

The
Begonian

January/February 1998

The **Begonian**

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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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Cover

Front: *B. lyman-smithii*, collected by Dr. Kathleen Burt-Utley and Dr. John Utley in Oaxaca, Mexico and described by them in 1987, was named after Dr. Lyman Smith who died on May 4, 1997. See article beginning on page 12. Photo by Don Miller, from the 1996 SWR *Begonia Leaflet*.

Back: *B.* 'Boomer', believed to be a hybrid of *B. U003* and *B. vitifolia* is a plant with a past and a future. See Mary Bucholtz's article beginning on page 10 and the further note on page 13. Photo by Mary Bucholtz.

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1998 ABS Convention

Atlanta, Georgia

June 18, 19, 20, 21, 1998

Quick

Check your mailing label.
If it reads
3/98 or 4/98, your membership is about to expire.
Please renew! We don't want to lose you.

Notes from the president...

We received newsletters from all over when Tamsin was editor of the *Begonian*. Occasional chortles, bursts of laughter, and “You must read this” came from the other side of the breakfast table or from the office where she was scanning the incoming mail for *bon mots* to include in the next issues. Now, with new responsibilities and newsletters addressed to me, I get to read *all* of them and not have to worry about messing up Tam’s filing system.

As one would expect, the northern branches have tucked in their plants for the winter; the southern branches are protecting from freezes, still growing for show or setting cuttings for the plant sale in Atlanta in June; and the results of the California shows (with appropriate ‘congrats’) have filled their newsletters. Our friends from “Down Under” are excited from visiting their Spring flower shows and have prepared for the summer bloomings of their tuberous (“pinch off those first buds!”) and selecting their best for the displays to be shown in Sydney in April.

There is such a strong feeling of camaraderie from some of the newsletters. When some new member or visitor extends him or herself there is a pat on the back. A brief reprise of the previous month’s meeting makes you sad that you missed it. Those who provided refreshments or the plant of the month or the show-and-tell potting idea receive accolades. It is no surprise that these branches have the longest list of members.

Hidden in the middle of a paragraph concerning the meeting just past, from

one newsletter, is the key to the future of this organization (and any other endeavor worth doing!):

“More experienced growers spent their time teaching and assisting new members, providing expertise and encouragement.” Nothing grows without a lot of

nurture--be it a begonia or a potential begoniac.

I’ve asked **Tom Keepin, Ramona Parker, and Beth Castellon** to serve as the Nominating Committee for the National Offices, with balloting to be in the May/June *Begonian*. Each is active in his/her geographic region, is knowledgeable of other ABS members, and has a long-term commitment to ABS membership. Please help them to select nominees who are committed to ABS, too.

Scott Hoover shall have embarked to Indonesia by the time most of you read this. He’s had to keep an eye on the forest fires on Sumatera, squeeze his trip needs into the funding, and plan for the unexpected. Please keep him and his party in your prayers. We wish him Godspeed and great collecting.

The ABS National Board meeting in Fort Worth is January 16-18, and you still have time to let your directors know of your concerns that we may need to address. As I said before: “All of us are smarter than any one of us!”

- **Bruce C. Boardman**



1998 American Begonia Society Awards

When the ABS convenes in Atlanta, one of the highlights is the presentation of its top three awards at the annual banquet. These awards are presented for outstanding service on a national level. These awards may be received only once. The ADR Medal is presented to a cultivar and may be won more than once by a hybridizer. Please give thorough consideration when submitting your nomination. Please give the reasons that make the person or plant eligible for the award.

Deadline for nominations is April 15, 1998. Please send nominations to:

Michael Ludwig, Awards Chairman
6040 Upland St.
San Diego, CA 92114

The **Eva Kenworthy Gray Award** is given for one of two reasons:

1. Contributing something of a spiritual value toward cementing goodwill and harmony among members; and/or
2. Contributing original material toward helping the rank and file members further their study of begonias.

The **Herbert P. Dyckman Award for Service** is presented to a member who has rendered long-term or very outstanding service for ABS above and beyond the normal duties of a member or officer.

The **Alfred D. Robinson Medal of Honor** is for a begonia cultivar that has been released for at least five years and

no more than fifteen. This hybrid must be registered with the Nomenclature Department and widely distributed, and the originator of the begonia must be a member of ABS.

Recipients since 1987 for these awards have been:

Eva Kenworthy Gray Award:

Pat Maley	1987
Mabel Corwin	1988
Tamsin Boardman	1989
Arlene Davis Ingles	1990
Dr. J.J.F.E. de Wilde	1993
Margaret Lee	1994
Mae Blanton	1995
Kit Jeans Mounger	1996

Herbert P. Dyckman Award for Service:

Thelma O'Reilly	1987
Mildred L. & Edward J. Thompson	1988
John Ingles, Jr.	1989
Joy Logee Martin	1990
Jack Golding	1991
Carrie Karegeannes	1992
Charles Jaros	1993
Don Miller	1994
Ann Salisbury	1995
Carol Notaras	1996
Joan Coulat	1997

Alfred D. Robinson Memorial Medal for Begonia Hybrid:

B. 'Christmas Candy' (Corwin)	1987
B. 'Connie Boswell' (M. Johnson)	1989
B. 'Glennis Crouch' (Blanton)	1990
B. 'Silvermist' (Nuss)	1995
B. 'Sweet Diane' (Siebold)	1996

A list of recipients for prior years can be found on pages 54-55 of the March/April 1995 *Begonian*.

~Michael Ludwig

Begonia J-11 (U-043)

by Ruth Pease



In the early 1960s, we saw *Begonia* J-11 being grown by **John Thieben**, founder of our **Westchester Branch**. It was in an 18-24 inch wire basket, a magnificent specimen. John's garden was then the Identification Garden for the American Begonia society (See page 219, November 1961 *Begonian*).

Nurserywoman **Sylvia Leatherman**, known worldwide for her knowledge of begonias and ferns, was chairperson of the ABS Research and Test Gardens. While on a trip to Brazil in 1957, Sylvia collected leaves of several plants, including *Begonia* J-11, and then sent them to John to propagate.

J-11, as we've known it for years, has now been assigned number *U043* as an unidentified species. Seed of this begonia was offered in the 1997 July-August *Begonian*. This species begonia

has intrigued us for years because of its habit of growth. It is unlike any others we've seen with the exception, perhaps, of *B. friburgensis* which we had in our own collection a long time ago.

Begonia J-11's matte green leaves, with their red undersides, start out pleated and unfurl on stems that have fleshy red appendages encircling them. The leaves, 12-14 inches in diameter, resemble cupped mushrooms. White blooms are borne well above the foliage on stems having the same red appendages, but these appendages are not as fleshy. Male blooms open first and are almost all gone before the female blooms open.

Our plant is the result of finding J-11 again in 1991 at **Rudy Ziesenne**'s nursery in Santa Barbara. The small plant grew so slowly that we bought

another from Rudy in 1994. We grew these plants separately. In 1995, wanting a larger specimen plant, we put the two together and then added still two more in 1996. The latter two we grew from a leaf cutting. Now, at last, we could see the progress we wanted. Our J-11 began to take on the familiar umbrella-like round shape we remembered seeing on the plant in John's garden.

While looking through back issues of the *Begonian*, we found an interesting article, "In Search of Begonias", written by **Dorothy Behrends**. (See page 216 of the November 1961 issue.) She had seen J-11 growing in **Louise Schwerdtfeger's** greenhouse in Santa Barbara and observed that "although the rhizome creeps at times, it also grows erect." So far we haven't seen creeping rhizomes on our plants.

In October 1997 we photographed J-11's stems to show why this begonia was classified as "thick stemmed, not jointed, thickset" by the ABS appointed classification committee in its 1969 publication. Finally, we looked in the 1981 publication: *Begonias The Complete Reference Guide* by **Mildred and Edward Thompson** and once again found J-11 classified as "thick-stemmed, thickset."

Begonias in our Collection put out a

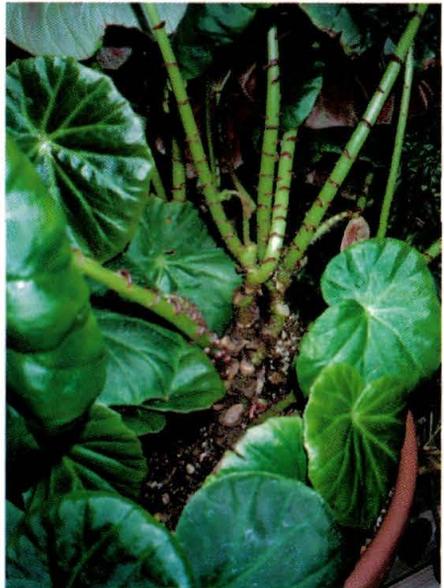


wonderful spurt of growth from August to the middle of October. It is at this time of the year that we in Southern California experience high humidity and hot days and nights. Obviously, these are the conditions that our begonias enjoy in their native habitats.

It has been our habit to go out in the morning during the hot, humid weather and using the nozzle on our hose, spray the ground under the benches, the benches themselves, and the plants on them in both our shade cloth house and fiberglass-roofed house. We do this to give a cooling effect and to put moisture into our plants through their leaves before the hot sun beats down on the houses. I gently tap the excess water off the leaves. *Begonia* J-11 is growing in a shade cloth house that has a fiberglass roof.

These photographs were taken June 5 (page 6), September 3 (bottom, left), and October 15, 1997 (bottom, right) to record and share our observations.

You may write to Ruth Pease at 8406 Croyden Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90045-3039.



Conservation News

by Tamsin Boardman,
Conservation Chair

On the environmental front the bad news is no secret: forests, the “lungs” of our planet, fall daily to fires and logging. Air becomes increasingly foul, making breathing more difficult for all living creatures, and respiratory diseases are now daily fare worldwide. Water is polluted, wetlands dying. “Desertification”, a relatively new term, was coined to describe what is happening in former pristine paradises.

Begonias, native mostly to rainforests, are among the species facing oblivion as the areas formerly most abundant in biodiversity fall victim to “progress.”

Can you use some good news for a change?

The **Queensland Begonia Society** has started a program called “**Protectors and Lovers of Species**” (PALS). Modeled on our Adopt-A-Species project, the PALS will work with us on preservation of begonia species. Queensland is tropical/semi-tropical, and many begonias have an easier time there surviving than in our colder climates. It’s great to have PALS!

Patrick Rose, Director of the **Conservatoire du Begonias** in Rochefort, France has sent an impressive list of species begonias: more than 400! Rochefort joins the **Fort Worth Botanic Garden** and the **University of South Florida Botanic Gardens** as a Begonia Species Bank. Again, having a different climate and a different geographical location increases survival chances for our favorite plant family.

There may be more species banks we just don’t know about. **Glasgow** and **Montreal Botanic Gardens**, for example, have large begonia collections and do an impressive amount of begonia research. In Holland a study group preserves **Dr. Jan Doorenbos’** collection of species and **Wagenigen Agricultural University** publishes *Studies in Begoniaceae*, describing new species. There’s interest in begonia species and hopefully a commitment to their preservation.

We’ve got begonias to love, and we’ll get by with a little help from our friends. (Hum, there’s a song there somewhere.)

Now it’s time to ask for a little help from ABS members: We’d like to know which begonia species are in cultivation here in the USA at the present time.

John Howell is reviving the Species Listing project. We’re asking that you send him a list of all the species begonias that you grow, and update it annually (we’ll remind you each January). There’s no further obligation and your only expenditure will be the few minutes it takes to make your list and 32 cents for a stamp. You will be helping us find out which species are widely grown and which we need to work on keeping in cultivation. John’s address is:

John Howell
123 Trillium,
San Antonio, Texas 78213-2514.

Note to begonia beginners: If begonias come to you properly tagged, the cultivars start with capital letters (*B. ‘Sophie Cecile’*, for example) and the species with lower case letters (*B. coccinea*, for example). Begonias with Latin names are usually species (not always: *B. ‘Fuscomaculata’* is a hybrid). If in doubt, list your begonias and we’ll sort out the species and let you know which they are.

Begonia Bytes

by Kathy Goetz, Internet Editor

The Internet is often called the information highway and many gardeners are discovering that it is a great source of information about all kinds of plants. For the past year, the ABS has had a web page devoted to growing begonias. This page, which was originally written by Brad Thompson, is now in need of a serious update. At the September Board meeting, I was asked to take on the task of updating the ABS web page. This project will take me a little time, but I hope to have it up and running by spring. Coding a web page is not actually very difficult. It is just tedious and takes a bit of time. The difficulty with a web page, as with any publication, is writing the content. This is something I will need lots of help with and hope that some of our best grower/writers will be willing to contribute.

One of the easiest and most fun ways to use the Internet is to send and receive e-mail. E-mail is a way to communicate easily and quickly with people all over the world. The beauty of using e-mail is that it does not involve long distance charges. It does not cost anymore to chatter with someone in Sweden than it does to talk to someone in your own town. There are also no additional charges for time, at least there shouldn't be. If your Internet provider is charging by the minute, you should look for a provider who will give you Internet access at a flat rate. Then you can talk as much or little as you like. Extra chatter should not add anything to the

cost. If you are already on the Internet and would like to have your e-mail address published in the *Begonian*, just drop me a note at goetzk@dnc.net and tell me to add your name to the list. Anyone who would like to join us in cyberspace, but is unsure how to get connected can send me a note and I will be more than happy to try and help you get on-line. My snail mail address is Kathy Goetz, 935 W. Isabella, Lebanon, OR 97355. I don't promise to solve all your cyber problems but I am game to try and help.

One final piece of begonia internet information is about our begonias discussion list. This list is not an official part of the ABS but many of its subscribers are also ABS members. It is just a discussion list of begoniacs who enjoy chatting about growing begonias. If you would like to join us, just send an e-mail to majordomo@dnc.net with the words "join begonias" in the body of the message. Once you are on the list as a subscriber (member) you will be allowed to post messages to the list and you will receive copies of all the messages that are posted by other list members. I hope many of you will join us in cyberspace. We are having a wonderful time learning more about our favorite begonias.

Here's a list of e-mail addresses:

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Member Favorites

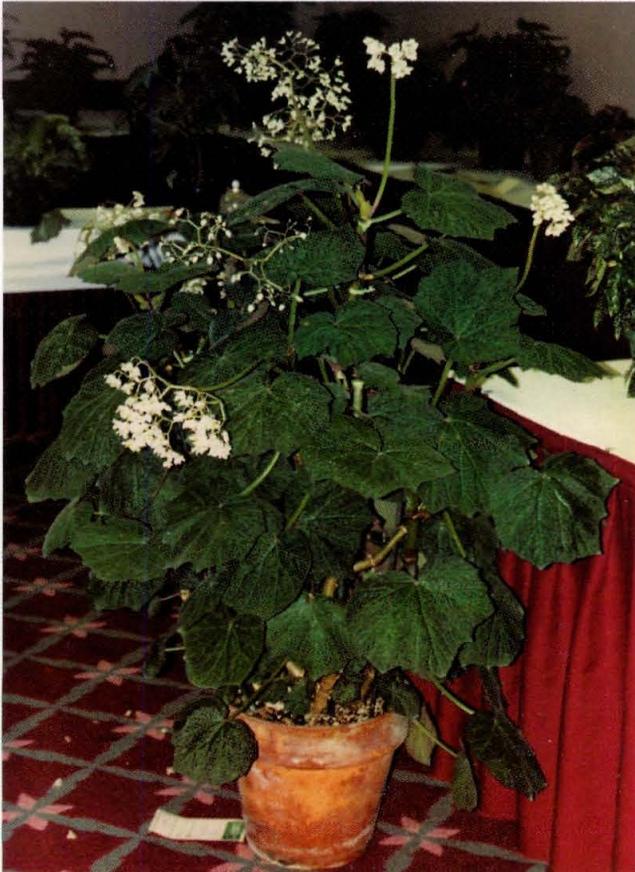
Begonia 'Boomer'

by Mary Bucholtz

I find this one of the more interesting begonias to grow. What is so special about B. 'Boomer'? I guess it is its growth habit, or rather its growth habits that hold my interest for this cultivar.

B. 'Boomer' was developed by Mabel Corwin of Vista, CA in 1979. It is a cross of U003 and possibly, B. vitifolia.

I grew B. 'Boomer' for many years. It was in a hollow, 16 inch clay pot, planted in a soilless mix, 1/3 of which was perlite, and was constant fed with a 20-20-20 fertilizer. It summered outside on a stand 36 inches above the ground, and under 70% shade cloth. It was between two very large trees, an oak and a magnolia and received additional shade from both. B. 'Boomer' grew low and full, very much



like the one pictured in photo #1 (Back Cover Photo).

It wintered well in front of a large east window, though by spring it was stretching for additional light. Funny how these begonias know when it is time for that trip to the outside world. I found it to be a fast grower, easy to shape by pinching the growing tips, and not a bit temperamental.

I would recommend B. 'Boomer' for the beginner or anyone who wanted the challenge of developing a variety of growth habits using only one begonia.

Just look at the photos. They tell

the story. Thick stemmed you say, yes, it is classified thick-stemmed, medium-leaved, bare-leaved.

Photo #1 (Back Cover) certainly looks like a rhizomatous begonia, and what a handsome specimen it is. The blossoms rise beautifully above the foliage.

Photo #2 (Page 10) captures B. 'Boomer's' upright growth, certainly

what one would expect from a thick-stemmed entry. I especially like the blossoms in this photo; the three stages are beautifully captured. The tight bloom spike is just emerging, upper right; the fully open blossoms are at their peak, lower left; and the final stage of the blossom, loosely open, slowly fading, upper left.

Photo #3 (Above) is a typical thick-stemmed entry, but medium-leaved? I have never seen it attain the leaf size exhibited on this entry which was in one of our branch shows. Several leaves were 24 inches across. That is a yard stick in front of B. 'Boomer', and the grower Ed. Harrell. Ed, a former branch president, passed away in March of 1997.

Photo #4 (Below) shows a variegation in the leaf of my plant, which I found appeared every summer. It was only on the new growth and didn't happen until we were experiencing the extremely hot days of late July and August. These are perhaps the most difficult months to care for begonias in our area. We have too much heat, too much rain, the days are oppressive and hardly a bit of air is stirring.

For more on B. 'Boomer' see page 13.

Mary Bucholtz, ABS 3rd Vice President, who took all these photos of B. 'Boomer', now grows begonias in Florida. You can write her at: 1560 Lancaster Terrace, #1008, Jacksonville, FL 32204



In Memory Dr. Lyman B. Smith

by Carrie Karegeannes

One of the most distinguished members of the American Begonia Society, Dr. Lyman B. Smith, botanist Emeritus of the **Smithsonian Institution**, died May 4, 1997, in his son's home in Kansas after a long illness.

A long time friend of ABS and a generous, encouraging source of begonia knowledge, Dr. Smith held our highest award, the Eva Kenworthy Gray Award, given to him and his colleague **Dr. Bernice G. Schubert**. ABS also awarded him a special certificate in 1984, honoring his 80th birthday and "in recognition of his many contributions to the study and knowledge of the Genus *Begonia*."

A memorial Service in Warner Memorial Presbyterian Church, Kensington, Maryland, in June was attended by a large number of family members, Smithsonian colleagues, neighbors, and friends. Many offered memories of Lyman and spoke of his accomplishments.

A noted international authority on *Begoniaceae*, *Bromeliaceae*, and *Velloziaceae*, Dr. Smith published more than 400 studies of the flora of South and Central America. Many of them on *Begoniaceae* are indispensable sources for us, including *Begoniaceae: Smithsonian Contributions to Botany* No. 60 (1986), written with Dr. Dieter C. Wasshausen and two ABS members.

At least 140 species and varieties of *Begonia* owe their names to Dr. Smith, writing with Dr. Schubert or Dr. Wasshausen. He made numerous

collecting trips to native habitats in Brazil and other countries. The Mexican species *Begonia lyman-smithii* (See Cover this issue.) we named in his honor in 1987. Brazil issued a colorful postage stamp picturing a *Bromeliad* whose name was preserved by him.

Dr. Smith received his A.B., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from **Harvard University** and was a member of **Harvard's Gray Herbarium** staff for 17 years before coming to the National **Museum's** Department of Botany at the **Smithsonian**. He continued working at the Smithsonian almost every weekday and weekends for a number of years after his appointment as Botanist Emeritus in 1984.

Earlier *Begonian* articles were in the January 1975 issue (with a photograph and a list of his publications on *Begonia* as of that date) and the January/February 1985 issue.

Among his many species, *B. listada* Smith & Wasshausen was published in the August 1981 issue of the *Begonian*; *B. thelmae* Smith & Wasshausen in the May 1981 issue, *B. mariae* Smith & Schubert in March 1975, *B. olsoniae* Smith & Schubert in July 1975--all with color cover photos and some with added drawings.

Dr. Smith was a teacher, sharing his knowledge and love of botany. I miss the twinkle in his eyes, his explanations, his guidance in the herbarium, and his answers to our many questions through the years.



The colorful leaves of *B. listada* Smith & Wasshausen above are typical of many of the varieties including *B. thelmae* Smith & Wasshausen and *B. olsoniae* Smith & Schubert that we owe to Dr. Lyman Smith.. *B. lyman-smithii* Burt-Utley and Utley, the plant named for him shown on the cover, also has beautifully colored juvenile leaves.

B. ‘Boomer’ has a history...

The 1987 *Begonian* on pages 95-96 and 137 tells an interesting story on this plant. Evidently there were at least three or more hybrid cultivars having very similar characteristics that resulted from a 1979 seed fund offering of *B. U003* (now named *B. soli-mutata*) that were not that species. One was grown by George Fix in Dallas and distributed as “Brazil Species Cross” that came also to be called *B. ‘George Fix.’* This was widely circulated in the Southwest area. Another offspring came from a plant grown by Helen Short, CA and was distributed by Bob Cole. His label of “Via HS” was attached to plants sent to a Barkley Branch sale in OK in 1985. That was interpreted as *B. ‘Via’* and somehow also as *B. ‘Ria.’*

A third cultivar was grown by Mabel Corwin and registered in August 19,

1987: #919 *B. ‘Boomer.’* Phyllis Bates, then editor of the *Begonian*, put this complicated story together.

We know that although first generation hybrids may look very much alike, there are surely genetic differences. Indeed, Bob Dodd in OK who grew both ‘Via’ and ‘George Fix’ noted the latter was a larger plant. All these cultivars may eventually have been labeled *B. ‘Boomer’* and might account for some of the differences noted by Mary Bucholtz on pages 10 and 11. ~Ed.

Quick Tips

Check under the outside rim of hanging baskets for mealybugs. They love to hide out there, and it’s easy to miss them.

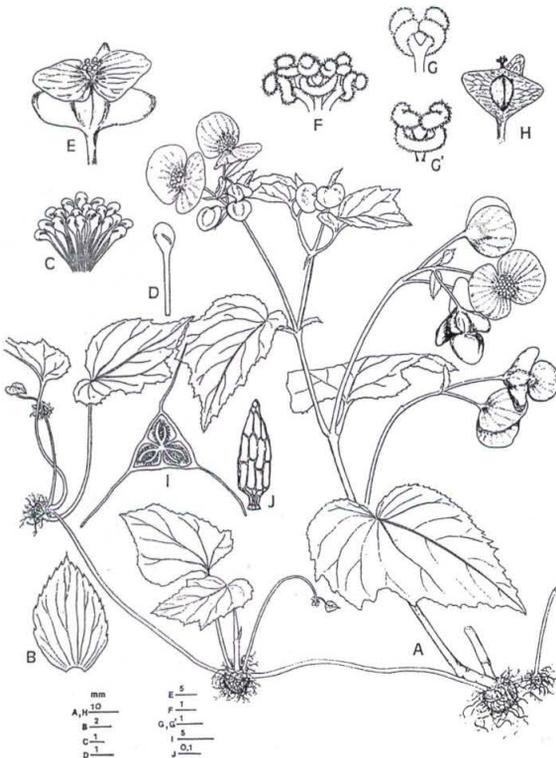
Mary Sakamoto
Orange, CA

A Begonia New in Cultivation:

B. ravenii

Kelton Parker, Research Director

B. ravenii was discovered in Chiayi County, Taiwan Province, China. The first collection of a living specimen was made November 1, 1985; the plant was found growing on a “somewhat moist, rocky slope” at about 500 meters elevation. In October 1987 type specimens were pressed from cultivated plants. Description was by C.I. Peng and Y. K. Chen and published in *Bot. Bull. Academia Sinica* (1988) 29: 217-222. The description noted that it does not appear to be related to any other begonia. It has since been found only in Chiayi and Taiuchung Counties (also in Taiwan Province) and at elevations between 340 and 1000 m. Its name honors Prof. Peter H. Raven.



The artwork to the left is taken from the *Botanical Bulletin of Academia Sinica*, Vol 29, 1988, page 215 in the article “*Begonia ravenii* (*Begoniaceae*), a new species from Taiwan” by Ching-I Peng, Yung-Kuan Chen and Hsin-Fu Yen”, pages 217-222. A. Habit; B. Stipule; C. Androecium; D. Stamen; E. Female Flower; F. Styles; G, G’ Style, ventral and dorsal views; H. Fruit. I. Fruit Transection; J. Seed.

The photo right is *B. ravenii* growing in the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens in October 1997. Photo by Bruce Boardman.



Last year Missouri Botanic Gardens shared a specimen. *B. ravenii* is tuberous, with total dormancy occurring in winter. In cultivation here it is a rapid and aggressive grower. It reproduces not only through seed and tubers, but by means of runners. Interestingly, a stem cutting placed in the propagation box produced no tiny plantlet at the point of insertion--but soon more plants appeared nearby; they came from runners put out, underground, by the stem. Leaves are obliquely ovate, of varying thickness, light green. Petioles are green, sometimes reddish. Flowers are pink, and have a faint fragrance.

B. ravenii has been easy to grow and very attractive. It may require terrarium care in dry areas. I hope to have seed and tubers to share with the seed fund. (*He did!* See pages 26 and 27. Ed.)

You can write Kelton Parker at 3220 Botanic Garden Dr., Ft. Worth, Tx, 76107.

Growing Organic

or, Bellwether Companions

by Tamsin Boardman

At home in the rainforest, or dry forest, or along the waterways, begonias grow in the company of thousands of other plants. In our homes, gardens, greenhouses, they are also seldom alone. Few begonia nuts can resist other species: ferns, gesneriads, bromeliads, orchids, cactus and succulents--we've all got companions for our begonias.

Besides being beautiful and interesting in their own right, these companion plants can help us grow better begonias.

The term bellwether originally designated a neutered male sheep (wether) who wore a bell and led the flock. It's come to be applied to any leader, or to the one who is first to do something. There's a bellwether plant in any group: it's the plant that is the first to show signs of stress.

Outdoors or in, my favorite bellwether plant is tropical hibiscus. It wilts fast! And recovers quickly when watered. Like begonias, hibiscus are heavy feeders; small or yellowing leaves are a sign they need sustenance. Hibiscus produce flowers, which are not only gorgeous, but draw hummingbirds and butterflies. If you grow them yourself (preferably from seed) and don't use pesticides, the dried flowers can be boiled for a delicious tea. Add sugar to taste; it's called "agua de jamaica" in Mexico and the Caribbean, and very popular.

Another bellwether helper is impatiens. Boy, do they wilt if ignored! Like hibiscus, impatiens will recover; like hibiscus, they'll signal the need for feeding. Again like hibiscus, they flower abundantly and attract hummingbirds and butterflies. One advantage is that they thrive in shade, even deep shade, in climates where begonias can't tolerate much sun. They're so floriferous that they're messy as houseplants, though.

Think for a minute about your begonias' companion plants. You're bound to have at least one that wilts before any of the others. Make it a habit to glance at that plant daily and let it tell you when your watering can or hose is needed. There are even cactus that show signs of distress before most begonias: the "Christmas" and "Easter" cactus go limp easily.

Somewhere you have a plant that's a wilting superstar, the Camille of your collection. It might even be one particular begonia that leads the pack in drying out quickly and drooping. Treasure it! That's your bellwether, the plant that will signal you, loud and clear, that it's time to soak everybody.

Quick Tip: It doesn't ordinarily freeze in your area, but one's coming. What to do about your begonias, all outdoors and exposed? Before the freeze hits, make sure the soil is moist; then spray them with liquid seaweed (4 tablespoons to a gallon of water) and *when they dry* cover them with a sheet or blanket.

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Clayton M. Kelly

Seed Fund Notes

Eleanor L. Calkins, Seed Fund Administrator

The Seed Fund is handled as a branch project by **The San Miguel Branch** in San Diego, California with **Eleanor Calkins** as the administrator. This is a small branch devoted to the study of Begonias. All of the members have committed to helping prepare and package the seeds. **Seed donations for this month are from: Mabel Corwin, Jackie Davis, Betty Girko, Thelma O'Reilly, Patrick Rose, and the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens.**

B. cardiocarpa: (Nicaragua) Grows on an erect rhizome, has large green puckered leaves, white flowers tinged with pink blooms in late winter.

B. dichroa: (Brazil) Grows on an erect stem, half drooping, to 2 ft.; has short, reddish green petioles, glabrous, wavy dark green leaves and fragrant orange flowers most of the year.

B. cucullata* var. *hookeri: (Brazil) A shrub-like, tall growing species with light, green, glaucous leaves and white flowers. (This is a synonym for *B. cucullata* Willdenow var. *cucullata*. Ed.)

B. foliosa: (Columbia, Ecuador, Venezuela) A shrub having many-branched, floppy stems, small medium green bare leaves, red stems, and petioles and small pinkish-white flowers from spring to autumn.

B. froebelii: (Ecuador) A tuberous species, shrubby to 12", petioles 2-3" with asymmetric, elliptic, wavy, crenate, dark green somewhat hairy leaves. Blooms are large brilliant red to orange red in winter.

B. humilis: (West Indies and South America) This small annual shrub grows in sunny areas, has medium

somewhat hairy leaves and white flowers in the fall.

B. ravenii: (Taiwan) This unusual tuberous species is also stoloniferous. It has a red stem, medium green leaves and bright pink flowers. (See article on page 14-15 of this issue.)

B. U315: (Madagascar) this plant is a medium shrub or hanging basket plant. It has medium dark green leaves, and profuse white flowers much of the year. This plant is characterized by swollen nodes along the stem.

B. U319: This unidentified begonia is a *B. cucullata* type, tall with large attractive white flowers.

Semperflorens Type Hybrids

B. 'Glamour Rose': This is one of the 'Glamour' series of semperflorens type with light green leaves and large rosy red flowers.

Semp J1: A Kit Jeans cross.

Semp J2: Green leaf, white flowers, no mildew.

Semp J3: A pink second generation semperflorens cultorum.

Notes: *B. coccinea* is the correct spelling for the seed offered last month. They are from a recent collection. The grower describes this plant as a basket type. Earlier descriptions of *B. coccinea* from Brazil are of a tall erect plant. (There is disagreement on *B. coccinea* and the original description is not very helpful. We would be interested in descriptions and photos of the plants readers are growing under this name. Eds.)

The Seed Fund Administrator needs a plant of *B. U347* for comparison. If anyone has this plant please contact Eleanor Calkins at 910 Fern Street Escondido, CA 92027. Her telephone number is (760) 746-4743.

There are still a few packets of B. J-11 (U043) seed remaining.

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The seed fund is a service to members only. It is a privilege of your membership.

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Packets of species seeds are \$1.50 each and all packets of hybrid seeds are 50 cents each, except rare seed are \$2.00 per packet. California residents please add 7.75% sales tax.

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B. dichroa
B. foliosa
B. froebelii
B. humilis
B. ravenii
B. U315
B. U319

Hybrid Seeds

B. 'Glamour Rose'
Semp J1
Semp J2
Semp J3

Round Robin Notes

Virginia Hamann
Round Robin Director

#8 Tuberous Begonias

A hot, dry August kept **Jeanette Dupey (WA)** busy watering. Her tuberous begonias had mildew so bad the leaves were injured although they kept blooming. **Howard Siebold** who also lives in **WA** had no mildew problems. **Julia Meister (NY)** had some blooms early and others later; not all bloomed at the same time.

#25 Midwest Growers

Marie Hollinger (IA) sent a copy of a page from the "Begonia Page" on the internet. This was about pinching begonias to keep them shapely. Not all begonias should be pinched such as large, upright canes; thick stemmed; and large tuberous, as they don't branch well. Small, medium-leafed canes and shrubs can be pinched as they do branch out and can be shaped for basket growing.

#20 Photography

Pictures of convention and plants were sent this round. A stunning picture of B. "Sophie Cecile" from **Mary McClelland (NE)**; also from Mary, a daisy picture that would be nice on note paper.

#11 Canes

Catherine Miller (IN) has canes that have 8 stems. B. 'Esther

Albertine' has reached the ceiling of her plant room. She attributes this robust growth to cow manure and rabbit "berrys" mixed into her potting soil. No special recipe; everything gets mixed together in a wheelbarrow until it looks and feels right. **Barbara Johnson (IN)** uses Peters Potting Soil and starter mix until plants go into 6" pots. Then she uses fine river sand and composted cow manure as a basic soil.

#4 Window Sill Growing

Lois Rowland (AR) has seeds to plant yet this fall. Many members are avid growers from seed. **Jeannette Gilbertson (CA)** has a cool growing room where her light stands are located. Terrarium Plants are not as happy in 90 degree summer heat. Her shade house is watered early each morning to keep her plants happy. **Mildred Swyka (DE)** and **Vickie Jackson (LA)** put cuttings into dish gardens so several can root together, 8 cuttings to a 16 inch bowl. This saves room in already crowded growing areas.

#57 Mini-Begonias and Terrariums

Cynthia Bishop (CA) likes her cross of B. 'Winsome' x 'Jim Wyrzten', not a small growing plant, but the leaves are long and have good substance with spots that are large and shiny.

Robins that need members:

#57 Mini-Begonias & Terrariums

#4 Window Sill Growing

#2 & #8 Tuberous Begonias for
Serious Growers

#6 Odd, Rare, and Unusual

#10 Begonias, All Kinds

#11 Canes

- #12 Begonias and Companion Plants
- #14 Semperflorens
- #20 Photography
- #25 Midwest Growers
- #31 Southwest Growers
- #33 Hybridizing
- #82 General Culture

To keep the robins flying we need members! You need not be a professional grower to belong; your enthusiasm and love of begonias are the key to a fun Round Robin. They are excellent ways to meet growers and share problems and ideas if you have no branch to join. Many members say they learn more from Robins than anywhere else. To join, just send your name, address, and interests to:

Virginia Hamann
1169 Lincoln Ave.
Chester, Iowa 52134-8508

In Memory

Robin members were saddened by the death of a long-time member, **Rhodora Buss** of Le Mars, Iowa. Rhodora passed away on September 3 in her home of a heart attack. She touched

many lives with her letters, giving advice on growing and giving lots of encouragement and praise when plants did well for members. She was willing to send care packages of cuttings to those starting out growing begonias. During the past few years she was having fun doing hybridizing using Superba begonias in her crosses.

~Virginia Hamann

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(See page 114, May/June 1997 *Begonian* for a list of available issues.)

A bill for postage to be paid to Ann Salisbury will be enclosed in the package.

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Howard Siebold recommended the repeat publication of this 3-part series on "Water" published in the 1942 Begonian. Our thanks to him for supplying a copy. It still appears to be the final word on water for begonias. Part I from page 36 of the March 1942 issue is reprinted here. The other two parts will appear in future issues..

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT--WATER BY RUDOLF ZIESENHENNE

The role water, the most essential material requirement of plants, plays in plant growth, is at best vaguely understood by the average hobbyist. Watering is usually considered a task to be done at random or when the plant begins to wilt. We shall tell here as briefly as possible just what water does so that it will give the greatest return in proportion to the care taken in its use.

Technically there are many types of water, but from a garden standpoint, these differences need not be stressed at this time. Water as we obtain it from our hydrants and wells usually contains various chemicals in addition to an abundance of minute plants and animals.

Sometimes water is what is known as "hard" water; that is, the water contains various alkaline substances which cause the water to be alkaline in reaction. The use of "hard" water tends to neutralize the acid in begonia pots and eventually builds up an alkaline condition; this condition is often evidenced by a white deposit of salts which have been precipitated by the action of the acid in the soil with the minerals in the hard water. This condition is normally combated by the use of leaf mold. Cow manure, especially if it has quantities of the liquid in it, will tend to be acid, but in cases where there is ample supply of

humus, acid forming fertilizers can be used, such as cotton seed meal. To rid the water of "hardness", one can dissolve 1/2 ounce of supersaturated alum into a gallon of water and after it has been allowed to stand, use the clear solution at the top to water the plants. The whitish deposit in the bottom is the alkali precipitant and should not be used on the plants.

In some localities "soft" water is available which does not carry quantities of alkaline minerals. In this case, it is well to guard against building up too acid a condition by the continued use of leaf mold and other acid-forming materials, for begonias do better in a soil which is only slightly acid or even neutral. Most city water is treated with chlorine, sometimes in such concentration that it does damage to plants. If the water is drawn from a tap and allowed to stand in a container for a while, the chlorine will be dissipated into the air.

When water is applied, the first thing it does is to help to dissolve the various necessary elements in the soil, (potash, phosphorous, lime, etc.), from which the plant constructs its food or which it uses in the building of its tissues.

The water containing the various elements in solution then, by the process of osmosis enters into the root hairs and is conducted through the roots up the water tubes to the upper parts of the plant and to the places where they are needed by the plant. Less than 1% of this water is used in the process of making starch in the green tissue with the aid of the sun. About 1/3 of the water is retained by the plant. The rest of the water is given off into the air by the plant. The rate of transpiration is governed by various conditions, such as dry atmosphere, wind and temperature, as well as the amount of foliage, the

covering of the stem or leaf, such as hairiness, etc.

When growing begonias indoors, the amount of moisture in the air usually spells success or failure with the plants. The plants try to maintain a zone of moist air around the leaves and if the air does not provide this condition, the plants will transpire moisture in an effort to create it. The rate of transpiration is usually very great indoors for the atmosphere is usually warm and dry and warm air can retain more moisture than cool air.

Under house conditions the wall paper, books and various other objects will absorb moisture from the air and for this reason the plant and the porous pot will give off large quantities of water and the soil will seem to be continually dry. This condition may be remedied by the growing of a number of plants in the room as each plant will then be required to give off less water and thus will require less watering. Too, plants can be placed in a fern stand containing a layer of sand or gravel, which, if kept moist, will help to humidify the air. Glazed containers will not give up much moisture and require less watering, but do not help to maintain a moist condition in the air which its plant requires. Where heat or steam heat is used, a pan of water on the register or radiator will also help to keep the air moist. Moistening the foliage will help to humidify the air. However this should not be done unless one is sure that bacterial virus is not present.

(To be continued.)

Quick Tips

Check your terrariums moisture level every month or two by putting your finger deep into the soil to make certain it's not just the surface soil that's moist.

Maria Holmes, Harbor City, CA.

Direct somatic embryogenesis from *Begonia gracilis* explants

by B. Castillo and M.A.L. Smith

(The following is an abstract of a study and an acknowledgement published in *Plant Cell Reports* 1997 16: 385-388)

Abstract Direct somatic embryogenesis of *Begonia gracilis* was achieved from microcultured laminar segments and petioles on Murashige and Skoog medium with 0.5 mg l⁻¹ kinetin and 2% coconut water. Somatic embryos were obtained with greater frequency from petiole explants than from leaf blade sections. Under red light (45 μmol m⁻² s⁻¹), approximately 80% of the petiole explants successfully produced somatic embryos but only 30% of the leaf blade responded. However somatic embryos were significantly more abundant on responding lamina explants (60-70 embryos/leaf section) than on petioles (40-50 embryos/leaf section) than on petioles (40-50 embryos/petiole). These trends were similar for explants kept in the dark, but overall production was lower. Somatic embryos were produced more quickly (5 weeks) from petioles than from lamina explants (8 weeks). The somatic embryos germinated to produce plantlets and subsequently shoot cultures with the same appearance as the parental clone.

...

Acknowledgements *B. gracilis* tubers were donated by Mr. Rudolf Zeisenhenne

of Santa Barbara, Calif. We thank the **Fred A. Barkley Research Fund** of the **American Begonia Society (Southwest Region)** for partial financial support for this work and for helpful information about locating specimens of *Begonia* genotypes. (**Emphasis added. Ed.**)

Finding the Right Potting Mix

by Greg Sytch

For years, I have been searching for the right potting mixture in which to grow my plants. I have tried almost every potting mix on the market, from Sunshine Mix to ProMix, but not one worked well every time straight from the bag.

Then two years ago I began mixing my own from dry peat moss, perlite, vermiculite and some crushed pine bark. This worked about as well as any until this past summer, when **Charles Jaros** suggested that I use Fafard 2-S, a commercial brand only available from growers or large supply houses.

While visiting a large grower near Charles, I picked up two bags to try it. Voila! I've finally found the mix *Begonia* dreams are made of, thanks to Charles.

Having a mail order business in *begonias*, it is important that I grow healthy specimens so my propagation is strong. Fafard 2-S works right out of the bag, as I only add a little perlite for taking leaf cuttings to ensure rooting. Since that summer trip, I ordered a small pallet of the mix (about 25, 3 cubic ft. bags) and have been busy potting away. Now I can repot specimens

without the risk of rot, because the mix dries out rapidly. I have taken all of my cane specimens and put them into 5 gallon containers. They are growing vigorously. Rhizomatous, so touchy when repotted, are thriving.

Fafard 2-S is a combination of a special chopped peat moss that is spongy, mixed with styrofoam balls (instead of perlite), a little vermiculite, a wetting agent to ensure moisture distribution, and a starter nutrient to help fragile root systems surge. It is truly a miracle for me, alleviating the messy and time consuming mixing of before.

Fafard 2-S is only available through trade outlets, such as large wholesale growers and distribution centers. If you have a large grower nearby, ask them if you can buy a bag or two. Your *begonias* will love you for it.

Yes, I still add organics to the mix for long term feeding, but my foliar spraying has become more essential to fertilizing as it is easier and faster. Do try Fafard 2-S, and drop me a line on how much you love it, too.

You can write Greg at 6329 Alaska Ave., New Port Richey, FL 34653-4301.

Read all the articles in this issue and still want more? Why not join the Southwest Region/ABS (You needn't live in the Southwest, but must be an ABS member) and receive the *Begonia Leaflet*, edited by Tamsin Boardman, in alternate months with the **Begonian**.

Dues are \$10 for individuals, \$15 for family; \$15 foreign. Send to membership chairman:

Marie Harrell
317 North 12th Street
Donna, TX 78537

The text of a letter to Ann Salisbury is quoted below:

October 15, 1997

Dear Anne,

My husband and I hereby give permission to you to print copies of our book **BEGONIAS: THE COMPLETE REFERENCE GUIDE**. We give consent for 25 copies of this book. We require that the fact that the copies are in fact copies and not the original book and this is mentioned in the front of each book.

I apologize in being so long in sending to you this permission letter; I am sure that you realize the health problems that Ed has experienced. We hope that Gene is feeling better.

Sincerely,
Mildred L. Thompson
Edward L. Thompson

cc: Bruce C. Boardman,
President ABS

In Memory

On November 17, 1997, a memorial service was held for **Alice O'Donnell** at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Nassau Bay (Houston).

Alice helped to organize the Houston Satellites Branch in 1991 and was a member of ABS and the Southwest Region/ABS. She served the branch as its first secretary for four years, was an active member of the Executive Board lending her expertise in the management of the organization, and then served as President from 1995-1997.

She was appointed plant sale chairman for the 1997 ABS National Convention, but because of illness was denied the pleasure of carrying this out.

Alice, a most talented leader and organizer, charmed us with her smile and wonderful sense of humor and warmed our hearts with her laughter. She will be truly missed by all her begonia friends.

~Houston Satellite Branch

These books are the most complete reference tool on the subject of begonias and a must for all growers. If you don't have them, now is the time to order.

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Editor's Notes

Your editor is developing acute computer phobia! She alternates between amazement at what this new one *can* do and the overwhelming urge to throw it through the window for what it *won't do* for her! But I *will* master it! Someday.

I was so pleased by the number of items submitted for this issue and I want to sincerely thank all the contributors for their help. It was particularly pleasing to have a contribution to "Member's Favorites" from Mary Bucholtz. Don't you have one, too, that you can send? Contributions from different members and different areas make for a more interesting journal.

In the surveys, some wanted to know how articles should be submitted. I will take them any way I can get them, but I actually prefer plain paper copy because I find I can estimate space needed better and it is no problem for me to enter and format at the same time (I type fast!). Handwritten copy is fine; some of the best articles I've seen come in that way. I need photos rather than negatives because I can scan them.

Please, I particularly need photos for covers and a photo file from which I can draw. *Small begonia sketches would also be wonderful.*

About the mail, the Nov/Dec issue was mailed the week of October 14 and arrived at widely varying rates or not at all, even first class. I received my own 3rd class copy the following week, but some people in California I know still have not received it as this was written. I have complained to the printer who in turn went to the post office. Bulk procedures are changing at the post office, but so far we haven't found a lot of promise to do better. But, I do promise to keep complaining and working on it. **And to keep my fingers crossed for this issue.**

About the index; I apologize in advance for errors that I know will occur despite my checking and rechecking. Indexes are very tedious as I never fully appreciated until doing this one!

Remember, the survey (9/97) deadline has been extended. Send yours now.

Corrections

On page 4, I inadvertently dropped the "one" from Bruce Boardman's quotation, "All of us are smarter than any *one* of us." Please add it back!

Spelling: *B. coccinea* is the correct name for the species seed offered on pages 226 and 227. It should have been the Santa Barbara Branch on 231 and Carol Notaras on page 235.

Don't hesitate to let me know about errors. I will make them in spite of my best efforts, and corrections are important.

More Coming Events

Saturday, March 21, 1998

The New England Tropical Conservatory and the Horticulture Program, Southwest Vermont Career Development Center will sponsor their second annual Tropical Flower Show, with displays of begonias and aroids, workshops, an amateur horticulture competition, and plant sales. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Career development Center, Park Street, Bennington, VT. For information, call Mary Fuqua, President, NETC, (413 458-5336).

April 17, 18, 19, 1998

There will be a 1998 Spring Perennial and Rare Plant Sale benefiting the Sacramento Aids Foundation at the Corner of 18th and W Streets in Midtown Sacramento. Send cuttings/plants now to grow for the sale to: Bob Hamm, c/o 2230 18th St., Sacramento, CA 95816 (916) 446-5384

ABS & BRANCH NEWS

In the News

Annette Boree was given a fantastic write-up in the *LI Life*. The full page article complete with three begonia photographs described her 35 year experience with growing begonias and her affiliation with the **Brooklyn-Queens-Nassau Branch**. It also listed 15 of her favorite begonias with descriptions.

Ruth Pease of the **Westchester Branch** won a blue ribbon in the Pacific Art Guild Show for her painting titled "Back in Coney" a view of the carousel horse done by her famous grandfather many years ago. These horses are now collector's items and extremely valuable and Ruth treasures the one she possesses.

Show News

The **Potomac Branch** held their fall show on September 5-7. There were 82 entries. **Johanna Zinn** won Best in Show with a basket of **B. 'Illumination Orange'** as well as Sweepstakes, and Showing is Sharing. People's Choice Award went to **Naomi Ihara** (**Ruth Ihara's** daughter) for her lovely Rex. The branch also welcomed new members **Randy Robinette, John Pumphrey, and Dana C. Brown**.

Branch News

The **Doug Frost Branch** had a program by **Nancy Mirgon** on "Small Leaved Begonias" on November 5. Their newsletter gave advance homework by reprinting **Alice Clark's** May 1944 *Begonian* article "Small Leaved Begonias." **Marilyn Eginton** is a new member.

The **Miami Begonia Society's** main fund raiser for the year was an auction held on October 28. Members donated plants and solicited potting materials and supplies from local nurseries. In December they had a display at the 1997 Fairchild Tropical "Ramble."

The **New South Wales Begonia Society (Australia)** has "talks teams" who speak to many local garden clubs and other groups where they find people keen to learn about begonias.

The **San Francisco Branch** had a Christmas sing-a-long complete with pianist.

Derk Telford, editor of the *National Begonia Society Bulletin* in England, gave a slide program on tuberous begonias to the **Dallas Area Branch** on October 11. **Chuck McGough** won the Branch's 1997 Hankerson Award given for outstanding and long service.

Back Issues Chair

Keith Fletcher who works for the US Postal Service has been transferred to OKC for an indefinite period of time. **Ann Salisbury** has agreed to take over the Back Issues Chair temporarily. Ann hopes to reduce the number of recent issues being shifted around; hence the special advertised on page 29. Also, remember, recent *Begonian* copies will be shipped to Branches for free distribution at shows or membership drives for the cost of postage (cost will be sent in the package you've requested). A mixture of editions will be sent to give a flavor of the Society's bulletin. Send requests to:

Ann Salisbury, Back Issues Chair
P.O. Box 452
Tonkawa, OK 74653
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Note new area code, please!

You Can't Miss Atlanta!!



And there will be eleven more! The above is an example of the squares that are being made for the begonia quilt which is being prepared for the 1998 ABS Convention. If you love begonias, you know that the quilt will be desirable to have. But if you love both needlework and begonias, then you will want to have this quilt! It will not only be a thing of beauty, but it will also be a legacy of the ABS. Different members from all over the country are making the squares, and Kit Jeans and her sister are doing the quilting. In one item, we have beautiful needle work, beautiful begonias and the handiwork of various members of the ABS.

Good things are going to happen in Atlanta in June. Plans are being made to get registration materials out in January. Another private garden tour has been added to the tour list and growers are already grooming their plants for the show.

1998 ABS CONVENTION

Atlanta, Georgia

June 18, 19, 20, and 21, 1998

Atlanta-Decatur Holiday Inn

130 Clairmont Avenue

Decatur, Georgia 30030

(404) 371-0204

For information, contact:

Mary Elizabeth Moultrie,

Convention Chairperson at

370 Cochise Drive, Atlanta Ga 30339

Phone: 770-436-5932

Go to Australia in 1998!

Morris Mueller (Sacramento Branch, ABS) is currently working with travel agencies in an attempt to put together an affordable trip for members who wish to attend the Australian Convention '98 (April 10-13, 1998).

If you are interested, call Morris Mueller at 916-927-4921 or Margaret Fisher at 714-847-1889 after 5 p.m. (CA time) or weekends.

Quick Tip

When transplanting begonia seedlings, many times you have more seedlings than you can handle. How to pick out the "best" seedlings to transplant? If the seed is from a species, only transplant the strongest and largest seedlings. If the seed is from a hybrid cross, plant some strong, some weak, and some middle-of-the-road seedlings (sometimes the small, weak-looking seedlings produce the best new hybrids).

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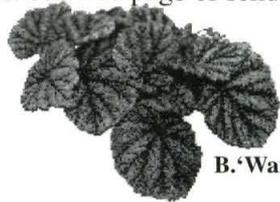
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COMING EVENTS

- January 16-18, 1998 Winter ABS Board Meeting at Fort Worth Botanic Gardens. At Ramada Inn Midtown (1-800-336-3000). For more information call Bruce Boardman at 254-728-3485.
- January 18, 1998 The New South Wales Begonia Society (Australia) will have a General Meeting at 1:30 p.m. at Bloomin' Greenery Nursery in Annangrove.
- April 10-13, 1998 The Association of Australian Begonia Societies' Convention will be hosted by the New South Wales Begonia Society with seminars, tours, and a plant sale which will include many new begonias from Australian hybridizers. Contact Peter Sharp, Convention Secretary, at 2/238 Jersey Road, Woollahra, NSW 2025, Australia or phone 02-9327-3240.
- April 23-26, 1998 SWR Get-Together in Oklahoma City at the Embassy Suites Hotel, hosted by the Fred A. Barkley Branch. For information contact Linda Clemons at 3512 N.W. 65th Terrace, Oklahoma City, OK 73116 or phone 405-843-9016.
- June 18-21, 1998 ABS Convention in Atlanta, GA hosted by the Greater Atlanta Branch at the Atlanta-Decatur Holiday Inn. Contact Show Chairperson Mary Elizabeth Moultrie at 3710 Cochise Drive, Atlanta, GA 30339 or call 770-436-5932.

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.

Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund

Seeks donations of seed and photos of plants grown from Seed Fund Seed.

Slide Library

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

ABS Elected Officers

President.....Bruce C. Boardman
P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale, TX 76433
(254) 728-3485

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P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa, OK 74653

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Slide Library.....Charles Jaros
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