

The
Begonian

March/April, 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. radicans* Vellozo (Synonym *B. procumbens*), photographed by **Kit Jeans Mounger** in San Francisco in 1989, reminds us that not only rhizomatous begonias bloom in the winter; many trailing-scandents such as this one from Brazil put out their lovely flowers at this time of year too.

Back: **Cynthia Bishop** captured the yellow blooms as well as the unusual leaves in this photo of that captivating species *B. microsperma* Warburg (Synonym *B. ficicola*).

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Begonias...

*Southern
Style*



1998 ABS Convention

Atlanta, Georgia

June 18, 19, 20, & 21, 1998

Quick

Check your mailing label. If it reads **5/98 or 6/98**, your membership is about to expire. Please renew! We don't want to lose you.

OKLAHOMA: Here we Come!

The Southwest Region of the American Begonia Society will hold the annual "Get-Together" April 22-26, 1998, at the Embassy Suites, 1815 South Meridian, Oklahoma City, OK 73108.

Wednesday: The "Get-Together" will start with a Judging Class on Wednesday, April 22, 1998 from 7 to 9 P.M.. with the second session on Thursday from 7 to 9 P.M.. All students will serve as clerks at the judged show on Friday, April 24, 1998.

Thursday: April 23 will be a day you won't want to miss. The chartered bus will leave the hotel at 8:45 A.M.. for the Myriad Botanical Gardens where the participants may browse through without a guide and the nicest surprise will greet you as you walk around the grounds. The Oklahoma City Annual Arts Festival is downtown at the same time as our "Get-Together" so you will have a few hours to look and shop. We will leave the Gardens for a drive-by of the bombing site and the grounds where the National Monument will be built in honor of those who lost their lives, and then a journey to the famous and legendary "Sleepy Hollow" for a wonderful lunch and relaxation. After lunch we will go to the National Cowboy Hall of Fame to spend a few hours and see all the changes that have been made since 1994. Back to the hotel by 5 P.M., just in time for the cocktail hour which is free, gratis of the hotel. You may also want to visit the hospitality room at the hotel. It will be located in the Presidential Suite and our host and hostess, Charles and Bebe McGough have promised they will be on hand to visit with you as late as you would like to stay.

Friday A.M.: This will be a free morning for those of you who are not judging or clerking the show. Sleep in late, have a free breakfast and meet with people you have not seen in a long while. In the afternoon there will be seminars by three very talented people: Kathy Goetz, Freda Holley, and Charles McGough.

Friday Evening: The show opens and *last and certainly not least* will be the *Plant Sale*. It is always fascinating to see who gets in line first. I have seen Mary Sakamoto and Margaret Fisher in line an hour before a sale begins; patience is certainly a must when you are waiting for the plant sale.

Saturday A.M.: Yard tours with a delightful surprise in the box lunch. Our own Jim Estes will be conducting the yard tours and you will enjoy the bus trip all the more with his jovial attitude and surprise jokes.

Saturday Afternoon: Southwest Region meeting conducted by Director Linda Clemons followed with a Board Meeting of the American Begonia Society with President Bruce Boardman in control. Then time to adjourn and get ready for the cocktail hour and the **Banquet**.

Any further questions, please contact Ann Salisbury, Registration Chairman at 580-628-5230, P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa, OK. 74653

Notes from the President...

“That was fun! All these good minds--it was so satisfying!”

While these words were the expression of one person at our ‘priority workshop’ in Fort Worth, the other participants seemed to relish the work and the results of the brainstorming. There were 21 of us, all officers or long time active members of ABS Branches. We pinpointed problems; we shared solutions; we tossed around likes and dislikes; we praised and lambasted our newsletters, and, yes, we looked hard at what our journal, the *Begonian* has been and what it could and perhaps should be.

The solutions to some of our problems are already in place: The Round Robins; the MAL Newsletter; the Branch Relations Newsletter; and our branch newsletters. Or coming: An ABS Web Page from **Kathy Goetz**.

Virginia Hamann keeps track of the circulation of 30 Robins that aid our members in problem sharing/solving of our pet plants, be it soil or nutrients; timing the pinching; is it “dead or dormant?”; “(tuberous) (canes) (fill in the blank) are my favorites!”... there is something for the novice and the ancient sage, the newcomer and the founding member. Virginia keeps the groups smallish so that the flights can get back to the questioner in a reasonable time.

If time is critical, MAL Director **Elaine Ayers** has an e-mail address, knows the experienced growers with e-mail that can help those in crisis quickly. The December MAL letter put some of the answers into print for “snail mail.” If you’re not in a branch with a know-it-all (hmm...that

doesn’t sound right...), try Virginia and Elaine. All of us run dry of ideas at some time: Branch Relations Director **Mary Bucholtz** has condensed good to great ideas for revitalizing the slumbering branch in a twice-a-year mailing. Some branches seem to have all the fun, pull in new members, and have put some WOW! back into their monthly gatherings. Yours can too!

At our meeting I held a newsletter inside a file folder to maintain anonymity: “This is a great newsletter; it has two full paragraphs about the upcoming meeting--including an opportunity to pay the ABS dues with the branch dues; there are two long paragraphs describing the preceding month’s meeting from the installation of new officers, and welcoming the named visitors and new members; to a nicely detailed bit about the guest speaker and his subject. There’s a note from the president, good and bad news about members, planting tips, comments on items of interest to branch members in the current *Begonian*, branch show news (8 months hence), and a calendar of upcoming events that includes nearby horticultural activities. And after a nice philosophical aphorism, the last full page has tips for maintenance of the beloved begonias for the local grower.

Afterwards, the comments ranged from “that sure isn’t ours” (frowns) to “I know that one” (smiles). It may be tough on some egos, but would a new editor in your branch cause you to say, “I know that one” too? More next issue.

“If you’re not part of the solution, you may be part of the problem.” - Wise old saying that I like.

~ **Bruce C. Boardman**



A Lovely Begonia To Grow

by Cynthia Bishop

Sometime back, I obtained some collected seed. I was told it came from an area between Vietnam and China; it was labeled by number and letters VN/C.

I have grown from this seed the plants labeled #1, #3, #5, and #10. These plants were most difficult for me to grow until I got the lack of humidity under control. The Vietnam/China series are not particularly hard to grow, as with most any plant, when conditions are right for them.

I grow VN/C # 5 under lights: 2 four-foot, four tube fluorescent lights. In these lights I have two cool and two warm tubes in each fixture. These are in a covered bench with the humidifier going at the rate of one hour on and two off. I also have a heating cable buried in the sand on this bench. I was so surprised when upon checking my plants several weeks ago, I saw tiny buds forming on this plant. It is a quietly elegant plant. The leaves are heart-shaped, with a very slight roll-under at the edge of the leaf. Picture a lovely shade of soft grass green, with the underside of the leaf a very, very light green. Both sides of the leaf are covered with velvet. It grows in a sprawling manner. You can imagine it crawling around rocks or hanging down the face of a cliff, decorated with surprisingly bright, rose-red flowers. The leaves are a perfect foil for the flowers, setting them off outstandingly. Now, imagine walking along a road and looking up, seeing this little plant

decorated with many bright, rose-red flowers. It will grow from leaves, and is growing for me in a 2 1/4" pot. The planting mix is 2 parts cocopeat, 2 parts perlite, 1 part vermiculite. I add 14-14-14 timed-release fertilizer to my mix and use water amended with chelated iron and Epsom salts to bring my PH down. This is a plant to grow in terrariums and to be placed where you can enjoy its quiet charms all the time.

You may learn more about these begonias by writing Cynthia Bishop at her Golden Hills Nursery, P.O. Box 247, 35615 Hwy. 97, Macdoel, CA 96058 or call her at 916-398-4023.

MAL is There!

This article by **Cynthia Bishop** and pages of other interesting material appeared in the Winter 1997 new and revised MAL Newsletter. Plans are underway to bring the next edition to all ABS members-at-large, that is those not affiliated with a Branch, along with an opportunity to subscribe to the newsletter for \$5. More information will be in the newsletter. Judging by the interesting material in the Winter issue, you may wish to subscribe even if you are a branch member. **Elaine Ayers**, MAL Director is also communicating with members-at-large via E-mail at elainea400@ameritech.com. You may also reach her at 3939 Lee Hts. Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44128, Phone 216-561-7033.

Breeding Begonias for Pleasure

by Frank Bernett



Although I had never grown begonias before, three years ago I decided I wanted to hybridize them. I chose canes because I thought they would be easier to grow and offered everblooming qualities that appealed to me. My space is very limited so I couldn't collect begonias of all kinds.

The first year was spent learning how to keep stock plants alive and how to grow seedlings that didn't rot and mildew; i.e. use well-drained potting mix with no fertilizer in it, put Captan 50WP fungicide in the water I used to first dampen the potting mix and seed media, and get young plants outside as fast as possible where they could be watered with a hose to keep the leaves

clean (reduce mildew) and experience the purifying rays of the sun. My plants now get from four to five hours of undiluted equator-bright sunlight every morning (Hawaii).

During that year I crossed everything with everything and had so many seedlings I could only grow 6 or 12 from any batch. I was indiscriminate.

The second year some of my hybrids were maturing and blooming. It took roughly nine months for the canes to bloom. A few were worthy specimens. Many were junk. I was getting an idea of what to expect and which stock plants gave results I liked. Since I was hybridizing hybrids, for the most part every plant was unique.

I got more discriminate, crossed and backcrossed with some design, and learned to evaluate new plant possibilities. My seeds germinated quickly at 80 to 85° F under fluorescent lights (in 7 to 10 days) and grew reliably although wanly. I was afraid to fertilize. But then I discovered time-release fertilizer that I sprinkle on the soil surface. It provides a constant, slow delivery of fertilizer to well-drained pots being watered daily with no fear of burning roots.

The third year I got so discriminating that I grew very few seedlings (by comparison). They were carefully chosen crosses most often using B. 'Hot Shot' (Bernett) as a parent.

'Hot Shot' is my own cultivar derived from Michael Kartuz's B. 'Rubrick'. It blooms its head off constantly with up to 100 flowers at a time on the small, compact plant. It crosses both ways with just about any other fertile cane imparting dwarfness to many seedlings and coral and orange shades to many flowers.

The photos show 'Hot Shot' (at left) and two of its progeny (below). None of the plants in the photos have ever been pinched back; their nature is what you see. The shorter progeny plant is a miracle of early base-caning with close nodes. It has nine mature canes in a tight cluster. I don't think it has ever lost a leaf during its twelve months on earth.

There is also a very dwarf one-year-old 'Hot Shot' seedling only five inches high that is growing under my florescent lights.

I don't think B. 'Hot Shot' is so special that will become a standard cultivar, but it brings me joy because it is such a versatile breeder. It will be hard to propagate because it blooms at almost every leaf node leaving none to break a branch. Obviously it has branched occasionally.

*Frank Bernett enjoys hybridizing at
412A Hiolani St. Pukalani, HI 96768.*



Member Favorites

B. 'Cracklin' Rosie'

by Greg Sytch

B. 'Cracklin' Rosie' was developed by **Walter Dworkin** several years ago, and today it is swiftly becoming one of the most popular and beautiful of recent cane hybrids. Why? The leaves, the leaves!

The leaves of B. 'Cracklin' Rosie' are, in my opinion, among the most beautiful of all begonias. Fluted, wavy, with a rich dark bronze color that deepens in bright light, each leaf is heavily spotted with diminutive pink spots that complement the dark red reverse of the leaf. The overall effect creates a leaf that is very red, dark, and haunting.

Flowering is not profuse, and in the two years that I have grown this hybrid, I have only had a few clusters of rosy-red flowers develop, but then I am not growing B. 'Cracklin' Rosie' for the flowers, am I? Culture is surprisingly easy for such a dramatic cane, requiring only general cane care of bright light; rich, porous soil; and frequent fertilizing. Allowing the soil to dry out also helps.

While not a huge grower, it has reached a sizable 3 1/2 feet under my tropical, Tampa Bay conditions. Problems are few and far between, with the most noticeable being debris collecting within the flutes of the leaf. Periodic flushing of the leaves with water takes care of that. I also suspect that B. 'Cracklin' Rosie' would make an excellent light garden subject as the color would be fantastic!

B. 'Silvermist' is the mother of B. 'Cracklin' Rosie' and the other parent is B. 'Salmon Rubra'. (Walter Dworkin says that this is the true parentage of his 1990 cross, a correction for the next updating of the *Buxton Check List*.) The vigor and beauty of this hybrid shines through. A winner no matter how you grow it, this is one *mujer* that will demand attention in our begonia collections for years to come.

*Greg Sytch grows begonias at Sunshine State Tropicals,
6329 Alaska Avenue in New Port Richey, Fl 34653-4301,
and you may reach him by phone at 813-841-9618.*



To the left is Greg's plant grown in Florida, as beautiful as he describes.
Photo by Charles Jaros.

But B. 'Cracklin' Rosie' appears to do just as well in northern climes.

Mildred Swyka introduced some of us to B. 'Cracklin' Rosie' in the November/December 1996 Southwest Region *Begonia Leaflet* with a followup article in the September/October 1997 issue.

Mildred's plant had not bloomed at all, but like Greg, she places it in the "blue ribbon" class because of its lovely leaves. Shown below, her plant has been grown inside and is more compact and seemingly has a deeper leaf color.

Photo by Mildred Swyka.



A Guide to the Pronunciation of Begonia Names

by Jack Golding

*This revised guide is to assist you vocalize the Latinized names of **Begonia** and be understood. It also serves as an introduction to the inclusion of a pronunciation guide for species included in each issue of the **Begonian**.*

Latin, the international language of the scientific world, has been used for centuries to name and describe plants. The great discoveries and advancement during the 18th and 19th centuries made it necessary to modify the old classical Latin to furnish the terminology needed by the botanist for new and more precise plant descriptions. The revised language, Botanical Latin, was evolved by restricting and changing the meaning of some words, by adding new words of Greek origin, and by simplifying the grammar.

Most people tend to pronounce Latin names as if they were words in their own language. The same groups of letters are vocalized as different sounds by people in various parts of the country and the world. It is therefore unrealistic to expect all to agree on an exact pronunciation for every name.

There are two basic systems for the pronunciation of Botanical Latin. The **Reformed Academic** system is accepted by classical scholars and is approximated most often by continental European botanists. In English speaking countries the **Traditional English** system is generally used and is preferred

here. Latin words with more than one vowel or diphthong are divided into syllables. Every vowel is pronounced, and is either “long or short,” according to the relative time employed in saying it.

Botanical Latin is primarily a written language and most of the early authors were not too concerned with the articulations of each word. They correctly contended that if the stress (accent) is at the correct syllable it will be understood. I have used either the **Reformed Academic** or the **Traditional English** system when I talk about **Begonia**. It does not matter which system of pronunciation is used, you will be understood provided you accent the Latin words in accordance with the following rules:

1. The stress is on the first syllable in names of two syllables.
i.e., **nuda NYEW-duh**
2. In names of several syllables the stress is on the next-to-last:
 - a. when this syllable ends in a long vowel,
i.e., **palmata pal-MAY-tuh.**
 - b. when two consonants separate the last two vowels,
i.e., **boliviensis boh-liv-i-EN-sis.**
3. When the next-to-the-last syllable has a short vowel (except as in 2b above), the stress is on the one preceding it,
i.e., **echinosepala ek-in-oh-SEP-al-uh.**
4. The accent is never on the last syllable.
5. Do not accent before the third-from-the-last syllable.

**Key to Phonetic Pronunciation Symbols used for:
The Traditional English System, are in Roman Type
*The Reformed Academic System, are in Italics.***

Letter	Symbol	Typical	Examples, the accented syllable is CAPITALIZED.	
long a <i>in RA long a</i>	ay <i>ah</i>	bay, fate <i>father</i>	cucullata <i>RA</i>	kyew-kul- LAY -tuh <i>kyew-kul-LAH-tuh</i>
short a , usually when first or last letter	uh	ago, Burma	acaulis carnosa	uh -KAWL-is kar-NOH- suh
short a <i>in RA a</i>	a <i>uh</i>	sat <i>apart</i>	falciloba	fal -si-LOH-buh <i>fuhl-ki-LOH-buh</i>
diphthong ae <i>RA diphthong ae</i>	ee <i>eye</i>	bee, aegis <i>ice</i>	bowerae <i>RA</i>	BOW-er- ee <i>BOW-er-eye</i>
diphthong au <i>RA diphthong au</i>	aw <i>ow</i>	bawl <i>cow</i>	crassicaulis	kras-si- KAW -lis kras-si- KOW -lis
hard c ; before a, o, u, and <i>in RA</i> always hard	k	cat, kite	cavum	KAY -vum
soft c : before e, i, y, ae, oe	s	send, center	cirrosa <i>RA</i>	sir-ROH-suh <i>kir-ROH-suh</i>
ch ; in words of Greek origin	k	kid, chemist	chlorosticta	klo-ro-STIK-tuh
long e <i>In RA long e</i>	ee <i>ay</i>	me, see <i>they, bay</i>	decora <i>RA</i>	DEE -koh-ruh <i>DAY-koh-ruh</i>
short e	e	pet	echinosepala	ek -in-oh-SEP-a-luh
diphthong ei <i>RA diphthong ei</i>	eye <i>ay</i>	ice, height <i>rein</i>	ei romischa <i>RA</i>	eye -ro-MIS-kuh <i>ay-ro-MIS-kuh</i>
diphthong eu	oo	pseudo sericoneura		ser-i-kon- OO -ruh
hard g ; before a, o, u, and <i>in RA</i> always hard	g	gap, go	grandis	GRAND -is

Letter Symbol Typical Examples, the accented syllable is CAPITALIZED

soft g ; before e, i, y, ae, oe	j	joy, gem	gemella RA	jem-EL-luh gem-EL-luh
long i in RA long i	eye ee	bite, machine	bifolia RA	beye-FOHL-i-uh bee-FOHL-i-uh
short i	i	bit	digitata	dij-i-TAY-tuh
long o	oh	note	pilosa	pil-oh-suh
short o	o	not	obliqua RA	ob-LEYE-kwa ob-LEE-kwa
diphthong oe RA diphthong oe	ee oy	fee, amoeba oil	froebelii RA	free-BEL-i-eye froy-BEL-i-ee
ph	f	fill, physics	physandra	FEYE-sand-ruh
s	s	sit	socia	SOH-si-uh
s at end of word	z	has	geranioides	jer-ayn-i-o- EYE-deez
long u	yew	you	fruticosa	fryew-ti-KOH- suh
short u	u	tub	fusca	FUS-kuh
diphthong ui RA diphthong ui	oo ee	ruin we	pruinata RA	proo-NAY-tuh pree-NAH-tuh
y same as letter i				

Note: Diphthongs, two vowels pronounced as one, are treated as long vowels. But when two vowels are together without forming a diphthong, the first is short, i.e

ii in RA	i-eye i-ee		woodii	WOOD-i-eye WOOD-i-ee
oi in RA	o-eye o-ee		aceroides	uh-ser-o-EYE-deez uh-ker-o-EE-deez
word ending ia	i-uh		falcifolia	fal-si-FOH-li-uh

Pronunciation of Begonia Epithets in this Issue*

The name of a species consists of the genus name **Begonia** (be-GOH-ni-uh) plus the species epithet. *Not including index.

crassicaulis	kra-si-KAW-lis
dipetala	deye-PET-a-luh
echinosepala	ek-in-oh-SEP-a-luh
microsperma (synonym <i>ficicola</i>)	meye-kro-SPER-muh fis-i-KOH-luh
francoisii	fran-SWAH-i-ee (French)
gracilis var. martiana	GRAY-sil-is, mart-i-AYE-nuh
homonyma (synonym rudatisii)	hoh-mon-EYE-muh rud-a-TIS-i-eye
sericoneura (synonym <i>hypolipara</i>)	seri-i-kon-OO-ruh heye-pol-i-PAY-ruh
johnstonii	john-STON-i-eye
leathermaniae	leth-er-MAN-i-ee
radicans (synonym <i>procumbens</i>)	RAD-i-kans PROH-kum-bens
solananthera	soh-lan-ANTH-er-uh
venosa	ven-OH-suh

Editor's Notes

Can you tell what your editor learned to do this month? And I only kicked the computer ten times! I hope to keep learning for a more colorful and interesting issue each month.

A very special thanks to all those who met the copy deadline for this month. Layout is so much easier when all copy

is at hand--it helps avoid those awkward "continued on" lines.

Corrections: In the November/December, 1997 issue, on page 218 please add an i to *B. rudatisii* and take away the extra C in **Tracy McLellan's** name. *The editor giveth and the editor taketh away!* Sorry, Tracy.

~FH

Survey Results

The Begonian of September/October 1997 carried a survey. Preliminary results were given in the January/February 1998 issue. Ten additional surveys were received. Overall results were not substantially changed. The number in parantheses after an item is mean rating rank of first and last five items (ie. 1=most favorably rated item; 28=least). Percentages for each response are listed in columns to right, where 1=Want to read/see often; 2=Want to read/see occasionally; 3=Not important to me to see/read; 4=No response on the item.

	1	2	3	4
	%	%	%	%
Articles about new hybrids.	52	34	7	6
Articles about older hybrids.	41	44	9	6
Articles about species. (4)	65	24	9	2
Articles about U numbered species.	54	29	13	4
Articles about general culture. (5)	55	38	4	4
Articles about insect/disease control.	55	30	11	4
Articles about organic growing.	24	43	28	5
Articles about begonias in the landscape. (27)	20	38	38	5
Articles about greenhouse growing.	37	34	24	5
Articles about raising from seed.	44	38	13	5
Articles about hybridizing.	34	37	26	4
Articles about other ABS growers.	39	45	11	5
Articles about branch/regional shows. (25)	21	41	33	5
Monthly summaries of regional/branch activites.(26)	12	43	40	5
Scientific articles about begonias.	33	45	20	2
Photos of older hybrids.	50	34	11	5
Photos of new hybrids.(2)	63	24	6	6
Photos of species. (1)	72	17	7	4
Photos of seed fund offerings.	60	24	11	5
Photos of begonias in the landscape.	27	39	28	6
Photos of member greenhouses.	24	55	16	5
Photos of ABS people.(24)	19	45	30	5
Photos of begonia arts/crafts. (28)	12	24	60	4
A glossary of botanical terms used in each issue.	41	26	29	4
A pronunciation guide to species names used.	48	31	21	1
Descriptions of seed fund offerings. (3)	67	18	11	4
Articles about member experiences with seed fund offerings.	42	39	15	5
Round Robin Summaries.	38	37	22	4
Should the Begonian include:				
Good articles taken from older issues?:	yes 58%; sometimes 33%; no 4%; no response 5%			
Articles from branch/regional newsletters?:	yes 28%; sometimes 57%; no 7%; no response 6%.			
Articles from other plant society publications?:	yes 39%; sometimes 43%; no 9%; no response 10%.			
Only original material/:	yes 9%; no 67%; no response 24%.			

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Growing Organic

or

“Waxing and Waning”

by Tamsin Boardman

Late winter and early spring are prime time for rhizomatous begonias. Rhizomes are thick and juicy, leaves are perky and shiny, and those great clusters of flowers are doing their lovely thing up in the air.

It's a different story a month or so later when rhizomatous begonias go into a decline. Some look as though they are gasping their last; flowers drop, leaves droop limply then curl up and die, and the rhizome itself stops putting out new growth and sometimes shrinks and dries.

Reaction varies from plant to plant - a few, like *B. crassicaulis*, bloom while bare and put their leaves back on later--but many rhizomatous begonias, sometime in April or May, look like candidates for the compost pile. Does it help to know that's normal? And desirable--not from your point of view, of course, but from the plant's standpoint. Like their owners, begonias need rest sometimes. Blooming is a strain!

Expert growers disagree on what to do during the declining period. Some increase feeding and light and warmth; some just let the plant alone until it shows signs of revival, then pour on the fertilizer.

If you grow organically, you can take the middle road, and I think it's the one begonias would choose if given their druthers. Begonias prefer regular doses of light feedings to occasional treatment with a big dose. Organic feeds, which break down gradually, are ideal for constant feeding; there's less chance of burn from an overdose, less chance of the plant running out of food (this last is particularly important when growing in soilless mixes, which contain no

nutrients). Even if your rhizomatous begonias looked exhausted after flowering, you don't need to make any changes if they're on an organic program; but you may find that your rhizomatous begonias don't go downhill as much as those that have been given high doses of phosphorus to force bloom.

If you're not growing organically, spring would be a good time to give it a try. Start off easy by switching to fish emulsion, an old favorite that is easy to find, or liquid seaweed, which might also be labeled kelp and isn't as smelly as the fish product. There are also combination feeds such as Bioform. If you live in the west or in a city with alkaline water, add a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar to each gallon of water. Don't use organics just when watering; they work fine for foliar feeding, too. There are a couple of special warnings here; if you've got cats and dogs around, don't use fish products, blood meal, or anything else with odors that will tempt them to dig up your pots; and don't use products that include molasses for foliar feeding because they'll clog your sprayer.

Next, start treating your mix by adding worm castings, small amounts of very well rotted compost, leaf mold, cottonseed meal, lava sands (which paradoxically, increase both drainage and the soil's ability to hold water). If nematodes are a problem, small bits of bark in your pots will help run them off. You'll have to play around with soil additives a bit. Most testing of organics has been done with vegetable gardens, because use of pesticides is dangerous for food supplies; it's tricky to determine amounts suitable for adding to plants grown in small containers.

As for increasing the light and warmth, the sun will do that for you in the months ahead, something your rhizomatous begonias counted on all along.

ABS & BRANCH NEWS

In the News

From the **New South Wales Begonia Society (Australia)** comes word that *The Garden*, Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, will feature Ros Bolwell's magnificent cane-like hybrid B. 'White Cascade' in an upcoming issue.

Branch News

The Branch Newsletters just brim with news and good ideas for meetings. It would be wonderful to share every word with readers here, but there is only space for the most fascinating. Wouldn't we all love to be at these meetings?

The **San Francisco Branch (CA)** has a treat in store for members. They will have two very experienced, successful growers, Susan Miller and Carol Notaras, alternate at each meeting giving advice on what should be done in member gardens at the time of that meeting. They will also answer questions.

The **Theodosia Burr Shepherd Branch (CA)** shares the news that freeze dried begonia flowers are available from Antonelli's (888-423-4664) Monday through Friday. Their newsletter also tells how to repair clay pots with pot colored epoxy putty. Clean the pot well and put pieces together. Use a putty knife to fill in skips and remove excess putty. Work rapidly within the setting time limits of the putty.

The **Astro Branch** has a begonia question box. Any question from which

begonias go dormant in winter to how to pot rooted cuttings goes in; then questions are drawn and answered by their knowledgeable growers. Neat!

The **Alamo Branch (TX)** started the new year by inviting a group of Girl Scouts to their meeting. They taught them about begonia culture and helped them plant cuttings to take home and grow. What a great idea!

The **San Jacinto Branch (TX)** celebrated its second birthday in January with 29 members.

The **Queensland Begonia Society (Australia)** spotlights a particular type of begonia at each meeting. Members then bring exemplars. There is a general discussion of the type and then specifics on the culture of each sample plant. In September it was Pre-1850 begonias, in November Trailing-Scandent, and in December Semperflorens which reminds us that it is the latter's summer bloom-time there now.

Forty or more different species were brought to a meeting of the **Cascade Branch (OR)** for a discussion of the ABS Adopt-A-Species project. After discussing the merits of many, the group voted to select *B. metachroa* as the official adopted species of the Cascade Branch. Then, their January newsletter carried an article about this species for members who might have missed the meeting. This Branch also lists the programs for the year in their January newsletter.

Round Robin Notes

Virginia Hamann
Round Robin Director

#30 Rex Begonias

Bob Brill (MI) tells that dry conditions in his home add to growing problems. He tends to over water which is worse than being too dry, as they can be revived. He is growing them in terrariums where conditions can be controlled. Mildew is a problem in a humid, closed environment; he is learning to add fresh air to prevent this. Bob likes to root Rex leaves in plastic deli containers using sphagnum moss as the rooting medium. Misting humidifiers saved **Cynthia Bishop's (CA)** Rex. She has a growing chamber enclosed in plastic just for misting plants. Pictures sent are of lovely plants in all stages of growth.

#1 General Culture

Marilyn Dube (OR) likes Pysan 20 for mildew and leaf spot control. Physan 20 is a fungicide, bacteriacide, and virucide.

#32 Kusler and other Canes

To prepare canes for summer's hot, humid weather, **Greg Sytch (FL)** adds extra perlite to all newly potted canes as they hate hot, wet feet. Fertilizing in summer is done with either a hose end for foliar feeding or a watering can which takes hours to do.

#12 Companion Plants

We need members for this robin. Cane begonias such as 'Saigon Silk,' 'Lucerna,' and 'Sophie Cecile' grew and bloomed in full sun for **Freda Holley (AR)**. Other members reported that their canes enjoyed full sun also. They had grown canes in shade before, thinking they would burn in the sun.

#25 Midwest Growers II

Marie Hollinger (IA) says other rhizomatous begonias besides Rex are lovely, especially the Begonia 'Iron Cross'. She uses misting and fans in her greenhouse to keep the temperatures just right for them.

#9 Growing Under Lights

Lorraine Anderson (CO) finds that seedlings growing under daylight tubes would not grow, they would turn white, become stunted, then die. Switching to cool whites made a big difference in her seedlings.

#8 Tuberous Begonias

No mildew on tuberous watered with community water that is treated with ozone on **Howard Siebold's (WA)** plants. As rains began, mildew appeared on outdoors grown plants, but not on the greenhouse grown tuberous.

#6 Odd, Rare, & Unusual

Hot weather in August caused **Marilyn Dube's (OR)** tuberous begonias to wilt. she had to cut them back just at the time she wanted to show them off to her Begonia Branch members. Small canes

also lost leaves due to the heat. B. 'Orococo,' 'Red Compta,' 'Splotches,' *solananthera*, *clivias*, and *nematanthus*, and other gesneriads did not mind the heat, they kept on blooming.

To join a robin where you will meet new people and learn more about begonias, write to:

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

In Memory

The Miami Branch was saddened to learn of the sudden death of Past President **Anne W. Fergis**. Anne passed away on November 29th.

Anne served in many capacities during her years as a Miami Branch member. Anne was president, vice-president, plant sales chairman for local branch shows as well as plant sales chairman at the 1985 and 1993 ABS Conventions, and entries chairman at all local branch shows.

Anne joined the branch as a result of attending a branch show. She will be remembered for her friendship, generosity, and willingness to share and volunteer. She will be greatly missed by the Miami Branch and ABS friends.

Charles J. Jaros

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This is the second of a series begun in last month's issue which originated in the 1942 Begonian; this second installment is from the April 1942 issue.

Water, Second Installment.

**by Rudolph Zieshenne,
Research Department, Santa
Barbara, Calif.**

In addition to its important role of transporting the elements from the soil into the plant, where it is broken down in the process of photosynthesis, water is important for its maintenance of the upright position of the plant, water pressure preventing the succulent stems from collapsing, and making it possible for the leaves to develop and the flowers to open.

Out-of-doors, in areas where it is normally dry during the summer, a cloth house is usually required to grow the Rex-hybrids and tuberous Begonias to perfection. The muslin cloth admits air freely but tends to maintain a moist atmosphere by preventing the dry air outside from drawing the water out. In some areas where the atmosphere is naturally dry, begonias have been successfully grown by planting broad-leaved trees and shrubs which help to create a zone of moist air about the property; and too, in dry areas planted to alfalfa, oats, and similar crops, a moist atmosphere is created although the growing time of such crops is limited during the year.

The rapid movement of air around begonia plants breaks up the zone of humidity around the plants and causes the plants to give off water. For this

reason a dry desert wind will do more damage than a moist one. Along the Coastal regions, or on the lake shores, a gentle breeze will prove very beneficial to the begonias, but because of the probability of occasional strong winds, which may tear up the plants, it is best to provide a wind break of some sort on the windward side of your garden or lath-house. Sometimes trees and shrubs will make suitable barriers against the wind. Burlap, flour or sugar sacking, or muslin will protect the lathhouse. If the wind is quite strong, wood, building paper or even glass may be necessary.

The temperature of the air also directly affects the loss of water from the plants. Warm air can retain more moisture than cool air, and therefore the plants out-of-doors give off less moisture from the leaves during the winter months than in summer; consequently the plants will require less water then. During the summer plants in a position where there is little wind and the air is cool do not require water as often as the plants which are exposed to the sun and wind.

The physical characteristic of plants also affects the loss of water. The moisture given off by begonias passes out of the undersides of the leaves through the little openings called stomata. A plant with many leaves will naturally be able to give off more moisture in a given location than a plant with few leaves and will need more water. Plants with hairy leaves give off less moisture in a given location than hairless Begonia for they develop a zone of moist air within the reaches of the hairs.

Now let us look into the factors in the soil which affect the water intake into the plant.

The roots find more difficulty absorbing cold water than they do warm water;

for this reason, cold water should not be used on Begonias indoors in winter. If cold water is used regularly, the plants may wilt because the rate of water absorption may be lower than the rate of evaporation. It is advisable, therefore to apply water which has been warmed to the air temperature of the room or greenhouse. In Southern California some damage is caused to begonias during the winter months due to the cold soil and water, coupled with a drying wind. Evaporation from the leaves is more rapid than the water intake by the roots and while the main veins of the leaves are normal in appearance the leaf tissue between them as well as the smaller veins dry up, becoming dark brown or black in appearance.

Water is absorbed more easily from soils low in fertilizer materials than from soils with a high concentration of them. For this reason, during unusually hot, dry, or windy weather it is not wise to apply either liquid or dry fertilizer materials for they may prevent a sufficiently rapid intake of water to offset the loss due to unusually heavy evaporation.

*This series will be concluded in the May/June **Begonian**.*

Begonia

Bytes

by **Kathy Goetz**

I grow begonias. Computers are expensive, confusing, and difficult to use. Why would I or any begonia

grower want to waste my time learning to use a computer? The answer may be that you do not need or want to become a computer user. However, if you do certain common tasks you may find that computers help you get them done quickly and easily to actually give you more time to spend with your plants. So what tasks can a computer help with? The most common are communications, writing, organizing (making and sorting lists), and looking for information. The computer is simply a tool that helps with these chores.

Let's look at some of the positive things that can be done using computers. First, personal communication has taken some giant leaps since the Internet and e-mail have become common. This is a great way to communicate with friends and colleagues. E-mail has the immediacy of a phone conversation combined with the patience of a letter. Although you send the message instantly, it will sit until the receiver finds it convenient to retrieve and read it. Perhaps the most incredible thing about e-mail is its ability to cross international boundaries. A message sent from the USA to Sweden is no different, or more costly, than one sent across town. In addition to personal e-mail, the World Wide Web has opened a universe of information to everyone. Almost any subject you are interested in from botany to gardening has a page on the web. Most companies now have web pages. They commonly provide an e-mail address where you can write if you have questions. It is also possible to book airline tickets and hotel rooms directly from the web. Think Atlanta!

Next, the computer helps those who write, especially those of us who do branch newsletters or correspondence. It allows instant, almost effortless

corrections while a work is in progress. No more finding a mistake after the paper has been removed from the typewriter and retyping an entire page. Simply make your correction and the computer adjusts the rest of the pages to fit. Then run the document through the printer and you have a clean finished copy. *Want to send a copy to a friend?* Paste or attach it to an e-mail and off it goes in an instant. If you want to include pictures with your words, the computer allows you to do this too.

Finally, listing and organizing data. Although this sounds like something that most begonia growers would say they never do, I suspect many of us do, or need to do, this type of work. The computer allows you to easily make lists of anything. For example, I have detailed lists of my plants, including the original source of the plant, date I acquired it, and other horticultural/botanical information. I can select certain categories of plants, such as species, and sort the list in any order I choose. It is a great help when I have questions about specific plants that I am raising. Ask me if I am growing a particular variety and I will quickly check my list. I also use this list to organize cultural information. What

did I do and when? How did the plants respond? It is simply a quick, easy way to organize this information in a usable form.

I hope this has given some of you the desire to rethink the “why should I learn to use a computer” question. Computers are powerful tools that can have dramatic impact on the way we work and how much time we have left to play. I use computers to make my work easier and faster so that I have more time to play with my plants.

I would like to let everyone know that the begonia discussion list has gone down and I am having real difficulty getting it back up and running. Please be patient. We are working hard at it and hope to have it back on-line soon. I am also working hard on the new ABS web page, but do not have it ready yet. One thing I need is pictures of begonias. If you have photos of your plants that you are sure are correctly identified and you would not mind my scanning them for the page, please let me know.

Kathy Goetz is ABS Internet Editor. She also raises and offers begonias at Cloudy Valley Nursery. You may reach her at 935 W. Isabella Street, Lebanon, OR 97355 or by phone at 541-258-7517. Her E-mail address is goetzk@dnc.net.



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Conservation News

by Tamsin Boardman, Conservation Chair

By the time you read this, **Scott Hoover** will be in Sumatera searching out begonia species. In several ways this expedition will be different: it will cover terrain he visited several years ago, so he knows which areas are most likely to be productive. He'll be accompanied by an Indonesian taxonomic botanist which will make field identification easier and facilitate cooperation with local scientists and authorities.

Contributions from ABS, its members and branches, from Australia and from the New England Tropical Conservatory support his trip. We all hope for exciting begonia discoveries and seed.

Let's not forget that collecting the species is just the beginning. As their native homes disappear, botanic gardens and hobby growers may provide the only hope these enchanting plants have to survive.

Each of us can do a bit to help. Here's how:

1. Learn about the species. Grow some. Photograph them. Exchange pollen and seeds with other interested members.

2. List your species. Send your list to **John Howell**, 129 Trillium, San Antonio, TX 78213-2514. Update it annually.

3. Adopt-a-Species. Grow, propagate, distribute, observe, keep records, report on it. Join other members committed to keeping begonia species alive, at least in cultivation. Contact Conservation Chair **Tamsin Boardman**, P.O.. Box 69, Bluff Dale, TX 76433.

4. Support horticultural and environmental groups that protect rainforest and other natural habitats. It's not just plants that are at stake; it's all living things: forests are the air filtration systems for our planet.

Turn your creativity loose on this one!

"Begonias, Southern Style", our 1998 Convention in Atlanta, will have a division for Recycled Containers. Judging will be done on originality and attractiveness of the container--and the begonia planted in it must be healthy and happy. Styrofoam boxes, paper towel rolls, plastic do-dads--what do you have lying around that could be converted, with a little ingenuity, into a good looking begonia pot.

Quick Tip

Sometimes it's hard to tell if a plant really needs watering. The soil on top may be dry. The soil a few inches down may also be dry. To really see if the plant is dry, pick up the pot to test its weight. A really dry pot will be very light. A light pot calls out, "Water me, water me!"

CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND LISTING

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

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The Seed Fund would appreciate receiving donations of any fresh seed. Our supply is very limited at this time. Please be careful to identify open pollinated seeds and keep them separated from known self-pollinated seeds. Thank you!

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Donors of seeds in this issue are:
**Jackie Davis, Permingest Dominique,
Evey McDuff, and Patrick Rose.**

Species Seeds

- MA98-1: *B. dipetala*
- MA98-2: *B. echinosepala*
- MA98-3: *B. francoisii*
- MA98-4: *B. gracilis* var. *martiana*
- MA98-5: *B. hypolipara*
- MA98-6: *B. johnstonii*
- MA98-7: *B. leathermaniae*
- MA98-8: *B. malabarica*
- MA98-9: *B. venosa*

MA98-1: *B. dipetala* Graham (India) ✓
The name means two petalled. Two feet tall. Thick stemmed, rigidly erect, brown, rarely branched. Leaves medium, ovate-pointed, doubly toothed, green with scattered bristly hairs, red beneath. Large, soft white to pink fragrant flowers in

pendulous clusters. Collected in the Bombay area; has annual rainfall over 80 inches from July to October; sandy loam; temp. 68°F-86°F.

MA98-2: *B. echinosepala* Regal (Brazil) The name means prickly sepaled. Two foot tall shrub with small narrow, serrated, ribbon-like leaves and white flowers with white hairs on tepal reverse.

MA98-3: *B. francoisii* Guillaumin (Madagascar) Leaf blades large, shallowly lobed to entire, ovate, veins radiating out from the base, stem scandent, base of blade deeply cordate, red hairs on petioles and back surface of veins, male blossoms two-tepalled.

MA98-4: *B. gracilis* HBK var. *martiana* (Mexico) A tall tuberous species from Mexico. Called "hollyhock begonia" because of the growth habit and the pink blossoms on the upper stem. The plant tolerates bright light and demands high humidity. It comes from high altitude. Bulbils form on the blossom axils.

MA98-5: *B. hypolipara* Sandwith (Honduras) (Synonym for *B. sericoneura*) Native to Central America, this trunk like non-ramified begonia now known as *sericoneura* has basifixed cordate green leaves, prominent veins and hairs with a reddish cast. Spring flowers are white and profuse.

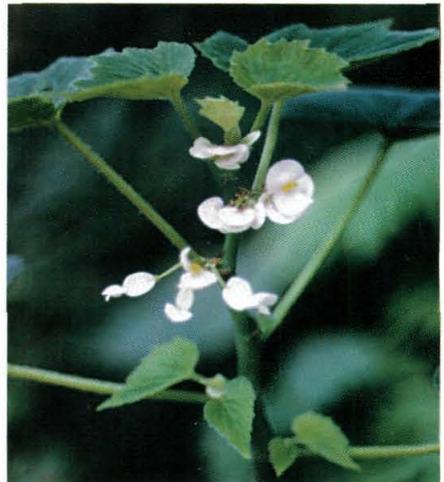
May 98-6: *B. johnstonii* Oliver (Tanganyika, Kenya) A thick stemmed species from Africa with glossy, pale green, 2 1/2 by 4 inch leaves with red scalloped margins. Large pink flowers in spring.

MA98-7: *B. leathermaniae* O'Reilly and Karegeannes (Bolivia): A superba type discovered in Bolivia; has a swollen base, a shaggy collar where the petiole joins the leaf base and crystal like glands that appear on the leaf underside; tall, up to 10 feet planted in the ground; leaves medium green to bronzy green with fine short hairs that give it a satiny sheen; lower leaves drop off; flowers large white tinged with pink from November to April.

MA98-8: *B. malabarica* Lamarck (India) A thick stemmed begonia from west India grows to 2-3 feet; hairy leaves; large pinkish white pendant flowers.

MA98-9: *B. venosa* Skan (Brazil): Interesting plant covered with white scurf; leaves kidney-shaped, depressed in center. Inflorescence long and arching, flowers white with a spicy fragrance. Due to the dry persistent large stipules and the heavy tomentum covering the leaves, it requires less moisture than most begonias. Use a medium light soil and allow for excellent drainage.

Below, *B. dipetala*.



You Can't Miss Atlanta!!

Seminars! Seminars! Judging School!

Coming to the ABS Convention means fun, friends and finds. While we are hoping that you have fun times while in Atlanta, we know that catching up with friends and begonias is your real reason for being here. Because I have attended two conventions, I can tell you that the wealth and variety of begonias is overwhelming. This was especially true for me when I remembered my straggly plants that I had left back at home. I had thought that I had something to be proud of; after all each new leaf had been a source of pride, but then when I encountered the prize winners at the conventions, I was overwhelmed. Would it ever be possible for me to accomplish such a feat? I would stand and day dream, but what really gave me encouragement was talking to the other members who were attending the convention. *They would actually tell me their secrets for growing the best begonias ever!*

At the convention this year, we are pleased to tell you that Mary Bucholtz, our Seminar Chairman, has planned not only two very interesting and informative seminars, but that they are also going to be presented by two of our very own ABS members.

First, Wanda Macnair will be telling us about 'Bringing the Rainforest Indoors'. If you have attended an ABS Convention, then you have seen Wanda's wonderful terrariums. If you have not been, then you will want to come so that you cannot only see Wanda's work, but also so that she can share her knowledge with you. Although I had steamed begonias after my first attempt at growing begonias in terrariums, Wanda assures me that it is easy to grow them this way because they require less water as well as less light.

Next, Tamsin Boardman will explain the "Species Begonias" to us. When I attended my first convention, I did not understand what all the fuss over some rather ordinary looking begonias was all about. I had to ask why the excitement and was told that they are the parent or ancestor plants. As with our own parents, it is not until we stand apart from them that we can appreciate their beauty and contributions to our lives. Without these plants, we would not have all the others. Tamsin will explain all of this to us as well as tell us how we can protect these most valuable begonias.

Finally, the real secret to growing prize winning begonias is knowing what is a prize winner. For years, I thought that the biggest is best. It was not until I started attending ABS Conventions that I came to realize that there are many factors that determine a winner. Maxine Zinman is going to be in Atlanta with one of her Judging Schools. Maxine will teach us how to not just see our begonias with emotion, but how to give them real character. This course is not only for those who wish to be judges, but for all of us who wish to learn more about beautiful begonias and what makes them special.

So you see you are going to have to send in your registration. Materials will be coming to you soon in the mail. Please come to Atlanta and learn!

Mary Elizabeth Moultrie

For More Information You May Contact:

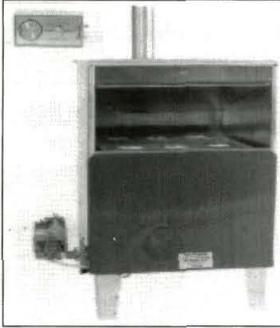
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COMING EVENTS

- March 15,
1998 Australian Convention Committee Meeting, 11 A.M. followed by General Meeting of the New South Wales Begonia Society at Bloomin' Greenery Nursery, 226 Annangrove Rd., Annangrove, Australia. For information call 02-9327-3240
- 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 22-26,
1998 SWR Get-Together in Oklahoma City at the Embassy Suites Hotel. 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.
- July 25/26,
1998 Doug Frost Branch Show and Sale, - UCI Arboretum, Irvine, CA. Call 714-898-2362 for information.
- August 23,
1998 Sixth Annual Begonia Show and Sale, Bewitching Begonias will be presented by the Palos Verdes Begonia Society at the South Coast Botanic Garden, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula, on Sunday from 9 A.M. to 4 PM. Admission to the Garden is \$5. Seniors 62 and over admitted for \$3.00 For more information call 310-830-4707.
- August 29,
1998 The Long Beach Parent Chapter Begonia Show & Sale, Paramount Methodist Church, 16635 Paramount Blvd., Paramount, CA. For information, call 562-866-6053.

The Begonian

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