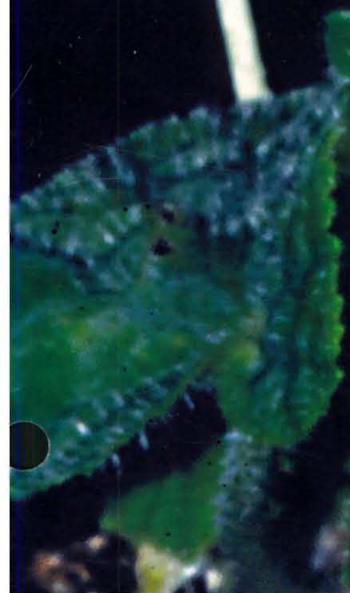


The
Begonian

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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: Closeup of *Begonia pudica* flowers. Read all about **Rekha Morris'** latest quest and the begonias she found beginning on page 85.

Back: From older classics to the latest hybrids, if they are canelike begonias you will find them at **George Macias'** in Houston. Here is *B. 'Salmon Rubra'*. See more beginning on page 113.

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Begonia 'Sinbad'
by J. M. Kunze, 2004

President's Message

Once again our Tampa members and the University of South Florida Botanical Garden hosted a wonderful quarterly board meeting. A great selection of sale plants, an interesting array of speakers and tours. **Shirley Brown** and her husband entertained attendees at their home.

The board heard a report by our committee that is working to have ABS use PayPal on our website. ABS members and potential will be able to apply for membership or renew a membership on www.begonia.org. This will be welcomed by many of our members who will find it more convenient to make an electronic funds transfer via PayPal than to write and mail a check. ABS will be able to receive the money without having to handle credit card entries and worry about security of data on our website. Our international members will like this arrangement since they will not have to worry about currency conversion and exchange rates. We are planning to offer publications and the seed fund to our members on the ABS website in the future. We will have another progress report at the meeting in Dallas.

Kathy Goetz, who has done a good job in getting our ABS pages on the Internet, has asked to be replaced in that job and **Sandy Boyd** has agreed to become the Internet Editor. We will have meetings about the website and its uses at the Dallas convention. In the future I would expect the Internet to be a primary source of members and be actively used by our members. I can envision that someday soon those members who would like to have electronic copies of *The Begonian* will be able to receive their subscription in .pdf format and, of course, those who want to get paper copies will still rely on the mail, although the .pdf subscription might be cheaper.

We are still receiving complaints from our members about not receiving seeds they order from ABS. I have asked **Jan Brown** and **Mary Sakamoto** to take an independent look at the situation and have a report as soon as possible and a formal report and proposal at the Dallas meeting.

Another topic that needs to be addressed is the basic cumbersomeness and undemocratic nature of our organizational structure. Every committee chair, every appointed officer, 36 branch directors, one regional director and every elected officer is a board member. It simply defies organizational logic to have a room full of people who hold up fingers representing the number of votes they hold (it can be over 60 votes in the room depending on how you count eligible directors) and try to conduct the business of the society. I am going to suggest we have a committee of members who study the matter and make suggestions of how we should change our constitution and by-laws so we have a more effective organization that includes a traditional board of directors and specific duties of elected officers. As it is the President, 1st vice president, and 2nd vice president have nebulous duties and authority. The treasurer and secretary have traditional duties. We need to reduce the number of inactive committees and officers and streamline. I am sure we'll have very significant disagreement with the proposal, but it needs to be studied and changed. It is obvious from looking at the past that many times our actions don't make sense when you try to tie actions to our finances.

So, until we meet in Dallas, go forth and recruit new members and have fun growing begonias. The Begonia Society is a combination of business matters and growing and studying begonias. Let's

Continued on page 110.

End of a Quest: Locating *B. lyniceorum* and *B. imperialis* by Rekha Morris, South Carolina

Despite the repeated disappointments of the March 2004 trip when we had to abort three attempts to find *B. imperialis* and *B. lyniceorum*, I remained hopeful that my next trip would be successful. In October of the same year a surprise invitation to my husband to chair a panel at a conference in Monterrey, Mexico unexpectedly gave me an opportunity to make yet another attempt to locate these two elusive begonias. Although Monterrey is a long way from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, we nevertheless decided to make the long trip east with a couple of detours along the northern segments of our drive. Our first detour would be to look for begonias in a northern region of Veracruz, Zacualpan, and then on to a section of Veracruz between Misantla and Naolinco north of Xalapa to look for seeds of *B. multistaminea*.

Research had indicated that several begonias such as *B. fusca*, *B. sartori*, *B. heracleifolia*, and *B. plebeja* had been documented around Zacualpan. To reach the environs of Zacualpan required our driving through parts of Hidalgo, which along this segment borders Veracruz, and then cutting through a dry, hilly landscape to a dirt track leading to Zacualpan. On October 17th 2004 we drove through Hidalgo along a route I had taken previously as it was a little further south along this same route where I had located several small colonies of *B. karwinskyana*. At this time these hilly stretches of Hidalgo were cool, moist and verdant with small, scattered colonies of *B. nelumbiifolia* edging the low, more exposed cliffs, and occasionally streaming down into the shallow trenches lining the road side. My compla-

ency along this familiar section of the route was suddenly shattered as we came around a long, sweeping curve and saw the hillside dotted with pink blooms, not in large clusters but in twos and threes, yet in sufficient numbers to light up a landscape which up to now was a monochromatic paean to the many shades of green. I had never seen these begonias before although the foliage was reminiscent of a species I had photographed without blooms twice before, once in Veracruz and once near one of the colonies of *B. karwinskyana* on this same route. Although we needed to drive on as we had a long way to go, I continued to photograph and collect the few seed capsules I found for nearly an hour. Later this species was identified as *B. pudica*.

Needless to say the specific dirt track leading to Zacualpan was not only unmarked but was such an insignificant notch in the landscape that we drove by it several times despite getting directions to it from several truck drivers who seemed familiar with this terrain. Finally, an elderly man enjoying the scenery along a road lined by drifts of cosmos gave us the one clue we needed to find this track, that it joined the dirt road we were on at an angle of about 15 degrees a few feet past a roadside stall which we had passed and re-passed several times.

After several hours of driving and as I was dosing off in boredom and distaste for the unending dry hills, I suddenly noticed a projecting rocky outcrop with ferns. Needing to stretch our legs, we decided to stop and look around. An easy climb brought me to a long swayback ledge, and as I walked slowly examining



Begonia pudica, all green foliage, at Zacualpan, Veracruz on October 16, 2004. All photos by Rekha Morris.

the surprisingly moist cliff side, a dot of pink barely visible among the thick growth of vines and shrubs sent me clamoring up to examine this isolated spot of color. Before I was close enough to move the obscuring thicket, I noticed foliage which was unmistakably similar to those I had seen earlier in Hidalgo. Half a dozen plants of *B. pudica* with large, pink flowers and a few mature seed capsules grew on the sides of a hollow indentation in this cliff.

A few miles further into the hills brought us to our first waterfall in this area, and looking up I noticed begonia seed heads swaying in the spray of moisture from the waterfall. These were far too high on a near vertical rock face, but in climbing towards them I found several small patches of *B. pudica*. Most of these had all green, hirsute foliage but a few had dark chocolate veins from which the color flowed like melting chocolate to form irregular patches between the veins.

When sunlight hit the wet upper surface of these leaves, they had a burnished metallic sheen. The floral clusters were bi-colored as the tepals were not only lightly brushed in a darker shade of pink along the lower ends on the obverse side, but the same darker shade of pink suffused the reverse side of each tepal, while the seed capsules were an even deeper shade of reddish-pink.

We spent the rest of the day until dusk among these hills around Zacualpan, stopping to climb the lower, more accessible gradients especially around waterfalls in search of begonias. I saw no other begonia besides *B. pudica*. I found this species growing in small, scattered patches along one other waterfall, although there were five of these within a space of a few miles.

Although I had photographed *B. multistaminea* several times between

Misantla and Naolinco where I had also documented *B. barkeri*, *B. heracleifolia*, *B. glabra*, *B. incarnata*, *B. ludicra*, *B. manicata* and *B. nelumbifolia*, I had never seen *B. multistaminea* in bloom nor had I ever found any seed capsules. This time [Oct. 20th, 2004] as I walked past a landslide which had brought down several huge plants of *B. multistaminea* whose 14"-20" long rhizomes lay partly exposed at the lower edges of the huge pile of rocks and dirt, I noticed several large begonia leaves which were not those of *B. multistaminea*. These turned out to be those of *B. fusca*, the first I had found on this route. A few feet further up were more *B. multistaminea*, and it was among this cluster that I found several dry stalks with seed capsules of *B. multistaminea*.

We finally reached the Los Tuxtlas region in the early hours of the following day [Oct. 21st], and spent the afternoon revisiting familiar begonia habitats at a more leisurely pace as we knew that the drive south from there to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec would be a long and arduous one. In retracing our way back to where we had found the long, woody stemmed *B. pinetorum* on a huge boulder earlier that year [March 2004], I was surprised to discover that instead of *B. pinetorum*, the boulder now had some dozen plants of *B. sericoneura*. I searched in vain among the clefts and crannies for *B. pinetorum*, and then wondered if this was indeed the same boulder. There was no mistake about the boulder, it was the largest in a section of mildly undulating landscape dotted with rocky outcrops sprinkled with small *B. heracleifolia*. Not only had I found an unusual form of *B. pinetorum*, but now I was to discover that it goes dormant by October, and that it shares its space with *B. sericoneura*, which in this microclimate is dormant in the drier months when *B. pinetorum* holds sway.

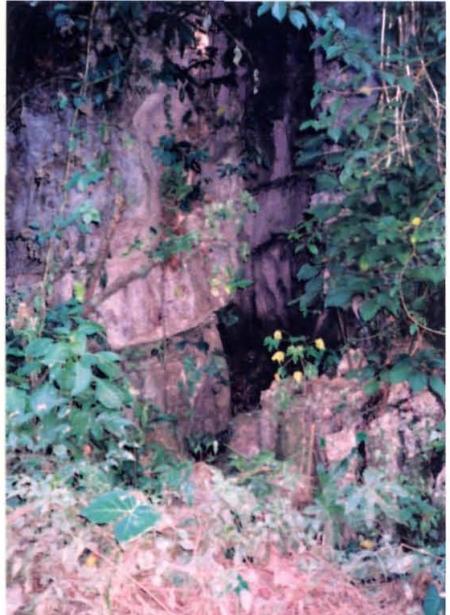
On Oct. 22nd we headed for the Isthmus of Tehuantepec at 6.30 a.m. With two stops along the way where I spotted begonias [*B. nelumbifolia* and *B. heracleifolia* at one spot, and a bit later *B. heracleifolia* along a vertical cliff side] we reached Jesus Carranza, about 180 km from our hotel in the Los Tuxtlas area, by 10.45 a.m. The turn off on to the dirt roads of the Uxpanapa region, as this section of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is referred to, was another 40 km south, and we reached this a little before noon.

On the previous trips to this area I had noticed moderately large colonies of both *B. nelumbifolia* and *B. heracleifolia* along the 40 or so km we had been able to traverse on this dirt road riddled with pot holes before having to turn back as darkness enveloped the landscape. Since on those occasions we had been in a hurry to reach the as yet unreachable habitat of *B. lynceorum* and *B. imperialis*, we had hurried on with few stops. At one of these we had found a couple of plants of *B. U462* growing with *B. nelumbifolia*. I had suspected that *B. U462* was a cross between *B. nelumbifolia* and *B. heracleifolia* as at the two other locations where I had documented *B. U462* it grew in proximity to both these species. Although I had not seen *B. heracleifolia* at this location, I felt certain that it was somewhere in the vicinity. So as I took leaves of *B. U462* to press for the herbarium, Michael walked around and located several *B. heracleifolia* on a slope hidden from view by a broken down shed some 50 yards away.

Although it was the second half of October, blinding sunlight and dry, dusty heat enveloped the landscape. The land around us was generally flat and cleared for agriculture or pasture land, but sporadically we encountered fairly high stretches of rocky outcrops, some with small caves and ledges which supported not only *B.*

nelumbifolia and *B. heracleifolia* but several species of gesneriads and an anthurium species with dissected foliage. Since all these were covered with a thick coat of dust, I was afraid that *B. imperialis* would have dried up and gone dormant during this hot and dry season. Nearly 50 km from the turn off on to this dirt road I saw huge plants of dust coated *B. heracleifolia*, and among them several plants of *B. U462*. Although there was not a single plant of *B. nelumbifolia* in this patch, we had passed innumerable colonies of this species along this road, and the nearest group of *B. nelumbifolia* a hundred or so yards away grew on the top ledges of limestone boulders which were 30'–35' high. The three or four large plants of *B. U462* here not only had foliage flushed pink on the reverse, but among the shallow lobed foliage were a few which were peltate. I finally had clear indication that *B. U462* is a natural hybrid with *B. heracleifolia* and *B. nelumbifolia* in its parentage.

B. lynceorum had been collected by Wendt, Villalobos & Navarrete in July 1980 along a dirt road between La Laguna and Belissario Dominguez [K. Burt-Utley, "Three New Species of Begonia (*Begoniaceae*) from Mexico," *Brittonia*, vol. 35, Issue 2 (Apr. – June, 1983), 115-119], and *B. imperialis* had been documented several times past a settlement known as Poblado Dos. The topographical map of this region which I had copied at Harvard University's Map Library marked all three of these settlements. However, despite our early start it was 3.30 P.M when we reached the turn off for Poblado Dos, and we still had another 28 km to reach the even more minor dirt road than the one we were on in order to head towards the find spot of *B. lynceorum*. Since *B. imperialis* had been collected a number of times and was in cultivation, which *B. lynceorum* was not as the single collection



Begonia pudica on Hwy. 105, on October 16, 2004, above left. Above right, entrance to cave in the Isthmus of Tehunatepec, Veracruz: *B. lynceorum* plants are on the ledges just to the right of the cave entrance; *B. imperialis* with dark foliage and silver mid vein on the lowest ledge just below the slight overhang to the right of the cave. Below, boulder with *B. imperialis*. Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Veracruz.



of this species did not include a mature seed capsule, I quickly decided to forego turning off at Poblado Dos and the find spot of *B. imperialis*, and drive as rapidly as this horrific road permitted to look for *B. lyniceorum*.

Around 5.00 P.M we found ourselves finally on a muddy track which we were told by a passing truck driver led to Nuevo Acapulco. No one we spoke to in that area appeared to know about Belissario Dominguez, however, my map indicated that we could get to it via Nuevo Acapulco. With dusk fast approaching, and the muddy track getting muddier and more difficult to negotiate, I was beginning to think that we would have to turn back within a few miles of our goal. This track lay between a couple of small hills so that both sides of the track were lined with a near continuous jagged line of rocky outcrops. On the right hand side all the shrubs and vines on the craggy boulders had been slashed in the process of installing what appeared to be a new power line. If there had been any begonias on these, they had all dried up with this sudden loss of canopy cover. Although there was some slashing close to the muddy track on the left, the upper sections of the boulders were still clad in tangles of shrubs and vines. It was this row of rocks and boulders I examined carefully as Michael inched the car over the deep, muddy ruts and water logged ditches which passed for a road.

On the ledges of a cavernous entrance to a cave I noticed bright green plants which I thought were pepperomias but nevertheless decided to examine them. These turned out to be what I then thought to be a form of *B. peltata*, as the leaves of this species were peltate. Moreover **Prof. Burt-Utley** had described the foliage of *B. lyniceorum* as "chartaceous" rather than succulent, as was the foliage of these begonias. I was preparing with some

trepidation to get closer to these begonias by climbing down to the darkening cave entrance by beating the boulders around me to scare off any snakes on their way to their nightly hunt when my walking stick landed on slashed branches on one of the boulders revealing a tiny spot of pink. I quickly cleared the rock of the debris, and to my delight found myself looking down at pink flushed, lanceolate foliage with silver veins of what I hastily thought might be *B. lyniceorum* with a tiny sprig of flowers setting seed. With mounting excitement I cleared the rest of the rock and found a couple more of these small begonias clinging to the rock by wiry roots which snaked across the surface with hardly any soil to sustain them. There were none others on the rocks strewn close by, so after photographing the ones I had exposed I began gingerly to lower myself to the cave entrance, and nearly stepped on another begonia with the same lanceolate foliage but these were a velvety brown rather than pale green flushed pink.

Among the succulent leaved begonias along the upper ledges, I noticed one dried stalk with five seed capsules which I could not reach. So I used my walking stick to dislodge this dried stalk, which gently floated down and came to rest on a lower ledge. As I reached upwards I noticed yet another begonia with lanceolate leaves, and these were a dark velvet green with prominent silver mid veins. I hastily thrust the dried seed capsules in a small zip lock bag in my shirt pocket, and began to photograph both species of begonias and collect leaf samples for the herbarium. Since this side faced east, light was fast disappearing behind the hills making it imperative for me to climb back up to the car to begin the 100 km long drive to the main highway. Moreover, the damp, dark cave entrance barely a few feet away sent chills down my spine, spurring me to

make a hasty retreat.

We not only had a long drive back to our base at Tropical World near Fortin, where we arrived at 5.50 a.m. on the 23rd, but I had barely a day to clean my specimens, press the leaves I had collected, and pack to fly back to the USA. Tired and pressed for time, I had failed to notice that the lanceolate leaves of the second begonia species from the cave entrance were not peltate as they should have been for it to be *B. lyniceorum*.

It was on the morning after we got home that **Patrick MacMillan**, the herbarium curator, unable to contain his curiosity, arrived at our house, and holding the succulent peltate leaves announced that I had found *B. lyniceorum*, and that the other one was probably *B. imperialis*. I was still too tired to register fully that my search for these two species was finally over, however, I pointed out that the peltate leaves were thick and succulent and not thin and papery. It appears that Prof. Burt-Utley's 1983 description of *B. lyniceorum* was based solely on a dry herbarium specimen as succulent foliage becomes chartaceous when dried. Patrick drove off to the herbarium to examine the incipient seed capsules to confirm the identification of the lanceolate leaved begonia as *B. imperialis*. When he called an hour later to tell me that I had indeed found *B. imperialis*, he added that it was a pity I had not found any seed capsules of *B. lyniceorum* as these had never been collected. It was then that I remembered the five dried seed capsules I had hastily thrust in my shirt pocket. Luckily we hadn't had time to launder our dirty clothes either in Mexico or in Pendleton, so the identification of the succulent leaved begonia was confirmed as *B. lyniceorum*.

I had found both species where neither had been previously recorded, although we were probably barely a few

km or so from the recorded site of *B. lyniceorum*. That night as I drifted off to sleep I could not keep images of the sinister looking cave [which in India would most certainly have been occupied by cobras or pythons] from making me both shudder with remembered dread and smile with satisfaction at finally reaching the end of a quest for *B. imperialis* and *B. lyniceorum*.

Acknowledgement

On this trip as on all the previous ones to document begonias in Mexico I have benefited from the hospitality extended by **Bruce Pearson** and **Michael Marino** of Tropical World de las Flores near Fortin. It is at their establishment that we are able to rest between trips to Veracruz and Oaxaca, and utilize their facilities to clean and prepare my samples before flying to the USA. I extend my gratitude to them and to Patrick McMillan, the curator of the Herbarium at Clemson University. Not only are samples of all the begonias I have collected so far housed in this herbarium, but it is due to Patrick McMillan's active interest and enthusiasm that 35 species of Mexican begonias grown from seeds I have collected now thrive in the university greenhouse. Invaluable though his taxonomic expertise has been to me personally, it is his intense study and consequently his rapidly increasing understanding of species begonias from Mexico which will continue not only to benefit me but the ABS as a whole.

A point of interest regarding the April 2003 trip: During this April 2003 trip to document begonias in Mexico my husband, Michael, had a disastrous fall while collecting a flower stalk of *B. glandulosa* on Xilitla road in San Luis Potosi [see the **Begonian**, Jan. / Feb. 2004, pp.6-13].

It was on this road that I collected

two leaves of an unidentified begonia which I turned in to the Clemson University herbarium. Recently Patrick McMillan spent time at the NY Botanical Garden and Harvard University's Herbaria studying begonias. He has identified these two leaves as those of *B. xilitlensis* which is known only from the type and one additional collection made by Kenoyer & Crum in Sep. 1948 [K. Burt-Utley, "Studies on Middle American Begonia (*Begoniaceae*)", *Brittonia*, 36(3), 1984, pp. 232-235]. Due to my panic and concern over Michael's injury I not only damaged both my cameras and the film in them, but I cannot recollect where precisely on Xilitla road I collected these leaf samples. Needless to say I plan to scour Xilitla road and the places we stopped on this trip to locate an entire plant of this species.

Conservation Comments

Bill Claybaugh

Conservation Chairman, ABS

Section Begonia

This is the first in a series of articles dealing with the section *Begonia*. In this issue, we will describe this section and enumerate the species it contains. In future articles, we will examine some of those species, detail their characteristics, and explore how they are alike and how they differ.

First, let me describe how I picked section *Begonia* out of the 63 sections of the genus *Begonia* to study. Over the past several years since becoming the ABS Conservation Chairman, I have been accumulating sundry species from various sources. Most of these are correctly

named, but to my surprise, the identity of several of those in section *Begonia* are in doubt. This is probably because many are similar in appearance thus making identification difficult. I currently have 10 plants with names of species from this section but only a few are identified for certain. The others are my "problem children". As a result, I have spent several weeks reviewing section *Begonia*, working with the *Begoniaceae* Keys and studying my plants.

We will begin by listing the species in section *Begonia*, 62 in all, as defined by **J. Doorenbos** in his work, *The Sections of Begonia*, 1998: (1) those in my collection (by nametag): *Begonia acutifolia*, *cubensis*, *cucullata*, *fischeri*, *minor*, *mollicaulis*, *obliqua*, *odorata*, *stipulacea*, and *subvillosa*. (2) others known to be in cultivation: *Begonia admirabilis*, *domingensis*, *dominicaulis*, *organensis*, *plumieri*, *repens*, *rotundifolia*, *schmidtiana*, *serafinensis*, and *suaveolens*. (3) those not known to be in cultivation: *Begonia abbottii*, *albidula*, *alcarrasica*, *alchemilloides*, *azuensis*, *balansae*, *banaoensis*, *bissei*, *bolleana*, *brachypoda*, *bullata*, *cowellii*, *decandra*, *descoleana*, *eciliata*, *ekmanii*, *exigua*, *exilis*, *glaberrima*, *harlingii*, *hassleri*, *jamaicensis*, *lanstyakii*, *leivae*, *leuconeura*, *libanensis*, *lindmanii*, *linearifolia*, *lomensis*, *maestrensis*, *notiophila*, *pensilis*, *per-dusenii*, *platyptera*, *plumieri*, *purdieana*, *pyncantha*, *retusa*, *schenckii*, *squamipes*, *stenotepala*, *vincentina*, and *wrightiana*.

One of the first things that initially struck me when reviewing this list was the small percentage of these that are in cultivation. I intuitively thought many more would be available because their native home is so close to the U.S. and they have been collected for over 300 years. A quick review of the sources of these plants reveals that about half come from the Caribbean islands, (Cuba, Haiti,

Jamaica, Dominican Republic, etc.) and the remaining from South America (Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Paraguay, etc.) and a few from Central America, including Mexico.

Next we need to describe just what constitutes section *Begonia*. The most recent definition comes from Dr. J. Doorenbos, and from it I deduced the following criteria:

1. Inflorescence – axillary; bisexual, male flowers basal, female flowers distal;

2. Female flower – **tepals** 5, rounded at apex; **ovary** with 3 wings, equal sub-equal or unequal; styles 3, 2-lobed or forked once, persistent in fruit; **stigma** in a band and spiraled; **bracteoles** inserted directly below the ovary; **locules** 3; **placenta** axillary, 2 branches per locule; **ovules** present between the placenta branches; **fruit** pendulous.

3. Male flower – **tepals** 4; **androecium** actinomorphic; **anthers** oblong, longer than the filaments, dehiscent with lateral longitudinal slits; **connective** extended.

To be in section *Begonia*, a plant must meet all of the above condition, plus come from the Americas. Several other sections are very similar, differing in only one or two details, such as (1) a simple placenta and (2) bracteoles spaced below the ovary for section *Pritzelia*.

Out of academic interest, I went back to the 1864 “Prodrum” of **A. de Candolle** to see his definition of his section *Begoniastrum*. As I translate the Latin text, there is very little difference in the descriptions of the two sections. The only item of note is that ADC frequently refers to seed shape, whereas Doorenbos has dropped this consideration.

Once the section is determined, and it is *Begonia*, one can more easily decide the exact identity using the “Illustrated Key” of the Smithsonian publications, *Begoniaceae*, Editions 1 and 2. Knowing the section automatically reduces the possible identities from over 1400 to only 62.

Next issue, we will confirm the identity of, and describe in detail one or more species in this section.

Continued from page 114.

auction based in that room will be ongoing, with the rules posted near the auction tables. It is going to be an exciting event with many wonderful items for your consideration. We are sure that everyone will find something they can't live without and will want to bid on. There will be begonia related items as well as other items which have been donated for that purpose. Also get prepared for a great plant sale with many new hybrids not available before, as well as many other begonias, and associated plants.

Speaking of donations! There is still plenty of time to donate items(or cash) for different areas of the convention, such as trophies, silent auction, banquet auction, and all of the various areas of the convention that require such things.

At the same time we would like to encourage everyone to visit and support the boutique which is also gearing up for a crowd, with new and exciting items.

The judging course mentioned in previous articles and the registration packet, HAS BEEN CANCELLED. Sadly those involved have other commitments and will not be able to lead this course.

We would like to encourage everyone coming from the airports to get directions at the airport as to how to get to the Hotel. For those driving from out of the Dallas area, if you need further directions or if you have further questions please let us know. Everything is coming along well and we know that everyone will not want to miss BEGONIA MADNESS, our ABS CONVENTION for 2005. If anyone has questions or concerns of

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ATLANTA'S GAIN: CHIHULY AND CHARLES JAROS

by Carolyn Hawkins, Atlanta

The month of June, 2004, was bright and warm—a perfect setting for the Atlanta Botanical Garden to host the exhibit of Chihuly glass and for Charles Jaros to meet with the Greater Atlanta Branch of the ABS, to promote begonias, present a program and sell plants to the eager begonia lovers.

The Saturday meeting with the Greater Atlanta Branch was a big success as the attendance blossomed to see what “Santa Jaros” had in his sleigh (van). With plants stuffed to the brim in the vehicle, it took trip after trip to unload. **Johnnie Hadley**, Greater Atlanta Branch President welcomed everyone, a pot luck lunch was served and the program by Charles focused on begonia culture. Shopping then commenced with everyone taking a number in order that they may select one plant to buy, then the next number, etc. A wonderful day for all! And then it took trip after trip to the new proud owners’ vehicles.

Sunday dawned and plans were made to take Charles to the Atlanta Botanical Garden to see the Chihuly glass. The glass was displayed everywhere—in the fountains, in pools, in the tropical and orchid houses, and in the Japanese garden. A spectacular event for Atlanta. The exhibit is moving to the Kew Gardens in the U.K. next.

After spending time viewing all the exhibits Charles noticed a plant he was curious about. What was it? I found **Michael Wenzel**, Horticulturist at the Atlanta Botanical Garden, and the mystery was solved. (It was not a begonia but an unusual tropical). Of course Michael realized we were “begonia people” and invited us into the greenhouse to view

the collection. Charles was pleased at the opportunity to see the begonias but many were not named or misnamed and he provided the information. With some note taking, Michael added the names. At this point Charles offered some of the species begonias he had in the van to Michael for additions to the collection. Michael jumped at the opportunity and off to the van we went. With several plants in his arms Michael returned to the greenhouses with his new treasures and invited Charles to come back when he could spend more time to help provide more names.

Charles and I then drove to Athens, Georgia for the Garden Club of Georgia Flower Show Judges Symposium. Begonias was one of the two horticulture topics that I was teaching. After hearing Charles present culture to the Greater Atlanta Branch, I persuaded him to teach the same hour for the judges—about 120 in attendance. *What a bonus for them to hear an expert and to this day I still hear such positive remarks about that session.*

Of course the plant sales were tremendous and the van returned to Florida completely empty.

As we all know Charles received the Eva Kenworthy Gray Award at the 2004 convention in San Diego. The above story is just further testimony to his contribution to ABS. Thank you Charles, once again, from the Greater Atlanta Branch and from the Flower Show Judges Symposium of 2004.

Begonia ‘Shaun’s Fantasy’

by Charles Henthorne, Dallas

By way of a New Year’s Resolution I had decided to try to give at least 3 articles to Freda Holley, for possible use in the *Begonian*, over the next year. I feel that begonias have given me such pleasure and joy over the last several years, and have lifted me up in times of sorrow, not to mention, that if it were not for begonias, I would not have found the true love of my life. It would only be fitting to donate a little time and effort now to give something in return.

So in bringing in the New Year, I choose to write this article in order to allow everyone to share in the enjoyment of my introducing a new Rex to the begonia world. I have decided to call it *B.* ‘Shaun’s Fantasy’, in memory of my son Shaun, who was murdered in 2002. In the past I have refrained from showing many plants that I have grown from seed, only because they were not special, but only dull, “run of the mill”, hybrids that did not deserve to be introduced to the world. However this one is different. It truly is a beautiful and unique plant.

The initial plant was started from seed, in January of 2002. Its parentage, is like most other rex hybrids, buried in obscurity, and unknown (unnamed hybrids). As it germinated and grew, I thought it would not be anything different, however there was a glimmer of the unusual in its foliage, and for that reason I decided to keep it going, in the hopes of having some hidden gem expose itself upon maturity.

One of the big worries for me was that I had grown very few begonias from seed in the past, and those that I had managed to grow, grew poorly for a few days or weeks, and then promptly fell apart. So I knew that if this were to survive, it would have to be something special. I decided

to grow it in a terrarium enclosure so as to give it a fighting chance among the begonias that I was used to growing. I also felt that in Oklahoma’s climate, and not being grown in a greenhouse, a Rex would have a better chance of survival if grown in a terrarium.

As the plant reached its first birthday, I had reached some conclusions about its cultivation. Both growing conditions, the plant’s appearance, and its growing habits were reevaluated. I decided that, indeed the terrarium was the right choice for its home, as the plant was growing well, quite vigorously, actually, and many new immature leaves were appearing. It grew slowly, in high natural light, in the closed terrarium, for over a year without added water. However the plant itself still did not show “it’s true colors.” The leaves remained small and dull in color. Even though it seemed to be a sturdy plant and somewhat vigorous in its growth, I doubted that it would be any different than others that had been discarded over the year. Still I held hope that, with a little more maturity, it would be exposed as a hidden gem.

So for another year it grew, quietly and without fanfare until the day arrived that I decided to try again to pass judgment on it. It was the last of several seedlings that I had kept so I approached the task with a little hesitation. However to my surprise, when I actually sat down to do the evaluation, I discovered that, indeed, I had a gem on my hands. However what kind of a gem? That was the question!

The plant had more than doubled in size. Both its leaves and the size of the plant itself required that it be moved into a bigger terrarium. At that point I realized that it was going to be a very large plant.



Above left male flowers of B. 'Shaun's Fantasy' and right the female flowers. Below is the lovely plant. Photos by Charles Henthorne.



I also saw the leaves gaining color and patterns that indicated that it had some potential to being a gem of true quality. It's growth habit and pattern showed that it was going to be upright, and having put several more leaves on, also showed that it was going to be a vigorous grower. However the question remained, was it going to be enough. I decided that more time was needed. Along with that I wanted other people's opinions. With that in mind, I approached several people with photos and questions and waited for answers.

During that time, in April 2004 I married and moved to Plano, Texas. Leora (my beloved wife), grows begonias in terrariums also. However her method of growing was completely different than mine, so I wondered how my "gem" would do in this new climate. In the next few months following our move to Plano, I worried about the plants as they did not look happy. In evaluating possible reasons, I decided that along with the climate change, and the lighting (we do not have good natural light here), which had been high natural in Okla., that my actual potting mixture (which was different than Leora's) would have to be changed to accommodate the move. How would the new rex react to being moved from a mixture of dirtless potting medium to a mixture of shredded sphagnum and perlite? ... Time would tell. Leora had her doubts, I think, and so did I, concerning the question of this plant's uniqueness and durability.

Then within three months of my move to Texas, the gem burst forth, in a blaze of glory. The leaves grew to a magnificent size, and the colors became more vivid and distinct. Not only that, but answers were coming in to the questions I had put forth to others concerning this new plant. They were all favorable in all areas. So I decided to try to propagate more of these for distribution. To that end I asked

Don Miller to test the plant, and am awaiting word from him as to his findings of its growth outside of the terrarium. I hope to have a local greenhouse propagate this plant for distribution also. I do plan on asking others in different parts of the country to try it also. I found that it reproduces very easily from leaf stem cuttings, as well as wedged sections of the leaf itself. And as an added bonus, it blooms profusely, with up to 5 blooms stalks at a time.

It is a large plant and requires high humidity and lots of room. It is a durable plant that likes it on the dry side and it also propagates easily. Its blooms are huge with the males having 2" diameters and the females having 1.25" diameters. And it is beautiful and showy. Along with this article I will include a few photos of my B. 'Shaun's Fantasy.' What a gem! What more could anyone ask for?..

Note Charles' resolution to submit articles - it is a resolution I hope a lot of members will emulate! Charles is assisting Leora with preparations for the 2005 Convention in Dallas. He was formerly a member of the Barkley Branch in Oklahoma City and both he and Leora are prolific growers of terrariums. They both regularly win show awards for their entries. Charles also produces and grows begonia seed. I am sure we will see some of those as well as the new B. 'Shaun's Fantasy' in Dallas in May. You may write Charles at 2200 Glen Forest Lane, Plano, TX 75023 or email him at leorahenthorne7@msn.com. And

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We thank **Eleanor Calkins, Ingeborg Foo, Carol Notaras, Iris Bird, and Thelma O'Reilly** for the following additions to the seed fund inventory:

B. fischeri Schrank
B. friburgensis Brade – rare \$2.00
B. U388

Continued on page 110.

Pondering Stipules - Part One

by Janet Brown, Los Angeles

For some time now I have been thinking about stipules and the roles they play in begonia growth and culture. Occasionally I have tried looking up the subject in various places and have come up with almost nothing. So the thought occurs that not much is known about stipules, they have no function or perhaps no one cares about them.

Before a local or national show one of the "must do" jobs in preparing a begonia for exhibit is to remove the stipules (sometimes known as 'those little brown things') from the plant. Through the years most of us have become expert stipule removers performing the task much like dusting, removing cat and dog hairs from fabric and furniture or nit picking. This is done out of habit even when not readying a begonia for show.

The definition from the Webster's Third New International Dictionary: "stipule: from Latin, stalk, straw; akin to Latin stipes, log, trunk of a tree, stipare, to press together. 1a. one of the pair of lifelike or membranous appendages that arise at the base of the leaf in many plants, vary greatly in size and shape and in degree of adnation to the stem, to the petiole, or to each other, and become modified in some plants to form spines or tendrils and in others to perform all the functions of leaves. 2. a newly sprouted feather PINFEATHER. Another definition: Basal appendage of a leaf or petiole. May photosynthesize or be scales and may protect the axillary buds."

Stipules must have a function. The above definition indicates that in some cases they do function as leaves. The persistent stipule is a major characteristic

of the *Begoniaceae* and although not all begonias have them it would be interesting to find those that don't and why they don't.

From the UCLA Botanic Garden web site comes the following: "In many orders of angiosperms, mainly among dicotyledons, the leaf may possess one or, more commonly, two stipules. A stipule is an outgrowth of the lower zone (Unterblatt) of a young leaf, part of the base... Stipule-like outgrowths may also be found at the base of leaflets on a compound leaf, in addition to stipules at the base of the petiole (rachis). Leaflet stipules are termed stipels or, less commonly, secondary stipules. Although nobody has counted, probably less than a quarter of all known angiosperm species have stipules. Forms and Functions: The original function of stipules is obscure, but may have been involved as protection for the emerging leaves. Conspicuous stipules covering buds also can be observed ... There are a number of interesting functions demonstrated for stipules of certain plant species. 1. Stipules that are green may be leaflike, linear, threadlike, or reduced to minute scales, thereby requiring a hand lens to see. Plant biologists have assumed that green stipules are photosynthetic, but ecophysicologists generally have not determined how significant green stipules may be as temporary or persistent photosynthetic structures. Anatomical reports on photosynthetic stipules are exceedingly rare, so that we know little about the presence of stomates and the nature of the mesophyll in stipules..."

In the *Begonian*, vol. 59, Sept.-Oct. 1992, p.170. **Annette Boree** wrote about an interesting and seemingly unique

event. "Stipules = Leaves One of the characteristics that distinguish begonias is that leaves develop within a sheath called a stipule. Stipules vary widely - some are large, some small; some drop off quickly, some persist; some are thick, some thin - but all bring forth the leaf, right down there at the node. At least, that's the way it usually works...

Early in the winter of 1991-1992 my plant of *B. 'Sugar Moon'* (an unregistered cane seedling of *B. 'Jim Wyrzten'* raised by **Walter Dworkin** of Westbury, NY) began putting out leaves on the ends of its stipules... There are informal lists of places where adventitious growths have appeared, but no one ever mentioned growth on the stipules.

Usually the stipules on 'Sugar Moon' stay green and fresh for a long time down the length of the canes. In this case, however, after a while the tip of the stipules began to elongate and twist, as if somebody had twirled the tip between his fingers; and then this fine point began

to thicken slowly and elongate more and more; then it flattened and turned dark green like a regular leaf.

In contrast to a leaf that is emanating from the leaf axil or node, these "stipule leaves" flap back and forth because the stipule is paper thin."

Evidently this "leaf stipule" event began in the winter in a greenhouse and the phenomenon stopped when the plant was put outside in for the summer. But it is an interesting event and probably confirms the leaf status of the stipule. We can only wonder if this happened again the next winter.

Stipules are not removed from all begonias for show grooming. *B. kellermannii* and *B. venosa* have beautiful stipules and they are "allowed to remain".

And *B. vaginans* has very pronounced and distinctive stipules that help identify the plant. What is the difference between an ugly and a beautiful stipule?

If they are considered dead leaves then they should be removed but if they

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are an integral part of the begonia then perhaps they should be left on.

Mealy bugs love them and that makes a case for removal. Stipules make cozy winter homes.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has also pondered stipules and their function. More information would be helpful for the next article on the subject and I'll be working on it as well. JBBROWN3@aol.com.

Boutique 2005 ABS Convention, Dallas, TXABS/SWR Boutique News

The 2005 ABS/SWR Convention in Dallas is coming up soon. Please help make this a good shopping experience for all. I am asking ABS/SWR members to make and or donate something for sale in the boutique.

I will be accepting items on consignment. If you have any questions about placing items on consignment please call me. Your help will be much appreciated by all those attending and shopping in the boutique at the May 18-22; 2005 Convention in Dallas. Please consider helping and making this boutique very successful. See you in Dallas.

**Joan Kessinger,
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you to think about. Begonia folks love anything with a begonia leaf or a blossom on it.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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*And don't you have some precious item to donate to the dinner auction? Let **Charles and Leora Henthorne** know if you do and what you might be donating. Find Leora's phone number, email address, and address on the top right of page 119.*

Trip in Gabon : In Search of Yellow Flowered Begonias , Part 2

by Jacky Duruisseau

December 6 th: Crystal Mountains
Departure about 3 PM: **Jean Philippe Biteau** who goes with us on his 4 x4. The Libreville suburbs spreads now over 10 km! Very obstructed traffic, unconventional and dangerous! Crosswalks are everywhere, many enormous holes which permit cars to drive on left ...horn obligatory, without flashing lights ! The asphalt road is very difficult during 75 km. We buy bananas and pineapples on the roadside. We leave at last the main road and we take the Tchimbélé track, on left, towards the North: better the asphalt! We go along the power line who comes from the Tchimbélé and Kinguéké dams, and the Mbei river after the PK 25: it is the waterway which supplies the dams. Stop to Kinguéké (PK 40) where travellers are controlled. Usually, the SEEG (Société d'Énergie Électrique du Gabon) prevents the tourists from following. So we will be scientists ...who do research on natural begonia hybrids... of course!

Jean Philippe confirms our coming with the SODEXHO who manages the Tchimbélé area, the accommodations and food of the dam technicians. This society will accommodate us and we will eat at the workers canteen. We are now in the Crystal Mountains at an altitude from 500 to 900 m. Coming to Tchimbélé (PK 80) about 8 PM after passing a location where we can admire a wonderful sunset on the mountains. Meal at the canteen and we set up in a house where the engineers and their family lived during the dam building. They had even a school ! Bedrooms and living are air-conditioned ! What a luxury ! Air-conditioner is well and mosquitos are kept out, but we cannot hear the forest

sounds.

December 7th: the mythical yellow flowered begonias...Furious attack as early as we go out on morning ! Poor Huguette! The GPS shows 00° 37' N / 10° 23' E and an altitude of 574 m. The Crystal Mountain forest is still shrouded in mist. Jean Philippe shows us the place and is off to Libreville again. We must manage without a car but with the help of two Wordlife Conservatory Society botanists, Thierry and Gerard who supervise and keep up the ombrière¹ built here by Jean Philippe and where grow many local orchids and some begonias. We thought to use some vehicles who go from Kinguéké to Assok (25 km towards the North), but it is destroyed to about 6 km from here ! Nobody goes over here ! OK, we'll walk!

First excursion: we follow a path at the South-East of the dam, after the power station; our first yellow flowered begonia, with peltate dark and very bullate leaves: *Begonia susaniae*, a wonder plant ! We see some in blossom near the path ...difficult path because it is very muddy ! A big tree knocked down is covered with epiphytic plants, also *Begonia elaeagnifolia*. The progress is easier on the plateau where we can see *Begonia minutifolia* which reminds us of *Begonia foliosa* with very small leaves. Some are in blossom with immature fruits. We observe that most of terrestrial begonias are epiphytic ones : they grow on trees trunks, dead or not, on the creepers and the rocks. The really epiphytic begonias are not terrestrial ones. An other species is discovered later , on the plateau : a great one with no peltate red leaves, perhaps *Begonia erectocaulis*, then



Above left, Tchimbelle lake. Above right, hybrid Begonia microsperma x staudtii.. Below, Begonia clypeifolia.



a fourth one, *Begonia auriculata* with jagged bracts that are very large. We see again too *Begonia macrocarpa*. The morning mist goes away with the warmth when the sun is shining. The cicadas sing gladly and their shrill stridulation is constant.

In the evening, we botanize again to 3 km below the dam, near the Mbei river which is, here, a furious torrent. Difficult walking as ever. In spite of the darkness, Thierry discovers an enormous *Begonia longipetiolata* on a creeper, to 3 m high : leaves are 20 cm long and 10 cm large! Male flowers are fully developed on the end of a long peduncle; petiole is canaliculated on it.

We came back to the camp tired and dripping with sweat! Big thunderstorm during the night.

December 8th: begonias everywhere. We go again on the track of the previous day and we hope to go farther. We go actually to yesterday's stop and go down along a brook obstructed with fallen trees.

At the start, many plants of a new species with peltate leaf, smooth, an epiphytic and terrestrial begonia, *Begonia clypeifolia*, unfortunately without blossom. The brooks are frequented by the elephants who pull up, crush, and break everything that is accessible to their trunk... *Begonia minutifolia* is found here very often. Farther down, moving along the brook, Thierry finds trails of a gorilla who certainly slept here because hairs are still attached on branches... Chimpanzees also leave some odors... We see again *Begonia susaniae* which grows everywhere and *Begonia longipetiolata*. We are really in the begonia sanctuary... What richness !

On the afternoon, we try going down along the dam. In vain because of the light, the vegetation is low but too dense ; more, the Mbei river we would like to cross over, but here it is a dangerous torrent !

We agree on another try from the end of the "landing runway", the track in fact! With a great bend after a straight line on 500 m, the pilot must be very dexterous and courageous... The last one who tried the takeoff, lies down, near the track... After some acrobatics in ferns and on trunks, we get in the forest and go down towards the Biguilinguen river, a tributary of the Mbei river. We meet another form of *Begonia susaniae*, with a leaf less bullate, all the species we saw in the morning and many *Begonia longipetiolata* on a creeper and so on the ground : perhaps some seeds have fallen here. Do the plantlets survive ? This plant is a strictly epiphytic one.

December 9th: the begonias river... We go in the Gérard's 4x4 and try to go farther without too long a preliminary of walking. The car has small tires and only 4 seats ! So Colette and Huguette plan a walk on the Assok track. We go towards Kinguélé. After 6 km, the 3 rd bridge crosses over a little river, a tributary of the Biguilinguen river : we go upstream. At the start we find a begonia on the sand of the bank : it is like *Begonia foliosa*, and grows with the roots in water ! Once again, the elephants led the way ! But the river is so much overgrown with devastated vegetation and we must push out of the river: thank you to "assalas", the local name of forest elephants, who allow us to discover another form of *Begonia susaniae*, with a very bullate blade, clear green, and a dark medium area, terrestrial and epiphytic. We will see it along 3 or 4 km near the river. At one point, an immense spider's web blocks the way. At the center of the web, is an immense spider, black and yellow, surrounded with midges who, and it is very amazing, don't fall in the web ! Charly takes a photo that will show us that the midges land on the spider ! What a strange association! We meet growing on a branch to 1,50 m high, a single individual of a

Begonias plus fragrant and flowering tropicals!

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new species: green edged with red peltate blade and very hairy red petiole: we will never see anywhere this wonderful plant, *Begonia scutifolia*.

The site is extremely rich with *Begonia minutifolia*, *Begonia hirsutula*, *Begonia auriculata*, *Begonia clypeifolia* with a very variable blade, and the epiphytic ones we had already met : *Begonia elaeagnifolia* and *Begonia longipetiolata*. We happen nearby upon a waterfall: not any new species but an exceptional flora, with still of the beginning impression... I didn't talk about animal life: some scared snakes, iule of 20 cm long and a big crab: it is not usual to meet them far from the sea bank...and many butterflies as the wonderful and rare *Papilio Hesperus* black and yellow.

We come back very tired by 6 hours of walking. Huguette and Colette have walked a lot; they met grey parrots, a great bird of prey on a tree and so many butterflies: the large *Papilio dardanus* black and white and *Charaxes* ones who gather on bad odor places: urines or animal dung. A great day, rich and tiring for all !

December 10 th: the last day to Tchimbélé. We go all the team, early on the morning, with Thierry and Gerard, on the Assok road. We leave it after 1 km, near the Tchimbélé lake, and follow on the left a brook, still an other tributary of the Biguilinguen river.

Right at the start, we find a wonderful dark leaved rhizomatous species: *Begonia mildbraedii*; blade is thick and bloom, like *Begonia acetosa* ; we already met it at Igotchi. Some leaves are iridescent, and as many species of this area, it is an epiphytic and terrestrial one. We find still *Begonia susaniae*, an other form with the blade less bullate, sometime very dark, almost black. Discovery so of a species who is perhaps *Begonia poculifera* with a fruit as a berry, a strictly epiphytic one, often in the com-

pany of *Begonia longipetiolata*. We greet as we went past, a green viper, rolled up and who has a siesta... We think at once of Guy-Roger to Igotchi: interviewed about the Gabon viper, the very dangerous *Bitis gabonica*, he told us as follows : “the viper does not move when it sees the first tourist ! When it sees the second one, it says : C'est comment? And then, when the third comes, it attacks ! ”.

I had already heard this version: this reptile is very soft and it constitutes a true danger because, unlike other snakes, the Gabon viper does not run away! The better is certainly not to meet it or to not be the third of the team.

The elephants have still trampled the place underfoot! Huguette finds so a begonia : we will call it “Huguette” before a more scientific determination... It is a small cane like one with lanceolate leaves, dark green, with pale nervures. *Begonia elaeagnifolia* grows on all the felled trees near the brook. It is still a very rich area; many many begonias and other plants; I imagine a terrarium with these wonders as Araceae, Gesneriaceae, and many others which grow near the rivers. We come back by the plateau above the brook. Thierry harvests some bark from an immense tree, used for malaria and diarrhea. We go back to the camp tired after a 7 hour difficult walk and only some cookies in the stomach. Siesta and rest for the remainder of the time!

In the evening, a big black spider simulates an attack with impressive jumps! There is a clap of thunder in the night followed by a free batrachians concert... But it will be the last rain, it is now the small dry season.

December 11th: return to Libreville. We pass our last morning Tchimbélé in the first day place, to the Sud-East of the dam. We go down from the plateau towards the lake. Not any new begonia, but all the

species we had already met. Meeting with an extraordinary frog, sleeping on a tree, at 2 meters high, brown with a light back and on it, two dark spots, and two eyes very impressive for a possible predator, and with two young squirrels playing before a hole, their home, on a tree at 15 m high...and such a wonderful golden scarab on a tree. *Papilio Hesperus* gathers the great white flowers of an unknown shrub.

We end the morning with the visit of the Jean Philippe Biteau's ombrière: We can see here about a hundred orchids species, some epiphytic begonias as *Begonia fusialata*, *Begonia poculifera* and a wonderful plant, perhaps a hybrid between *Begonia microsperma* and *Begonia staudtii*; but nobody knows where it came from and who brought it here.

Gaston, the Mistral Agency chauffeur, must bring back us to Libreville and we leave Tchimbélé about 4 PM. On the way, we locate some bridges over brooks with rocks: if we come back here, we would like visit them.... We stop at the Kinguélé falls, a very nice place where we find another form of a yellow flowered species we met at Igotchi, *Begonia lacunosa*, with a very bullate blade and very ornamental. The Mbei river shrouds the place in mist : certainly, species are growing here on the rocks... We will come back !

When we stop at Kinguélé where we must settle our meals to Sodexho, Charly and Thierry use this moment to explore the bank of the river after the bridge. They come back with a new species, the very rare *Begonia erectotricha*. We see an immense terrestrial orchid (*Eulophia*) on the trackside. We arrive at Libreville at night.

December 12th and 13th: a little rest...It will soon be time of departure! In the morning we go to the Libreville University Herbarium where we see again

Johan Van Walkenbourg whom we met at Igotchi. We consult the begonias herbarium but it is difficult to identify plants from dried specimen without any colour: often, we do not recognize the plants we have seen in the forest!

Then, we visit the artisanal village to buy some souvenirs from Gabon... Only Mbigou carved stones are really typical of the local art.

On the afternoon, we go to the Cap Esterias, about thirty km from Libreville, with Justin who rents us his taxi during the day. We can see the cutting up of a beached billet of padouk, a wonderful red wood. Actually, many billets beach at Gabon; they come from wood trains who go down the Ogoué and sometimes break their moorings.

We come back with the rain; the track is bumpy and shrouded. In the evening, Justin negotiates a 4x4 for Wednesday: it will be our last excursion in the forest.

The cards we wrote to Igotchi are at last sent! We visit again the Jean Philippe Biteau's ombrière: two begonias *Begonia potamophila* and *Begonia scutifolia* are blossom; their yellow flowers are brilliant ! We begin the cases.

December 14 th : the very last excursion. We go early in the morning with a new driver, Alphonse; the object is to attain Mbel, a village on the right bank of the Komo river, to 100 km from Libreville, via the Kinguélé track. But, at the crossroads, people tell us that the bridge is broken and the track is unfit, overgrown. We abandon and decide to return to Kinguélé. We remember a brook with many rocks...Some stops at the brooks which cross the track; we see again *Begonia hirsutula* and another form of *Begonia lacunosa*. We come across a village; dogs have set down some dung on the track. They are covered with many butterflies (*Charaxes*) ! We greet

policemen to Kingulé : this time, they ask for our passports and car papers, but they let us go towards Tchimbélé. We arrive to the brook of the PK 58! After scarcely 5 minutes, we find two rocks covered with ... *Begonia vittariifolia*! It is 2 PM and one rock is in the sun! For 10 minutes! Wonderful. The last day, we find this wonder... with yellow flowers, which grows in moss.

On other rocks, another species, perhaps *Begonia letouzeyi*, with peltate leaf. We don't regret coming back here! Alphonse seems hurried and brings us back very quickly, before the night.

December 15 th; the end. Return to Paris with a great thermal shock! We found it was about 5° C! Charles and Huguette go on in the plane towards Marseille, while the TGV takes us back towards the Charente Maritime.

Gabon, it is finished! We have seen thirty begonias, and about twenty yellow flowered ones. Nowhere else on the earth, will we see as many begonias as here ! We hope to come back here but in a better season for getting seeds, in April or May, at the end of the rainy season.

Thanks to **Patrice Pasquier** of the Mistral Agency, thanks to the Bakker family for their welcome, thanks to Jean Philippe Biteau for his help, thanks to **Marc Sosef** from Wageningen University, great Africa begonias specialist, for his help about species determination.

l'ombrière : a place where we can grow plants in the shade.

We appreciate Jacky sharing his travels with us - such an amazing variety of begonias there. You may contact Jacky at jkdur@club-internet.fr

Continued from page 84.

solve the business problems so we can spend more time with our books and plants.

Howard Berg

Continued from page 98.

The identity of *B. U388* has been in question for several years. Although some identify it as *B. sarmentacea* "samentacea" The nomenclature editor, **Jack Golding**, assures me that this is not correct.

Descriptions For The Seed Fund List for 2005

Descriptions to accompany all the seeds in the Master List cannot be published in a single issue of *The Begonian*. Each issue will have descriptions of the new additions and selected other entries in the Master List for 2005. For descriptions of specific items contact **Ed Bates** at the address above.

B. fischeri Schrank (Syn. U129) [N. & S. America] (Sect. *Begonia*) A highly variable shrub with many varieties. Var. *fischeri* has erect red stems to 2'; medium, puberulent green leaves, red flushed on back; palmately veined; pink blossoms and winged carpels throughout the year. Very prolific.

B. friburgensis Brade [Brazil] (Sect. *Pritzelia*) Rhizomatous with red stems; leaves orbicular, folded and resembling cockscombs when young, thick, leathery, dark glossy green above, red underneath; flowers white and pink in compact clusters in winter.

B. U388 [Viet Nam] Rhizomatous; leaves are light green with chocolate colored veins and a light more or less circular white zone midway

from the umbel to the margin, hairs on top and reverse, up to 8" x 6"; flowers white from September for several months.

B. kellermanii C. de Candolle, [Guatemala] (Sect. *Gireoudia*) Shrub like, stems 1-3 feet, succulent, hairy; leaves peltate, ovate, acuminate, green with white felting above; flowers white on erect peduncles in winter.

B. kenworthyae Ziesenhenné [Mexico] (Sect. *Gireoudia*). Erect succulent green thick rhizome to 6 in.; 12" X 8" leaves, unequally sharply lobed, basally cordate, serrate, red-ciliate, fleshy, slate grey, green veins, covered with a grey bloom; white flowers in many flowered cymes; winter.

B. leathermaniae O'Reilly and Karegeannes [Bolivia] (Sect. *Knesebeckia*) 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.

B. lindleyana Walpers, (Sect. *Gireoudia*) [Guatemala] Rhizomatous, usually erect to 12 inches, covered with red felt when young; leaves 3-8 inches long, obliquely broad ovate, cordate base, toothed; flowers white in broad cymes on hairy peduncles above foliage in spring to summer.

B. ludwigii Immscher [Ecuador] (Sect. *Knesebeckia*) Trunk like, non-ramified with creamy white flowers in spring and summer, striking deeply lobed leaves tipped with white.

B. luxurians Scheidweiler [Brazil] (Sect. *Scheidweileri*) Stems tall, unbranched; leaves palmately compound, 7-17 leaflets 3-6" long, lanceolate, serrate, hairy, reddish above, green underneath; small cream colored flowers in cymes on long peduncles; summer.

B. malabarica Lamarck [India] (Sect. ??) A thick stemmed begonia from west India grows to 2-3 feet; hairy leaves; large pinkish white pendant flowers.

B. nelumbiifolia Schlechtendal & Chamisso [Cent. America] (Sect. *Gireoudia*). Short, thick, ascending rhizome; peltate green leaves to 18 in. long, round-ovate to nearly orbicular, serrulate, ciliate; white to pink tinged flowers in tall, erect, forking cymes; winter to spring.

B. obscura Brade [Brazil] (Sect. *Pritzelia*) Shrub, erect with red stems; leaves smooth, waxy, olive-green, with red petioles; flowers white.

B. peltata Otto & Dietrich var. *peltata*, [Mexico, Guatemala] (Sect. *Gireoudia*) Stems 1-3 feet, succulent, hairy; leaves peltate, ovate, acuminate, green with white felting above; flowers white on long erect peduncles in winter.

Continued from page 93.

any kind please feel free to notify us at leorahenthorne7@msn.com and we will give any help we can.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone in May. Come and celebrate our weather, see our city and some of the exciting things in it, and most of all, come to enjoy fellowship with other begoniacs, and go away with a greater appreciation of the great world of begonias.

***Your editor may have moved
by time to begin the next
issue.***

***If you cannot reach
her, please contact Ann
Salisbury (address on page
118) for addresses.***

***We'll miss you if you are not
in Dallas
for the convention!!
Please come!***



Lovely blooms on B. 'Lenore Olivier' below are typical of those found on all the canes at George's. Inset, shows George, himself, with a small cane B. 'Olivia D'.



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Meet the Macias's

by Donna Zody

Imy and George Macias are popular figures in Begonia circles in Houston town. They are Charter members of The Satellites and The San Jacinto Branches of ABS. Both have held many offices including President, Secretary and Treasurer and have served in myriad roles to promote the goals of ABS. Besides being a popular program presenter, George has been active in establishing and maintaining a unique library shared by the Branches. New books are donated to this collection in lieu of other memorial gifts. The Macias's home is a hub of family, civic and hobbyist's activities – importantly, their begonias, and all of those books!

The Macias's didn't just wake up one morning and decide to turn their property into a showplace for Begonias; they already had an attractive garden with verdant lawns, ferns and tropical flowers, anchored in one corner by a very ambitious Loquat tree.

And yet, the germ of an idea was planted when George was lured by an ad for a begonia seed "species pack" which grew nicely. That success led him to place a comparatively large order for *B. 'Amigo Pink'*, this time with the reputable Logee's Greenhouses. George planted the new seeds with enthusiasm and the seeds responded in kind. George laughingly recalls the pleasant experience of giving tray after tray of *B. 'Amigo Pink'* to everyone he knew. Of course they were tickled pink.

Imy and George were glad that gardeners like to share information, so meeting Begonia enthusiast **Helen Spiers**, practically a neighbor, was inevitable. Helen was like an animated version of the *Thompson Begonia Guide*. While they

shared plants and cuttings, a long-term friendship blossomed. Even today, Helen and George challenge each other to "name that Begonia."

About that time, in 1991, the Macias's small greenhouse was bursting at the seams, but so was a serious knee condition that befell George, one requiring cautious surgical intervention. Just as sunshine follows rain, a fortuitous but untimely gift was bestowed on George – enough tempered glass to build a sizeable greenhouse. Imy encouraged George to design the greenhouse of his dreams, a home for begonias. At a follow-up visit with the surgeon, George shared his vision of building a greenhouse/shade house, and was shocked when the surgeon said, "Go for it. The exercise will be great for your knee." It was good for his psyche, too.

Building the structure was executed like a magnificent tango of George's meticulous woodworking skill, and Imy's sense of beauty and timing. The greenhouse is a brilliant centerpiece in their garden, a lovely monument to their integrity, a salute to begonia growers everywhere and it is home to nearly 200 baskets of very luxuriant begonias and scores of potted plants. In addition to that vision, about 90 trays of begonia cuttings are propagated and donated each year for plant sales benefiting their Begonia Branches.

The tempo rarely varies for this duo. Their day begins with a brisk walk and discussion of the day's plan, which often centers on their four children's families, especially their five grandchildren's activities. While Imy is always the gracious hostess, she defers horticultural questions to George, who certainly welcomes them.

His answers are direct and crisp so pay close attention. Look at the begonias later.

Q. If I start growing begonias will I become a begonian?

A. No, you will become a begoniac.

Q. You seem to favor growing cane-like begonias. Why?

A. Yes, I like to raise cane. I like them for their beautiful blooms. They are so versatile; you can grow them in containers or in the ground. Imy and I like rhizomatous very much, too.

Q. Would you consider going into the Begonia business?

A. No. Then a hobby would become work.

Q. Have you done any hybridizing?

A. No, but I may try that in the future.

Q. How do you unwind after a day with these plants?

A. I teach and moderate a two-hour class in Spanish and English each evening.

Q. What is your secret to growing such beautiful begonias?

A. You need two things: the first is a well-draining soil mix, absolutely. The second is foliar feeding once a week. Simply dilute your fertilizer of choice and spray the dilution on the plant's leaves. I do like to add some *micro-nutrients*. They are very beneficial. I like Monty's Joy Juice.

Did he just say Monty's Joy Juice?

Even the Mockingbird perched in the tree seems to suppress a giggle.

2005 Convention Update by Charles Henthorne

This is just a reminder to everyone to get their registrations in for the 2005 ABS CONVENTION in Dallas, May 18-22. Please remember that the cut-off date for early registration is May 1. We of the Dallas Area Branch, along with the Fort Worth Mae Blanton group, are looking forward to seeing old and new friends.

By now the registration packets have been sent to everyone, and if you have not received yours, please notify us @ leorahenthorne7@msn.com and request that one be sent to you. Also please remember that it will be necessary for you to make your reservation with the hotel itself for your rooms.

The tours are developing into trips that you will not want to miss. As you

look over the list we are sure that you will agree that all are exciting and are all on your must do list. The speakers are all scheduled now and you will find their individual speaking times in your packet you will receive upon arrival at the hotel. All speakers are scheduled, for later in the day, after the tours and on Sat. morning before the business meetings and banquet on Sat. evening. The tours will be scheduled so that the judges can go on the tour of their choice after judging on Friday. In other words there will be no tours on Fri. morning but the tours on Fri. will begin after the judges luncheon upon completion of the judging.

You will want to be sure to visit the hospitality room frequently as the silent

Continued on page 93.



Above left, B. 'Mary's Surprise'. Above right, B. 'Sporty Elaine', a Naron Stewart hybrid of B. 'Pinafort Sport' and B. 'Elaine'. Below is B. 'White Freckles'.



IN THE MAILBOX

by Greg Sytch

Q: I received a nice Rex Begonia as a present last summer and it began to droop all the time despite watering. What can I do to help it grow. It is growing in my office.

A: It definitely sounds like overwatering and poor light. Place the begonia as close to the brightest light source as possible. Only water when the soil is quite dry to the touch and repot only when rootbound. Offices are a great place for Rexes, but they do not dry out as rapidly. Under office lights the Rex should be in constant growth. Under normal light conditions, it may go somewhat dormant in winter, but revive once spring arrives. Water sparingly until new growth sets in.

I have also had several inquiries about finding Rex and other specific varieties of begonias or other begonia information on the web. I have found it best to begin with a search engine such as Google or Ask Jeeves (yes, it works). Try entering specific information such as "Growing Rex Begonias" in quotes and you will be amazed at the wealth of articles available. You will also receive many possible links, particularly for Rexes. You can then print them or save them to use in the future!

I have received many inquiries regarding where to get rex begonias

HURRICANE UPDATE

As many of you know, I was devastated by Jeanne last September. Not only am I still in an apartment as of March 1st, but my poor house is only 3/4 completed. A huge oak tree deposited itself into my house along with two smaller shade trees.

I also lost 2 of my 4 greenhouses and every shade tree in the yard.

I have worked hard the past few months to try and salvage my collection under less than ideal conditions. I am unable to cover my greenhouses fully in winter because even our winter sun can heat them to the extreme. I have utilized 70% shade cloth to minimize sun damage. I lost many larger plants due to sunscald. I also gave away hundreds to the Univ of South Florida and the local begonia group because I had no shade to grow them under. I have tried to respond quickly to questions as Horticultural Correspondent and have met most of those goals. Luckily, the apartment is within a short walk of my house and I have access to my computer, so please keep the emails coming.

As I enter a new phase of begonia growing, I may not be as visible nor may I be as involved as I piece my life back together. Having your home left in shambles like this has been difficult, but once I am back on my feet I hope to contribute as I always have. The support from Begoniacs has been great as I try to rebuild. I thank everyone who has offered cuttings, or just a prayer. I may take you up on the cuttings offer once I have a decent propagation house.

God Bless.

Send your questions to Greg Sytch at 6329 Alaska Avenue, New Port Richey, FL 34653-4301; Ph: 727-841-9618; GSytch@cs.com.

Late Breaking News

Antonelli Brothers in CA suffered a disastrous fire losing their main office, many begonias, and their order records.

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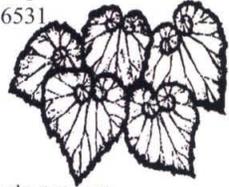
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COMING EVENTS

April 28-May 1, 2005: Miami, FL Begonia Society Show and Sale. Note these are newly revised dates. For more information, contact Joyce Pridgen at 305-378-4570.

May 18-22, 2005 ABS Convention 2005, Dallas, Texas. Packets have been mailed. For more information contact Leora Henthorne at 972-964-6417 and see page 114 of this issue.

Due date for articles for the July/August Begonian is June 1, 2005; announcements due by June 15.

There is a chance that your editor will move before the next issue is begun. I do not yet have an address, but will email those on my email address list. **If you need to reach me**, please get my phone, address, and email from Ann Salisbury, address below.

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Check your mailing label. If it reads
200507 or 200308, your membership is about to expire. Please renew! We don't want to lose you.

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