Speakers to Highlight Convention

by Charles Jaros, Seminar Chairman

A super group of speakers will be on hand at the 1996 ABS Convention and Show. "Begonias in Paradise, A Caribbean Carnival" will be held April 25-28 at the Clarion Resort Hotel in Hollywood Beach, Florida.

Scott Hoover will speak on his latest collecting trip to Sumatra and show slides from this exciting expedition. Seeds from this trip are available from the ABS Seed Fund (see listing, November-December 1995). See these new begonias in their natural habitat.

Beth Castellon, Seed Fund Director, will lecture on the New York Botanical Gardens, the begonia collection, her work at the Gardens, and the Seed Fund. What better way to see and hear about the New York Botanical Gardens than from Beth?

Bruce Pearson from Tropical World Nursery will present slides and a lecture on his fabulous retreat in Mexico at Fortín de las Flores, where native begonias abound. A post-convention trip to Fortín is in the works.

Dr. Kathleen Burt-Utley of the University of New Orleans will talk about Mexican species. Kathleen is an expert in this field, and we feel very fortunate to have her speak at the convention.

Bill Ash from central England will be showing some of the fabulous begonias he grows and talk about some of the exciting begonias at Kew and Glasgow Botanical Gardens. Foliage begonias are becoming ever more popular in Great Britain thanks to the efforts of Bill and Hugh McLauchlan.

Mary Bucholtz, Branch Relations Director, will talk about the growing popularity of Begonia Art, from historical Oriental pieces and Victorian Majolica to our current artists. After this seminar, antique shops, shows and begonia artists better watch out for new collectors. You'll be hooked, just ask me!

At this convention we are gearing two seminars towards beginners. Greg Sytch, Horticultural Correspondent, will demonstrate and lecture about soils, fertilizers, classification, and explain just what a begonia is. Wanda Macnair from the Buxton Branch will demonstrate propagation. Nobody propagates begonias better than Wanda!

I hope many of you attend and enjoy this group of speakers. This may be the only opportunity to hear many of these lecturers. See you there!

***See You in Sunny Florida at  
"Begonias in Paradise"***

# Bewitching Begonias: Species

## Part II

by Thelma O'Reilly

Two more bewitching begonias are found in the "Zapotec Collection" offered in the catalog of J. L. Hudson, P. O. Box 1058, Redwood City, CA 94064, U.S.A.

This collection offers seeds of vegetables, herbs, ornamentals, and medicinal plants collected deep in the Sierra Madre del Sur in southern Oaxaca, Mexico.

The population of this rugged, mountainous region is largely Zapotec, and many of these plants have been grown by this tribe since pre-history. The Zapotecs are called "People of the Clouds" by neighboring tribes; this aptly describes their life. Fog, cold winds, and mist are frequent at the higher elevations; a few hours walk down the mountain, bananas and sugar cane can be grown. Seeds in the collection are from 8000 feet down to 4000 feet.

Listed under "Herbs and Ornamental Plants" are two tuberous species: "Abegonia blanca" and "Abegonia rosa". "Blanca" is described as a lovely white-flowered begonia to 5 feet, with greener leaves and larger flowers than the pink-flowered kind. It grows in sun or shade, in poor soil and rocky cliff faces in the high mountains zone. "Abegonia Rosa" is described as a wild begonia species from high Oaxacan mountains with lovely nodding pink flowers of good size and delicate bronze-green leaves.

Michael Ludwig, a member of San Miguel Branch, purchased seed in 1994 and raised these two begonias. I observed their growth with great interest. None of the plants bloomed during their first season but

I suspected their identity because of their distinctively-shaped leaves. When the plants approached dormancy in the late fall, I persuaded Michael to check under the soil so I could examine the tubers. What a thrill to discover, as I had suspected, some finger-like tubers and winding elongated growths that terminated in tubers at the bottom of the pot.

"Abegonia blanca" was assigned B. U332. I have tentatively identified it as *B. biserrata*. "Abegonia rosa" was assigned B. U333. I have tentatively identified it as *B. pedata*. A positive identification cannot be made until the plants flower.

Let's go back in time to 1968-69 when Rudy Ziesenhenné aroused my deep interest in the tuberous species. During a visit to his nursery, we spent a full day discussing and examining several Mexican tuberous species recently collected by the late Tom MacDougal. My favorite, a lovely pink-flowered one, was to be named *B. thelmae* by Ziesenhenné if it proved to be a new species. Later, after much research, Ziesenhenné identified it as *B. pedata*. Further research resulted in determining a beautiful white-flowered species to be *B. biserrata*.

A few years ago I received a small seedling from Bob Hamm labeled "Zapotec", which did not survive. Mabel Corwin received three of these seedlings from Hamm. Three years later one of them came out of dormancy for a short period and produced foliage. I recognized the distinctive foliage as *B. pedata*. This plant bloomed in 1994. It is *B. pedata*.

Right:  
*B. pedata*



Below:  
*B. biserrata*



I purchased enough seed of the two tuberous species to donate to the Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund so that all who love begonias can enjoy these two Mexican treasures.

NOTE: B. U333 flowered for Ludwig this summer. It is *B. pedata*. He photographed both of the above species to accompany this article.

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*This is the second of three installments of Thelma O'Reilly's seminar at the 1995 Convention of the Association of Australian Begonia Societies in Brisbane, Queensland. Thelma's address is 10942 Sunray Place, La Mesa, CA 91941.*

## IN MEMORY

Belated news has come of the death last April of a charming lady and begonia hybridizer, **Dora Lee Dorsey**. Dora Lee's begonia hybrids were famous in her home state of Florida, and she was a long-time, enthusiastic member and often president of the Tampa Bay Area Branch.

It is with deep sadness that we report the death of **Gwynne Pollock**. She passed away October 10, 1995, one month after her 62nd birthday.

We did not see much of Gwynne at our monthly meetings even though she was an avid grower of begonias. Gwynne was a psychotherapist in alcohol and substance abuse and Thursday was one of the evenings she had late sessions scheduled with patients.

It was interesting to hear how she used begonias in her therapy. She would give plants as gifts to patients, and they in turn would receive positive reinforcement from taking care of the plant. Neat, huh?

Bye, Gwynne. We'll miss you.  
- Jerry Eubank, in the newsletter of the Dallas Area Branch.

## Tribute to Belva Kusler

by Howard G. Berg

Belva Nelson Kusler passed away in April, 1995. She was about 85 years old and had been growing begonias since she moved to Wisconsin during World War II. From the first hybrid she introduced, B. 'Anna Christine' in 1955, to her later introductions in 1975 and 1976 including B. 'Jack Golding' and B. 'Sophie Cecile', she became one of the premier hybridizers of begonias in modern times. She left us a legacy of outstanding begonia hybrids that have passed the test of time and remain as popular today as they were when they were introduced. Everyone has his or her favorite Kusler hybrid.

She was a focused, knowledgeable person who was thorough and critical in her efforts. She addressed ABS and Regional

Conventions from time to time and contributed a chapter to the Thompson's Begonias: The Complete Reference Guide and articles in the **Begonian**. From these talks and writings we can gain insight to her methods and philosophy of hybridizing.

An article in the April 1971 **Begonian** (based on Ms. Kusler's presentation at the 1970 Eastern Regional Convention) contains just about all the information a beginning hybridizer needs to organize a successful hybridizing project. Here is a summary of the article.

Hybridization occurs in three ways: **natural**—without human intervention, **random**—where a begonia grower crosses targets of opportunity either because the

plants are in bloom and available or because the grower is curious as to what would happen if two plants were crossed, and **planned**—when the hybridizer has an end result in mind and selects parents that have been studied and could possibly yield the desired result in crossing. Belva Kusler only engaged in planned hybridizing and always had the desired result of any cross firmly in her mind when she made it.

Ms. Kusler approached hybridizing in six steps: (1) Imagination (2) Research, (3) Pollination, (4) Cultivation, (5) Selection, and (6) Distribution.

She called the Imagination step her dreams of putting large blossoms of 'Lil O'Neill' on *B. foliosa* - the end result of the proposed cross.

Research was the study of begonia species and hybrids to determine which crosses had been made by others and what the results were, and which traits are readily passed on to progeny by various parent plants. She kept records of these studies and her efforts in a book her husband called "The Stud Book." She studied the characteristics of begonias prior to proceeding to pollinate. While results were not always predictable, the percentages of successes were high enough to make the studying worthwhile.

Her Pollination was done with a brush on successive days, and if the cross "took" she would leave the seed pods on the plant until they were ripe and dry. She related one instance of crossing *B. solananthera* with *B. albo-picta* by pollinating several hundred blossoms to obtain four seeds. Interestingly, none of the four resulting plants was found to be good enough to distribute.

The Cultivation of the product of the crosses allows for several successive

plantings of the seeds in case something happens to any batch of sown seeds. At each transplanting weak plants and undesirable are culled out. She calls this the point where 'Cultivation' merges with 'Selection.'

Culling continues as the plants are grown to maturity and only those with the desirable characteristics are chosen to continue on. At each point that a hybrid fails to pass muster it is discarded and others grown on. She grew nothing on hope that change would make the hybrid acceptable. It was pass, or fail and be discarded. Canes and shrub-like begonias were grown from cuttings of the seedlings, since these types of begonias can change growth habits when grown from cuttings.

Of the hundreds of plants grown, few got to the Distribution stage. Ms. Kusler would ship test plants to growers around the nation to be grown under different conditions for evaluation. Often, the test phase came two to three years after sowing the seedlings. If Ms. Kusler wasn't convinced as to the plants' merits, even when test growers gave positive responses, several years of evaluation would ensue and if the plant still didn't come up to her standards it was never introduced.

Since she grew her begonias indoors, her objective was to breed a begonia that remained relatively small in stature, bloomed for a good portion of the year, and could withstand the indoor environment. She almost did not introduce *B. 'Sophie Cecile'* because it grew too tall. She had sent a plant to the Missouri Botanical Gardens for evaluation and they convinced her it was an outstanding plant despite the fact that it grew ten feet tall. In 1966 *B. 'Sophie Cecile'* won the Alfred D. Robinson Medal for outstanding begonia hybrid. Ms. Kusler's *B. 'Murray Morrison'* won the ADR Medal in 1980.

Belva Nelson Kusler summed up her hybridizing activity in the 1971 **Begonian** article,

"So, for me, hybridizing Begonias remains my work and my pleasure, not a profession but more than a hobby, a means of creating beauty, though it requires patience, some sacrifice, and much labor (albeit a labor of love)."

Belva Kusler's work has made all begonia growers richer in that we have more than forty begonias that are the result of her patience, sacrifice, and labor. It was her "labor of love" and the discipline and patience she devoted to her work that have given us such outstanding begonia hybrids as B. 'Sophie Cecile', B. 'Anna Christine', B. 'Alvah Graham', B. 'Mabel Corwin', and B. 'Jack Golding', and many more.

To her the greatest sin of a hybridizer was to introduce a plant that did not have unique characteristics and could not be easily identified. The greatest gift of a hybridizer was imagination, and the second greatest gift was the ability to cull and discard plants so that each introduction met the highest standards she could set. She lived her life as she hybridized, always reaching for the highest standard.

---

*Howard Berg is President of Knickerbocker Branch and a past V-P of ABS. His address is 16 Highview Terrace, New Canaan, CT 06840.*

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## Germination - 10 Years Later!

by Goldie Frost

I have just tested some begonia seed that we put in the freezer back in 1985. I planted the seed at the end of August. It did take the seed longer to come up, because I didn't have bottom heat on them, but the little seedlings are up and growing.

This proves a point: you can store some of your seed in the freezer if you don't want to plant it all at one time.

You must put your seed in paper and tape the packet, then put it in a small plastic box. I have lots more seed I'll be testing.

Incidentally, the seeds I have already tested are of B. 'Rory' and *B. partita*.

---

*We owe lots of beautiful begonia hybrids to Goldie and her late husband Doug Frost. Doug once said that Goldie crossed everything but her eyes! Her address is 10622 Teal Dr., Garden Grove CA 92643.*

---

Ed. Note: Mae Blanton reported a few years back that she had had good germination from seed frozen since the 1970's. So - if seed you really want is listed in the Seed Fund but you know you can't plant right away, put your freezer to good use.

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## "Growing Tuberous Begonias"

Carol Notaras grows award-winning tuberous begonias, volunteers with the tuberous collection at Golden Gate Conservatory, and (in her spare time) has served ABS as Convention chair, President, and now Treasurer.

It was her expertise with tuberous begonias that was at the forefront in Orange County, as she ran through a year in the life of a tuberous begonia addict.

Carol buries her tubers, thus getting roots all over the tuber. She doesn't feed for the first month, thus forcing the roots to search for food. She plants her tubers in a mix of 1/3 used soil with steer manure added; 1/3 Live Earth organic soil; and 1/3 fir bark.

Carol's favorite fertilizers are made by Romeo: their 24-28-28 is used 1 to 1 1/2 weeks after potting; 18-18-18 after plants reach 7" to 8" of growth; 14-30-14 about 2 months later. Not just the plants, but the tubers themselves, should be growing during the summer. She credited Rudolf Ziesenhenné for teaching her that you must keep tubers growing, or they will rot.

Early on her plants are staked; her favorite material is raffia, which is gentle for the stem and lends a natural look. Also available (from Blackmore and Langdon) are adjustable stakes with a rubberized surface.

Sudden temperature changes are to be avoided if possible, as bud drop will result. Keep the plants uniformly slightly moist; too much dryness also causes bud drop.

Slides of her procedures and of the beautiful results enlivened the presentation. But Carol does have a secret weapon: at the end of the growing season she stores her dormant tubers in husband Peter's wine cellar - kept at perfect temperature constantly. Now that would be a fun thing to emulate!



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## "Propagation of Begonias"

Horticulturist Don Miller is a consistent winner at begonia shows across the country with his incredibly well grown begonias - many of them miniatures. Co-editor of the Southwest Region Leaflet and frequent writer/photographer for the **Begonian**, he won the 1994 Herbert P. Dyckman Award for Service to ABS.

Forsaking slides and lecture format, Don demonstrated both asexual and sexual reproduction in begonias, explaining and answering audience questions as he proceeded.

For asexual propagation, Don made cuttings, then inserted the various cuttings into a mix of 1/2 perlite and 1/2 vermiculite.

Rhizomatous, rex, and thick-stemmed begonias, and tuberous species, he said, can be started from leaf cuttings and wedge cuttings (that must contain a good-sized vein) as well as from stem and tip cuttings. Fresh leaves work best; but wilted leaves can be salvaged by soaking overnight in water, or in water with SuperThrive.

In propagating canes, Don stressed the importance of avoiding a "blind cutting" - one without buds in the leaf axils because all nodes have produced bloom. Blind cuttings will root, but will not produce a plant. Use instead a tip cutting, or a stem cutting with leaf buds at the axils.

Rooting is encouraged and speeded up by using bottom heat. Heating cables, heating pads, or placing the propagation box on top of fluorescent fixtures will work, although he warned that the last may get too hot. A space-saving suggestion: place cuttings in rooting media in a plastic bag, using a clothespin to clip the bag to a fluorescent light fixture or to curtains at a window (but out of direct sun).

Don grows from seed (sexual propagation) in a sterile media. He mentioned Jiffy Mix, RediEarth, or milled sphagnum as good light seed mixes. Seeds are sown *on the top* of the sterile media (do not cover the seeds) in an enclosed container. He likes to transplant when the first true leaves appear, still keeping the plantlets in an enclosed container. Harden off very gradually by moving the container lid back.

Another tip from Don concerned storing seed: put it in the refrigerator until you are ready to plant it. Begonia seed stored in the refrigerator has retained its viability for as long as 20 years.

Don's seminar ran into overtime as he continued answering questions, surrounded by people poking his mix, examining his cuttings, learning all they could from this gifted grower.

## “Hybridizing Canes the California Way”

Showing that "educational" need not be synonymous with adjectives such as "stodgy, boring", Paul Tsamtsis and Brad Thompson presented a seminar for our National Convention that might be described as funny, disjointed, frenetic.

Hybridizers both, Paul from Sacramento and Brad from Torrance in southern California, they had not had a chance to rehearse beforehand; while their individual slide presentations were uninterrupted, most of the rest of the hour flew as dialogue bounced back and forth spontaneously.

Paul discussed his philosophy and methods of pollination, growing on, and selection. Among his unusual and helpful suggestions: use a #9 crochet hook to move

seedlings from their starter mix into 2 1/4" pots; the fabric of the packets used by Federal Express makes good, lightweight, almost indestructible labels for the name of your pollen parent; simply cut the size you need, write the name in indelible marker, and attach to the seed pod.

Brad plants approximately 200 seeds per pot in his initial planting, and culls to 25 when he pots up to individual pots. Begonias that aren't exciting from the very beginning are discarded early.

One thing the hybridizers have in common is lack of space. Both grow in minute areas, mostly outdoors, and utilize every single inch, using benches, shelving, hanging baskets. Slides showed growing

areas as thick with plants as the most impenetrable rainforest. (However do they stay so organized, know each plant: where it is, who its parents are, when it blooms, etc.? How do they even find a seed pod?)

The lack of space influences their aims in hybridizing begonias. Brad looks for compact, full growth, and likes plants that "grow on their own": no pruning or staking. Paul also likes smaller plants: B. 'Amelia', a low-growing cane perfect for baskets, is his best-known creation. Size aside, both like bountiful amounts of flowers, Brad having a special liking for bell-shaped clusters and fragrance.

Wish you could all have been there to see the beautiful hybrids these talented two are turning out. - Tamsin Boardman

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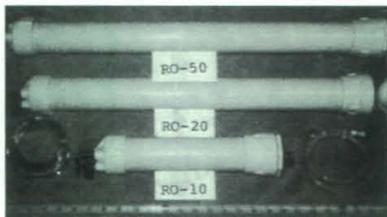
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## Show News Around the Country

**Johanna Zinn** swept the field at the *Potomac Branch Show* and sale at Green Springs Park the weekend of September 8-10, 1995: she won Best of Show (an unknown shrub-like begonia), Sweepstakes, and "Showing is Sharing", with the largest number of entries. Nor did she shirk dedication for the sale, bringing in lots of a local best-seller, *B. grandis* ssp. *evansiana*. Johanna also took home Cultural Awards for her Best of Show (96 points), and Begonias 'Mirage', 'Buttercup', and *grandis* ssp. *evansiana* (all 95 points).

B. 'Esther Albertine', grown by **Ruth Ihara**, won the "People's Choice" balloting. Ruth won Cultural Awards for the popular favorite (95 points), and for a *reniformis* x *solimutata* cross (95); and **Florence Kwok** took a Cultural Award for B. 'Amigo' (95).

**Buxton Branch** members distinguishing themselves at the *New England Flower Show* were **Phyllis Podren**, Sweepstakes Award; **Corliss Engle**, whose B. 'Torch' was winner of the Rosemary Norton Memorial Award for best canelike begonias and the Beatrice Haddrell Memorial Cup for Best Begonia in Show; and whose *B. versicolor* won the Orpha C. Fox Award for best species begonia and the Evelyn Cronin Award for best rhizomatous begonia; **Allen Drew**, whose *B. glandulosa* won the Percy I. Merry Award for the best begonia grown from seed. The Mildred L. Thompson and Edward J. Thompson "Showing is Sharing" Award went to **Normand Dufresne**, **Wanda Macnair**, and **Phyllis Podren**.

Best of Show at the *Palos Verdes Show* "Bewtiching Begonias" was **Eric Seel's** *B. venosa*.

At the 14th annual *Westchester Branch Show* in July 1995 **Brad Thompson** took Best with *B. rajah*. Novice winner was **Laverne Hanell** with B. 'Snowcapped'. Judges were Katherine Alberti, Pat McElderry, and Mary Sakamoto, with Joy Blair, Janet Brown, and Stephanie Snyder clerking.

"Love Affair with Begonias", the second annual *Doug Frost Branch Show* was lovely for **Mary Sakamoto**, who took top honors with B. 'Black Gold', winning the Doug Frost Trophy and also Best of Show.

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# BEGONIAN INDEX 1995

## 1995 TOPICS AT A GLANCE

**Jan.-Feb.:** Vietnamese species; Food Colors from Begonias; Silvery Variegated Canes

**March-April:** *B. chlorosticta*; Begonia Reproductive Organs; Variation among Begonias; Rhizomatous Begonias; Koehler Hybrids; Landscaping in Florida; B. 'Barbara Ann'; Poetry; Open Garden; Massachusetts Division

**May-June:** *B. valida*; From Nature to the Home; B. 'Alice Faye'; Watering Begonias; Begonia Fragrance; Ideas for Branches; Sharing; Survivors; B. 'Cockatoo'; B. U177; Ants; Palm Beaches Show

**July-Aug.:** Convention 1995; Begonias in Baskets; B. 'Mickey's Pride'; COLIN; Poetry; *B. decora*; Book Review

**Sept.-Oct.:** B. 'Essie Hunt'; B. U168; B.. U014; *B. thomsonii*; Univ. South Florida Botanic Garden & Begonia Collection; Southwest Region Get-Together 1995; Propagating Tips; Squeezing Plants In; "Texas Method" Propagation

**Nov.-Dec.:** Convention 1995; Fragrant Tuberhybrida; A Successful Begonia Year; Florida Canes; Hybridizing Beginnings; Bewitching Begonias; Variation among Begonias; B. U168

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\*photo or drawing

## Coming Events

**March 9-17:**  
**New England Flower Show.**

**April 13-14:**  
**Florida West Coast Branch Show & Sale** at University of South Florida Botanic Garden Spring Festival. This is also an opportunity to visit their *Begonia* Species Bank

**April 25-28:**  
**ABS Convention '96**

### "Begonias in Paradise"

Clarion Resort Hotel  
 Hollywood Beach, Florida  
 Hosted by **Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and Palm Beaches Branches**

**May 24-26:**  
 (Memorial Day weekend)  
**1996 Southwest Region Get-Together**  
 Dallas, Texas  
 Harvey House Downtown  
 Hosted by the **Dallas Area Branch**, with some terrific surprises in store.  
*Y'all come!*

# From the Mailbox

Greg Sytch, Horticultural Correspondent

**Q:** I have been growing tuberous begonias, and by the time I am able to get them going in the spring and summer they do not seem to bloom until it's almost too late to enjoy them. This seems to happen more to the non-stops than any others. Is there any way I can get them to start blooming sooner? New Jersey

**A:** While I do not grow tuberous begonias here in Florida, when I lived in New Jersey I grew them with moderate success. The key is an early awakening.

In March, slowly encourage your bulbs to come out of dormancy by repotting them in fresh soil, increasing the fertilizer, and placing the plants in brighter light.

By mid to late April, sneak them outdoors where the light is much stronger, but in a sheltered place. Tuberous begonias will tolerate cool temperatures, and survive as long as it is above freezing. Sheltered

areas should not be affected by any late frosts. By the middle of May, you can place pots outdoors in a bright spot - morning sun is best - and continue good culture. Feed every week with a balanced fertilizer to encourage growth. When the stems seem large enough to bloom, alternate with a bloom type fertilizer such as 12-55-7 or 15-30-25. This should produce the first blooms by June and continue all summer into fall.

However, sometimes New Jersey's summers become too hot and humid for tuberous types; do not be discouraged if heat waves rob you of some flowering. Once it cools down the blooming should restart.

NOTE: often non-stops are grown from seed and produce inferior bulbs the second year. Keep this in mind and try not to expect these bulbs to produce good plants until their third year.

## Propagating Rhizomatous Begonias: Leaves

Recently I have heard from many begonia lovers who have had minimal success propagating rhizomatous leaves. Most have tried and failed with pieces of leaves cut into wedges. Only a few realize the benefits of using a whole leaf. It is easy and simple:

1) Prepare a soil mix. I like to use 3 parts perlite, 1 part peat moss, and 1 part vermiculite. This mix is well-drained and holds moisture but not so much as to rot leaves.

2) Choose a healthy leaf, but never a brand new one. Try for a crisp outer leaf not showing damage, or one in the middle of the plant. Take it off as close to the center

of the plant as possible (any part of the petiole you leave on the plant will wilt away naturally).

3) Cut the petiole to within 1/2"-1" of the junction with the leaf base, on an angle. Then dip the end in a rooting hormone and insert into your mix. I successfully root large leaves directly into 3" pots, with smaller leaves going into 2 1/2" pots. You may also use a flat pan (in which case a small layer of pure perlite on the bottom helps).

4) When inserting the leaf, make sure it is horizontal, and bury it up to the area where the leaf meets the petiole. Water in lightly,

and place in an area that is bright (but never in hot sun) and moist. Covering with a clear dome, plastic, or other transparent device creates greenhouse conditions that will increase rooting success and decrease rooting time.

5) For extra large leaves, such as 'Earl-ee-bee' or 'Big Green', the leaf may be reduced in size by cutting the outer edges in a triangular pattern. This should not affect the leaf, but to play it safe you may spray with a fungicide.

Ideal conditions produce babies on rexes in 3-4 weeks, while most other rhizomatous types take between 4-5 weeks to show growth. Once growth is seen, a dilute fertilizer will aid development.

A word of caution: during peak blooming season (winter and early spring for most) when the plant's energy is directed toward producing flowers, it is wise not to take leaf cuttings. Leaves may rot more quickly. Wait until blooming is finished. I have found that here in Florida late summer and fall are fantastic times to root leaves.

After the leaf spawns new growth and the pot is filled with roots, minimize rotting by potting up gradually. Step up one size only (a 3" pot to a 4" pot, for example).

*Greg Sytch is Horticultural Correspondent for ABS, and reminds members: if you have a growing problem with a begonia, don't hesitate to drop him a line. He'll try to reply quickly and efficiently! His address is P.O. Box 1033B Port Richey FL 34653.*

## Request from Scotland

Paul Matthews, Curator at the Glasgow Botanic Gardens, has written requesting help in finding Asian begonias in the section *Knesebeckia* for a research project. Needed are the following:

*Begonias adscendens, anceps, asperifolia var. asperifolia, asperifolia var. tomentosa, clavicaulis, concanensis, dioica, (amoena, tenella), fimbristipula (cyclophylla), fordii, grandis, grandis ssp. evansiana var. simsii, grandis ssp. evansiana var. unalata, grandis spp.. sinensis, grandis ssp. sinensis var. puberula, grandis Dryander ssp. holostyla, imitans, josephii var. josephii, josephii var. macrocarpa, josephii var. minima, khasiana, labordei, lushaiensis, minicarpa (modestiflora), miranda, muliensis, pedunculosa, picta (erosa), satrapis, summoglabra, surculigera, tribenensis, yui, yunnanensis var. yunnanensis, yunnanensis var. sootepensis, yunnanensis var. thorelii, cordifolia, gemmipara, parvuliflora var. parvuliflora, parvuliflora var. pubescens, taliensis, wilsonii*

If you are growing any of the begonias listed above, please contact Paul Matthews, Curator, Glasgow Botanic Gardens, 730 Great Western Road, Glasgow G12 0UE Scotland.

---

### Quote:

"If people would listen to themselves more often,  
They would talk less."

Marion Lindgren,  
in the Westchester Branch newsletter

# Happy New Year and Happy Birthday, One and All!

Happy January Birthday to ABS, as our first branch, Long Beach Parent Chapter, celebrates its birthday. Our Society is 64 this year!

What have we accomplished in that time? Well, we've gone national; established relations with international begonia societies and members in other countries; set up Round Robins and the Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund; registered hundreds of new hybrids; sponsored collecting trips; started the Adopt-a-Species program, and just in this decade helped start two Begonia Species Banks.

Our members have contributed to begonia knowledge. Jack Golding and Carrie Karegeannes co-authored the Smithsonian Institution's Contributions to Botany #60: Begoniaceae, and Mildred and Edward Thompson co-authored Begonias:

The Complete Reference Guide. John Ingles Jr. has updated the Buxton Check List of Begonia Hybrids.

There's still lots more to do to live up to our Aims and Purposes. Above all we hope to increase our "Friendly Contact" with all members - people from different areas, different backgrounds, all united in love of beauty as found in the varied and bewitching begonia family.

How about making a New Year's Resolution to keep growing - not only begonias, but in fellowship with your fellow members? Pick an area of interest, and volunteer to help out - there's a wide range of committees and jobs, and you'll be welcomed with open arms. Help spread the joy of growing Nature's most fascinating plants. Just think what we could accomplish, working together!

---

## Quote:

"Every action in our lives touches a chord that will vibrate forever."  
Satellite Shuttle

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# Beware!

## for begonia growers who have cats

by Thelma McRae

Christmas before last my son presented me with two kittens I refer to as the "Beautiful Burmese Beasties", Flossie and Freddie. These cats are affectionate and often smarter than I; there's a loaded water pistol on the sill above the kitchen sink because Floss likes to jump up on the counter and unroll the paper towels, and I had to put child-proof locks on lower cabinets because Fred likes to curl up in large cooking pots - not too hygienic!

A couple of months ago I had filled a one-gallon watering can with a dilute solution of Peter's 20-20-20. The dryer went off, and I went to fold clothes; when I came back into the kitchen Floss was enthusiastically lapping the fertilizer-water mixture. I chased her off and thought nothing more about it.

The next morning Fred made a few dashes at her as an invitation to come and play, but she'd have none of it. I thought, that'll teach you, old girl. The following morning she didn't try to beat Fred to the food bowl, was extremely lethargic, and felt warm, so we made a trip to the vet along with a list of the ingredients of Peter's fertilizer.

Flossie was dehydrated and had a temperature. The vet phoned the animal poison center and they told her that Flossie's kidneys couldn't handle the nitrogen.

Sooo - Floss spent an overnight at the veterinary hospital, with intravenous feeding and antibiotic shots. When I picked her up the next afternoon I was presented with a container of pills and a bill totaling \$198.00!

Not the end of the story: Fred really missed his sister - and if you've ever heard a Siamese yowl, a Burmese is worse by far. He'd never jumped on the counter before - maybe he was looking for his sister? When I brought Floss home I put the antibiotic container (one of those with a child-proof cap that only a kid can open) with the cap on loosely so that I wouldn't break another fingernail opening it. There was a pan soaking in the sink and sometime that night Fred knocked the container off the sill and into the pan. Another eight bucks for more antibiotics. Floss survived, but I came near to cutting Fred's throat!

Moral: Doesn't matter how smart your cat is, it'll do some pretty dumb (and obviously expensive) things. *Fertilizers aren't for cats!*

---

*Thelma McRae is Members-at-Large Director for ABS, and lives in Paradise: her address is 5471 S. Libby Rd #15, Paradise CA 95969.*

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# BULLETIN BOARD

## ABS News

### MEETING BY MAIL

In an effort to provide more opportunity for members to participate in running the Society, the Board will be conducting some business by mail.

On October 18, 1995 ballots were mailed to all 34 Board members and all 30 known Branch Director/Representatives, asking them to vote on several appointments and on a proposed change involving funds produced by the Seed Fund. Ballots were to be returned by Nov. 20.

With all officers and chairs and 25 National Directors responding, all appointments were approved (see Appointments, below).

Continuing to give 10% of monies generated by the Seed Fund to the Research Department was defeated by a narrow margin (28 for, 32 against). Several interesting suggestions were made on better use of the funds in question, and the suggestions will be discussed at the Board meeting in January.

Five ballots were not returned.

Still needed are the names of the Branch Director/Representative for Brooklyn/Queens/Nassau, Rubidoux, Theodosia Burr Shepherd, and Western Reserve branches.

The ABS Constitution designates the National Director (may also be known as National Representative) as the liaison between the branch and the national organization. Each National Director is a voting member of the national Board.

Please help keep your branch current and voting! Send the name and address of your National Director/Representative to the Secretary and the President as soon as possible. Deadline for listing in the Directory of Begonia Societies is January 15, 1996.

### APPOINTMENTS

#### **Ballot Counting Chair:**

**Ingeborg Foo**  
1050 Melrose Way  
Vista, CA 92083

#### **Ballot Counting Committee:**

**Pearl Swatsek**  
633 Traci Lane  
Vista, CA 92084

**Michael Kartuz**  
1408 Sunset Dr.  
Vista, CA 92083

#### **Awards Committee:**

**Charles Jaros**  
200 Maureen Dr.  
Sanford, FL 32771

**Michael Ludwig**  
6040 Upland St.  
San Diego, CA 92114-1933

### **Correction**

Ruth Pease has written to say that the photo of the begonia display on p. 189 in the Nov.-Dec. '95 issue was not of the Pease' award-winning display, it was of the Palomar Branch display. We regret the error.

## **BOARD MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Begonia Society will be held January 20, 1996 at the Best Western DeAnza Motel in Monterey, California.

All members are welcome. Elected and appointed officers and National Directors of branches are urged to attend.

On the agenda for the meeting will be appointment of a new Advertising Manager for the **Begonian**; approval of name change of Pinellas County Branch to Florida West Coast Branch; approval of name of a new branch in Massachusetts; an application for a charter from a new branch in Houston, Texas; and a report from the Research Director.

If you would like to comment on any of these, or if there is other business you would like to have discussed, please write to President Ann Salisbury by January 5, and send a copy of your letter to Secretary Margaret Fisher (addresses on inside back cover).

## **AWARDS NOMINATIONS**

**February 1st** is the deadline for submitting nominations for ABS' top awards. Awards Chair Mary Sakamoto reminds us that nominations *must cover the reasons you believe your nominee deserves to be recognized.*

Please see the November-December 1995 issue, p. 198, for a description of the criteria for recipients of each award, and the March-April 1995 issue for a listing of previous winners (a person may win an award only once; but since the Alfred D. Robinson Medal is given to a begonia, a hybridizer may win more than once).

## **BACK ISSUES Chairman needed!**

Until a chair is found, Ann Salisbury will continue to fill requests for Back Issues of the **Begonian**. Ann's address is P. O. Box 452, Tonkawa, OK 74653.

Back Issues are available to branch libraries for cost of postage only. *The librarian must be an ABS member.* Branches are reminded that they can also order recent overprints (for use at sales, displays, talks, or just to give to visitors at meetings) for the cost of postage only. Order from either Ann Salisbury (address above) or editor Tamsin Boardman, P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale, TX 76433.

## **Temporary Special!**

Members wishing to order specific issues, or certain years, can do so for 50 cents per copy or \$2 per year, plus postage. Write to Ann Salisbury (address above).

# Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund Notes

Beth Castellon, Seed Fund Director

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## Species Seed

### Shrub-like

*B. cyathophora* (Peru, 1835; syn. *lynchiana*). Medium-sized bare leaves, scarlet flower winter-spring. 100% germination, 10 days.\*

*B. huegelli* (Brazil, 1861). Broad hairy lobed bronze-to-green leaves, red beneath. White bearded flowers. Wild collected in forest clearing at 1200-1500 metres. Not tested. (See July-Aug. **Begonian** 1995 p. 140 for recent information; also, Jan-Feb '89 cover.)  
*B. incarnata* 'Sandersii'. *B. incarnata* seedling, 1901. Small bare leaves, brilliant and profuse pink flowers. 100% germination, 15 days.

*B. peltata* (Mexico, 1841). Firm round peltate white-felted leaves, showing green when wet. White flowers late autumn-spring. 100% germination, 11 days.

*B. pulchella* (Brazil, 1820). Small leaved. Wild collected in forest 1200-1500 metres. Not tested. (See Jan-Feb 1989 **Begonian** p. 9.)

### Thick-stemmed

*B. petasitifolia* (Brazil, 1941). Large-leaved, non-branching trunk. 95% germination, 12 days.

### Rhizomatous

*B. floccifera* (India, 1884). Medium sparsely felted leaves, pinkish-white flowers winter-spring.

*B. goegoensis* (Sumatra, 1882). Distinctive foliage. large leaves, pink flowers late winter-spring, moderate.\*

*B. nelumbiifolia* (Mexico to Colombia, 1830). large leaves, white flowers winter-spring. 100% germination, 15 days.

*B. pruinata* (Costa Rica, 1864). Medium dark green leaves, white flowers in winter. 100% germination in 10 days.

### Trailing-Scandent

*B. mazae* forma *nigricans* (Mexico, 1980). 100% germination, 11 days.

### Tuberous

Please see the article "Bewitching Begonias" on p. 7 for descriptions of two more listings, Begonias U332 and U333, now identified.

## Hybrid Seed

(seed parent listed and described)

B. 'Elizabeth Lockhart' cane-like Superba type

B. 'Lana' cane-like Superba type with dark green silver-splashed leaves, flowers rose-red spring through fall.

B. 'Texas Tea Sipper' cane-like, low growing, dark green leaves with silver spots, coral flowers

*B. rex* cultivar, wide range of colorful foliage. Cross of red-flowered tuberous x red-flowered semp. Described as tall and floriferous. Lustrous leaves. This is a second generation cross, and should be interesting.

**\*very limited quantity**

## CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND LISTING

*The Seed Fund is a service to members only. It is a privilege of your membership.*

The Seed Fund would appreciate receiving donations of any fresh seed, as our supply is very limited at this time. Thank you!

All packets of species seed are \$1 each, and all packets of hybrid seed are 50c each.

All orders must be accompanied by check or money order payable ONLY in US funds to The Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund

### **Costs of mailing:**

**US only:** 1-12 packets, \$1; 13-24, \$1.35; 25-36, \$1.71; 37-48 (2 cans), \$2.30; 49-60, \$2.66.

**Canada only:** 1-12 packets, \$1.10; 13-24, \$1.46; 25-36, \$1.82; 27-48 (2 cans) \$2.35; 49-60, \$2.71.

**Mexico only:** 1-12 packets, \$1.15; 13-24, \$1.51; 25-36, \$1.87; 37-48 (2 cans), \$2.50 49-60, \$2.81.

**All other international mail:** 1-12 packets, \$1.85; 13-24, \$2.68; 25-36, \$3.68; 37-48, \$4.68; 49-60, \$5.68.

Please send your order with payment to:

Beth Castellon  
Propagation Range  
New York Botanical Garden  
Bronx, NY 10458  
U.S.A.

### **Species Seed**

\$1 per packet

*B. cyathophora*\*  
*B. floccifera*  
*B. goegoensis*\*  
*B. huegelii*  
*B. incarnata*  
*B. mazaе forma nigricans*\*  
*B. nelumbiifolia*  
*B. peltata*  
*B. petasitifolia*  
*B. pruinata*  
*B. pulchella*  
*B. U332: B. biserrata*  
*B. U333: B. pedata*

\*very limited quantity

### **Hybrid Seed**

50c per packet

*B. 'Elizabeth Lockhart'*  
*B. 'Lana'*  
*B. 'Texas Tea Sipper'*  
*B. rex* cultivar  
Tuberous x semp. cross

# Conservation News

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## Adopt-a-Species Project

As rainforests worldwide undergo cutting and devastation, ABS has responded with efforts to help preserve in cultivation as many of the begonia species as possible, while simultaneously sponsoring collecting trips into endangered areas.

The ABS Conservation Department Adopt-A-Species project is now a year old, and over 75 begonia species have now been adopted by ABS members. We've also been joined by the San Miguel Branch, whose members are sponsoring, jointly, B. U218 - in addition to the fact that every one of their members has adopted at least one species to care for, propagate, and distribute.

The Begonia Species Bank at Fort Worth Botanic Garden, under the direction of Curator Kelton Parker, has slightly over 250 species, and our newest Species Bank at the University of South Florida Botanic Garden, under Curator Dale Sena, has about 90 species.

The search for new species goes on, too. Read Virginia Jens' article on p. 3 about collecting in Mexico - an opportunity that's available to us all. We hope to have a report soon on the Martin Johnson Memorial Expedition to Sumatra last year. Seeds have already been offered through the Seed Fund, and collector Scott Hoover believes that some at least will be species unknown previously.

Are *you* concerned about loss of begonia species as their habitat disappears? Join us in the fight to keep them going!

Write Conservation Chair Bruce C. Boardman, P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale, TX 76433, and adopt your favorite begonia!

**Thank you!** to Houston Satellite Branch for their donation of \$100 to the Adopt-A-Species Project.

"Simply stated, insects and disease are bringing a message that the plant is under stress. That message is incomprehensible as long as we view pests as enemies." - Eliot Coleman, in The New Organic Gardener

*Beginning next issue:*

### **Going Organic**

a column dedicated to helping you grow better begonias naturally!

# In the News...

## *Begonias!*

*Begonias masoniana*, 'Red Heart', 'Greenpeace', a Rieger hybrid, *rex*, 'Mardi Gras', and 'Morocco' are featured on the cover of the 1996 calendar put out by the **University of South Florida Botanical Garden**.

The colorful 8.5" x 11" calendars may be ordered from the University of South Florida, Dr. F. B. Essig, Dept of Biology-LIF 136, University of South Florida 4202 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa, FL 33620-5150. Cost including tax and shipping is \$14.78. Profits support the development of the USF Botanical Garden, home to our second Begonia Species Bank.

"beguiling begonias" was the title of a six page spread by Christine Bucks in the December, 1995 issue of Organic Gardening. Quoted were ABS members **Daniel Hasetine**, **Michael Kartuz**, **Thelma O'Reilly**, and **Howard Siebold**; and **Tovah Martin** of **Logee's Greenhouses**. Focus was on *semperflorens*, canes, and tuberous begonias.

Mary Sakamoto and her fabulous begonia collection (over 2,000 plants!) were spotlighted in the September 2, 1995 issue of the Los Angeles Times. The article by Karen Dardick was entitled "Shade-Loving Begonia Has Its Day in Sun". Mary's begonias thrive despite the wicked Santa Ana winds; her lath house designed by husband Ed helps; it's divided into areas for display, repotting, an aviary, and a greenhouse for the most finicky of her plants. Best photo: Mary with a big smile, holding her namesake B. 'Mary Sakamoto'.

**Dr. Sandra Scarr** was quoted extensively in an article on research on twins entitled "Double Mystery", by Lawrence Wright, in the August 7 issue of The New Yorker.

## *Author, Author!*

"Spirochete Seroprevalence in Rodents of North Central Texas" is the title of an article by **Kathleen Huckabee** in Texas Journal of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Watch the news stands for Indoor and Patio Gardening magazine, and three articles on begonias by ABS Horticultural Correspondent **Greg Sytch**...Greg is a regular columnist for Hobby Greenhouse, whose Winter 1995 issue also has an article by **Joy Logee Martin** and her sister Mary Ellen Ross of Merry Gardens.

Round Robin Director Virginia Hamann writes also for the newsletter of the Gesneriad Correspondence Club. Her column is titled "Through Nature's Window." Mealy bugs were her November-December topic.

Wanda Macnair is up to her usual tricks: pushing begonias! This time it's in a regular column for the Lincoln County News of Damariscotta, Maine, entitled "A Passion for Plants". (And we know what plants that passion is primarily for, don't we?)

Logee's **Tovah Martin** has a new book out: Tasha Tudor's Garden chronicles the gardens and gardening techniques of the famed author-illustrator.

# AROUND ABS

## Notes from our Newsletters

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“Surviving the Winter with Begonias” was the title of the program for Potomac Branch in October. Note the desperation: surviving, not enjoying, the winter with begonias!

For so many of us, survival is all we can hope for. Across the country in northern California Leslie Hatfield in the newsletter of the Monterey Bay Area Branch suggested:

“Do be thinking of getting movable begonia plants into a sheltered area and have such things as old sheets, curtains, towels, tablecloths, cardboard cartons, stakes, and a sack full of clothespins on hand to cover non-movable tender plants if you live in an area that gets frost...Remember not to let plastic coverings touch any part of those tender plants. Use stakes and clothespins to keep such coverings off your plants.”

But it's different in Florida! While we anxiously watch the weather, monitor heaters, and dread power outages, members in the Sunshine State are out in their gardens sporting their year-round tans and sprinkling the immense healthy begonias in their flower beds. Life isn't always fair - but bear in mind their sizzling and humid summers as you envy their winter warmth.

And - we'll all get a chance to see the beautiful results of their care in April, and to bring home some of those big beauties to inspire our winter-bedraggled begonias to brighten up in spring.

There have been distressed wails from around the country about the difficulty of growing rhizomatous begonias. “I love them

but they just won't grow for me” is the usual lament. A clue to success may lie in the pot. For years, writes Brad Thompson in the November issues of The Shade House, newsletter of the Doug Frost Branch, he has told of his problems in growing rhizomatous begonias. Here's what he discovered lately:

“I have never had a rhizomatous begonia that didn't thrive in a clay pot...since clay pots are more expensive, much heavier, and harder to maintain, I have tried valiantly to find a way to grow them well in plastic...it was more important to have them grow and survive than to worry about the additional work and expense so I have repotted almost all of my rhizomatous begonias into shallow clay pots..they weren't really that much more than plastic (some were cheaper, in fact). Even though this is really not the best time to repot anything...most have shown a sudden burst of growth already. I used my regular mix and just moved them into the same size pot they were already in, only clay instead of plastic...Anyway, if you can, go with clay for rhizomatous if you haven't been successful with the plastic.”

One of the most intriguing of the rhizomatous begonias is *B. crassicaulis*, the Guatemalan species that loses all its leaves for a period of winter dormancy, then blooms abundantly before the leaves reappear. Some observations on *B. crassicaulis* were made in the September, 1995 issue of the New South Wales Begonia News by editor Peter Sharp. (Since this comes from Down under, you will have to adjust the seasons by six months).

"During July/August this year I have had the opportunity to compare the growth behaviour of two of this species begonia, one of which is a clone of the other. One is in the Society collection housed in Annangrove, some 40 kilometres from the seaboard whilst the other is in the Royal Botanic Gardens collection in Sydney, housed near the harbour front. This latter plant was donated by Ross Bolwell who grew the original at Annangrove. The society plant is kept in an unheated plastic tunnel whilst the Gardens plant is benched in an open fronted, north facing shed with a translucent plastic roof. The main differences that I can see in environment during the period of study are that (a) the Gardens are in a high humidity area, usually around 60% whilst Annangrove is much drier, and

(b) the night temperatures at Annangrove would be several degrees lower. It seems to me that the amount of light that each plant receives may be about the same, although the Gardens plant may receive a slightly higher level. In winter the plant in the Gardens lost all its leaves and then in late July produced a mass of flowers that bloomed with a distinctly pink flush. The plant at Annangrove also lost its leaves but commenced blooming several weeks later than the other and produced pure white flowers, at the same time putting on new leaf growth. Both plants are still blooming at 1st September with no sign of blossom drop, and no leaves yet on the plant in the Gardens. Amazing what differences a changed environment can produce!"

Happy New Year to all, and good luck with your begonia growing in 1996!  
 Hope to see you in Florida!

**GESNERIAD CORRESPONDENCE CLUB**

RON & LOIS KRUGER, EDITORS  
 207 WYCOFF WAY WEST, EAST BRUNSWICK  
 NJ 08816 Membership \$5 US; \$6.75 Canada; \$12  
 foreign; Braille \$5 (all payable US funds to Ron  
 Kruger) includes a bi-monthly newsletter; seed &  
 tuber funds, round robins; listing of pen pals with  
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 E. 187 St., Artesia, CA 90701.

### **Elected Officers**

President..... Ann Salisbury  
P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa OK 74653  
(405) 628-5230  
Past President.....Gene Salisbury  
P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa OK 74653  
1st Vice-President...Bruce C. Boardman  
P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale TX 76433  
2nd Vice-President.....Shelley Andros  
740 Lamat Rd., La Habra Heights CA 90631  
3rd Vice-President.....Michael Kartuz  
1408 Sunset Dr., Vista CA 92083  
Secretary..... Margaret P. Fisher  
7552 Danube Dr., Huntington Beach CA 92647  
Treasurer.....Carol Notaras  
2567 Green St., San Francisco CA 94123

### **Appointed Chairmen and Directors**

Audit.....Paul Tsamtsis  
1630 F St., Sacramento CA 95814  
Awards.....Mary Sakamoto  
6847 E. Sycamore Glen Dr., Orange CA 92669  
Ballot Counting.....Shelley Andros  
740 Lamat Rd., La Habra Heights CA 90631  
Book Store.....Betty Benningfield  
P O Box 969, Anahuac, TX 77514  
Branch Relations.....Mary Bucholtz  
1560 Lancaster Terrace #1008, Jacksonville FL 32204  
Business Manager.....John Ingles, Jr.  
157 Monument, Rio Dell CA 95562-1617  
Conservation.....Bruce C. Boardman  
P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale TX 76433  
Convention Advisor.....Herb Wilkinson  
16281 Mercier Ln, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

Convention Chairman.....Bob Cochran  
951 SW 99th Ave, Pembroke Pines, FL 33025  
Entries/Classification.....Leora Fuentes  
13747 Wilderness Point, San Antonio TX 78231  
Historian.....Norma Pfrunder  
1958 Sycamore Ct., McKinleyville, CA  
95519-3900  
Horticultural Correspondent....Greg Sytch  
P.O. Box 1033., Port Richey FL 34653  
Judging.....Maxine Zinman  
Rt. 1, Box 73, Boyce VA 22620  
Long-Range Planning.....Kay Tucker  
207 Southcross, San Antonio TX 78221  
Members-at-Large.....Thelma McRae  
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1852 31st St., San Diego CA 92102  
Public Relations.....Russ Richardson  
1854 Chancery Lane, Chamblee GA 30341  
Research.....Kelton Parker  
3220 Botanic Garden Dr., Ft. Worth TX 76107  
Round Robin.....Virginia Hamann  
1169 Lincoln Ave., Chester IA 52134-8508  
Seed Fund.....Beth Castellon  
Propagation Range, New York Botanic  
Garden, Bronx, NY 10458  
Slide Library.....Charles Jaros  
200 Maureen Dr., Sanford FL 32771

## **OPENINGS: Begonian Editor Back Issues Chair**

### **BEGONIAN STAFF**

Editor: Tamsin Boardman, P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale TX 76433; (817) 728-3485  
Nomenclature Editor: Jack Golding  
Editorial Assistants: Bruce C. Boardman, Kit Mounger  
Advertising Staff:

Display Ads: Ann Salisbury, P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa OK 74653

Plant Society Ads: Wanda Macnair, 177 Hancock St., Cambridge MA 02139

*For subscription, dues, circulation inquiries contact John Ingles Jr.,  
157 Monument, Rio Dell CA 95562-1617*

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## ***Help Available from ABS***

*These services are available to all ABS members. For names and addresses of department heads, see preceding page. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope when you write.*

### **Members at Large**

Members who do not belong to branches are represented at Board meetings by the Members-at-Large Director. MAL members receive a quarterly newsletter and work on projects by mail

### **Back Issues**

Back issues of the **Begonian**, also current issues for branch use at shows, etc.

### **Bookstore**

Books about Begonias! And more! Write for complete list.

### **Judging Department**

Certifies accredited judges though judging schools and correspondence course.

### **Nomenclature Department**

Monitors newly published findings on Begonia names. Handles official international registrations of new Begonia cultivars and publishes these registrations. Gathers information about and assigns numbers to unidentified species.

### **Research Department**

Works on problems relating to begonia culture.

### **Round Robins**

Members exchange information about begonias and their culture through packets of letters that circulate among a small group of growers. There are dozens of these packets, called flights, on many specialized subjects.

### **Seed Fund**

The Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund offers seed of begonia species and cultivars by mail. New acquisitions are discussed in the **Begonian**.

### **Slide Library**

Write Slide Librarian for list of slide programs and videos.

---

## ***Member Input Opportunities***

### **Conservation Department**

wants lists of species grown by members

### **Nomenclature Department**

wants photos and information on "U" numbers members are growing from seed.

### **Research Department**

solicits suggestions on projects and participation in research.

### **Seed Fund**

seeks donation of seed and photos of plants grown from Seed Fund seed.

### **Slide library**

requests individual slides of begonias as well as complete slide programs.

**See also "Openings", preceding page.  
Participate. You can make a difference.**

---



**American Begonia Society**

157 Monument  
Rio Dell, CA 95562-1617

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*Wishing you the best in begonias in 1996!*