

The
Begonian

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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: Kingsley Langenberg photographs *B. curtii* a unique Brazilian begonia he raised from seed

Back: Johanna Zinn grows *B. U. 476* in a unique terrarium.

In This Issue

The editor thinks you will enjoy this special issue with much begonia information featuring both old and new begonias. We have the always interesting adventures of **Rekha Morris** in her latest trip to India. **Charles Henthorne** and **Johanna Zinn** write about terrarium begonias. There is also a special feature on easy rhizomatous to grow in various areas. **Kingsley Langenberg** reports on growing a begonia from Brazil that the editor has not seen before and **Jack Golding** provides us with material on a new begonia from China.

Articles

<i>Begonias in the Hanging Gardens of Mishmi Hills</i>	86
<i>Begonia "Pink African Violet"</i>	94
Unidentified Begonia Numbers	96
Tampa Bay Branch Wins First Place	97
Terrarium Containers	98
Growing a Unique Plant from Seed	100
Houston Convention 2008	105
Easy to Grow Rhizomatous Begonias in Various Areas	107
Australia	107
South Florida	109
Sacramento, CA	111
New York	111
Houston	112
Louisiana	113
A New Chinese Begonia	115

Regular Features

President's Message	84
Letter's to the Editor	84
In the Mailbox	93
Seed Fund	102
Conservation	103
Membership Report	104
Coming Events	118
Officers' Page	119



Photo by Ed and Mildred Thompson. Millie labeled this *B. bowerae* as easy to grow, but in many of our climates it is not so easy.

President's Message

It was my pleasure last night to attend the San Diego Horticultural Societies Garden Party with **Margaret Fisher**. It was to award **Chuck Ades**, from Ades and Gish Nursery, Horticulturist of the Year. Chuck became interested in plants when he was 5 or 6 years old. After college and 2 years in the Army he started his career at Rod McLellan Co. in San Francisco. After working there for 12 years he moved to Encinitas and formed Ades and Gish Nurseries with **Bill Gish**. During the 2007 convention the Nursery, now own by his son **Darrell**, was on one of the tours. Chuck's present focus is specialty begonias, and it is always a treat to go down and see what is new and different in the green houses. He was so fortunate to take a love of plants and turn it into a life long profession.

I hope everyone of you has made reservations to attend the convention in Houston this year. **Cheryl Lenert** has an article in the March/April *Begonian* outlining all the activities, the tours, gardens, seminars, and last but not least the plant sale on Friday night. There is going to be a great time had by all so if you haven't done it yet make those reservation or else you will be sorry.

I have just received some more great news. The Palm Beach Branch has unanimously voted to host the 2009 convention in West Palm Beach Florida. Dates are April 29th to May 3rd. Convention co-chairs will be **Charles Jaros** and **Doris Happel**. Save these date because then you will get to see just how big begonias leaves get in Florida.

Just a note to let everyone know that **Charles Jaros** and **Mary Bucholtz** are going to be taking over the U number's from **Thelma O'Reilly**. Thelma has done a terrific job over the years with all the

research she and Rudy Ziesenhenné did on all of the unidentified species that have been discovered on the research trips. Charles has written an article in one of the current issues of the *Begonian* about his and Mary's plans.

One last thing before I close. Have you been on the ABS web site and seen how many hits there are all over the world? The internet has truly made the world so much smaller. Julie has been adding pictures of the Australian hybrids so take a look you will be glad you did. Beautiful doesn't seem to quite do it. Also, read the ABS privacy policy that is on the web site and has a first printing in this issue.

See you in Houston.

Mary Sakamoto

Remember: *We are looking for a new editor.*

Letters to the Editor

Should the *Begonian* Change?

I recently rejoined ABS after dropping my membership for two reasons: 1) *The Begonian* didn't offer much to a new member who isn't "on the inside" as to Society happenings and personalities, and 2) there wasn't any opportunity for learning via local contact with other begonia growers.

Bernie Weiner (Delaware Valley Chapter) took care of the second issue by his gracious invitation to attend local chapter meetings. I wasn't even aware of its existence until he spoke up at a local Rock Garden Society meeting, so his point on the need for local action is very valid. But the second issue is still extant. After considerable thought I think I have at least

identified the problem - it isn't clear if the *Begonian* is a magazine or a newsletter, which makes for a jumble of different types of material. I have the following suggestion to solve the problem:

Separate the two, both physically and editorially. Specifically, continue the *Begonian* as a coated paper publication with content and illustrations solely related to feature articles on begonia nomenclature, exploration, culture and exhibitions. Have a second publication, perhaps entitled something like *ABS News*, that would serve as the house organ/newsletter for national and chapter news, meeting minutes, etc. It would be printed on lower-quality paper and either mailed separately (alternating with the *Begonian*) or bound inside. Several other organizations I belong to do one or the other.

I suggest that the president appoint a committee to explore the above.

Sincerely,

David W. Messer,
Royersford, PA

*David, I too belong to several organizations that separate the two functions. Your thoughts are appreciated, however, the philosophy of ABS and the **Begonian** has always been that we need to do all we can to encourage all members to participate fully in the society and they will be best informed by including society news in the journal. However, as we become more and more an internet society, it may be possible to depend increasingly on the internet to keep members informed of society happenings and as you suggest be able to reserve the *Begonian* for information on begonias which might be preferable to all.*

Mailing costs are far more a factor in total production costs of the journal than are paper costs; they are not even a significant element of production costs.

*Most societies that publish both types do so by limiting the main journal to 4 issues per year or sometimes only 1. Personally, I would not see that as a good use of our resources. Right now, perhaps the major problem facing the *Begonian* is finding someone willing to assume the editor's role as with one more issue after this one, the current editor will complete eleven years in that role.*

*Our president may wish to respond to your request for a committee in the next issue and other reader's thoughts would also be welcome as a letter to the editor. I would say that all members should realize how important it is that they participate in and support the society in all its activities (many of which contribute in a major financial way to the costs of the *Begonian* and now the website) so that it may remain a strong voice for our favorite plant group.*

~FH

Editor's Notes

As I finish one issue I am already thinking about the next. The next issue will be the July/August issue. Unfortunately it will have to be done before the convention material will be in and I do not have a lot of material on hand. I hope you will contribute - you may join in on the "easy to grow" series by just sending in a few paragraphs about the easiest cane-like begonia that you grow; the more areas that we have reports from the more helpful it will prove. What's easy in one area is often impossible in another.

Thanks to all those who responded on a short timeline to my request for material for this issue.

See you all in Houston!

~FH

Begonias
in the
Hanging Gardens of Mishmi Hills
by **Rekha Morris**

One of Lord Byron's witticisms at the expense of women is a none too subtle twist on a well known Shakespearean quotation : "There is a tide in the affairs of women, / Which taken at the flood, leads – God knows where." The unpredictable tides in my life have led me not to "God knows where" but to many memorable habitats in search of begonias, but none has been or is likely to be more memorable than my December 2007 trip to Lohit [now divided into two districts, Lohit and Anjaw], the easternmost section of Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern Himalayas of India.

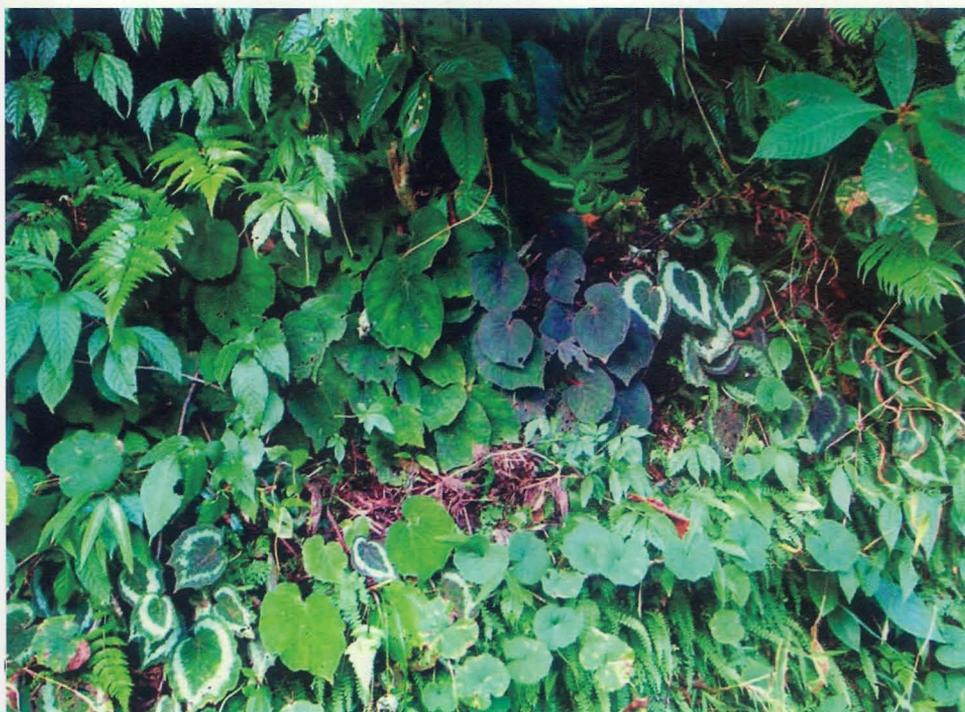
On the first lap of this 4th trip to Arunachal to document begonias, I revisited several sites to assure myself that I had not missed species dormant on previous trips, and to collect any fresh seeds that might be available this late in the season. In E Siang I found two species I had not noticed on my trip there in 2006. One of these might be an all green form of *B. rex* which until then I had documented only in W Kameng, and the second one, a running species which roots where the stems touch the ground remains unidentified. In addition I found a couple of dozen succulent, almost ripe fruit of *B. aborensis*, which enables me for the first time to share seeds of this little known species, which appears not to have been in cultivation until I brought back several rhizomes in 2005. In the course of a hurried one day trip to W Kameng at the end of the trip to Arunachal I collected seeds of *B. xanthina*, and more importantly found some baccate fruit of a species with 5 red splashes, BU526, first recorded in 2006.

Ever since my first visit to Arunachal in April 2005 I had hoped and longed to visit the Mishmi Hills, as the eastern extension of the Himalayas in the districts of Lohit and Anjaw are known. Although most of this tribal area now known as Arunachal remained unexplored in the 19th century, in 1928 F. Kingdon-Ward's plant hunting trips in search of rhododendrons, camellia, primulas and many other temperate zone plants led him through Burma [now Myanmar] to this eastern section of Arunachal on his way to Sadiya, the main British outpost in Assam, India. As he passed through the valleys of the Lohit, Delei and Tidding rivers he documented perhaps a dozen species of begonias of which he identified seven [some possibly erroneously] as *B. cathcartii*, *B. griffithiana*, *B. hatacoa*, *B. josephii*, *B. megaptera*, *B. rex*, *B. roxburghii*, and the rest remain unidentified. The lure of finding these and other species in retracing even a small part of Kingdon-Ward's trek through the Mishmi Hills had been a compelling if unrealized dream during the two trips to Arunachal in 2006. Finally early on the morning of November 30th, 2007 as I left the hills of E Siang and Pasighat I could barely contain my excitement as I headed towards Lohit.

However, as in most such quests the path to fulfillment is neither simple nor straightforward. In my case the obstacles included flooded and washed out roads and bridges which had succumbed to the onslaught of the monsoons, as well as getting not only lost in large sandy stretches in search of ferries plying across



Rekha Morris' photos show above left, B. acetosella var. hirtifolia and BU 542 to the left. Above right is B. U542. Below we see four forms of B. annulata.



the Brahmaputra River but also getting so hopelessly stuck in the sandy mush that it took a tractor to push us out to more solid ground. When we eventually crossed over to the southern flank of the Brahmaputra and headed east towards Lohit we had to drive through Assam, then in the throes of intermittent and unpredictable violence. As though I did not have enough to contend with, there was the added danger of driving through stretches of jungles where either small, marauding bandits or local terrorists operated or an elephant wounded by a poacher justifiably took his revenge by killing a dozen or so humans who had encroached on his territory. Ignoring the apprehensions and timorous warnings of officials supervising my movements along this route, I doggedly and tensely pushed ahead, and after 15 hours on the road finally crossed back into Arunachal, and stopped for the night at a rest house on the edge of Lohit.

Early on the morning of December 1st we headed eastwards as the sun's early light backlit the low Mishmi Hills on the horizon in an ever brightening halo of vermilion-gold. By the time the sun rose above the hills we had driven past the cleared pastures, fields and scrublands of the plains, and were crossing streams and rivers which flowed through an undulating landscape of incipient tropical growth. Quite suddenly we were at the edge of the Kamlang Forest Reserve, an area where Kingdon-Ward had documented an as yet unidentified begonia. Skeptical of finding begonias in this low lying area of about 250 m in elevation where there were marked signs of human encroachment, I nevertheless began scrutinizing the staggered stretches of slopes and embankments allowed to revert to their natural tangle of trees, shrubs, and vines.

Along one such slope I saw the first two species begonias of this region of

Arunachal. One of these has red splashed foliage similar to a begonia I had considered a hybrid between *B. burkillii* and *B. aborensis* [BU529] in E Siang [see the *Begonian*, Nov. / Dec. 2007, p. 209]. With no sign of *B. burkillii* or *B. aborensis* in the vicinity, it now appears that this is a species and not a natural hybrid as I had assumed earlier. The second species, BU541, is a course leafed species with dark, lax stems and foliage much damaged by rapacious insects. Neither had any flowers, but among the tangle of foliage I found 3 baccate fruit of the second species, BU541.

Shortly after this the road began to wind steadily upward through the hills, which were too dry to sustain any begonias. The serpentine road through these mountains afforded magnificent views of range upon range of jagged cliffs with occasional views down precipitous gorges to the Lohit River winding its way through the Mishmi Hills as we were also. From above the Lohit River, one of the five major rivers of the dozens of rivers and streams of Arunachal, was a narrow band of blue-green threading its way to the plains of Assam, its size and force camouflaged by the distance from which we viewed it. However, late in the afternoon we arrived at a bend in the road from where we could both see and hear the waters of the Lohit rushing out of a steep, narrow channel between two thickly forested hills, and curving widely flowing gently between sandy and pebble strewn beaches towards the plains. A few yards around the bend in the hills the late afternoon light seemed to fracture into dozens of dazzling strips across the landscape. This was not a mirage but the sunlight bouncing off the innumerable sinuous streams comprising a delta created by the force of the Lohit reaching the plains before eventually merging with the

longest of India's rivers, the Brahmaputra. It would be in the valleys and cliff sides of the Lohit and its two main tributaries, the Tidding and the Delei, where I would find begonias.

As we moved deeper into the Mishmi Hills the greener they became, and with their ever increasing verdure the chances of encountering begonias increased dramatically. A small colony of *B. sikkimensis* with a few plants of *B. hatacoa* spilling down a cliff was the first sign that I was finally in begonia habitat. However, I was quite unprepared for my next glimpse of begonias as twilight deepened and transformed the periwinkle blue of a scandent campanula threading through the masses of ferns into shades of violet and indigo. I was walking along the base of a near vertical cliff when glancing up I noticed a ledge some dozen or so feet above me outlined in swirls of silver. As my sight adjusted to the darkness I felt as though I had crossed the shadow line separating reality from the dream world and stepped into a begonian's Garden of Eden: above me were dozens of *B. annulata* growing along the edge of this narrow ledge for about 20 feet.

Nothing I had ever seen in the rain forests of Mexico, Central America or in other parts of Arunachal anticipated or rivaled this extraordinary collage of silver and green begonia leaves among and below the arching fronds of ferns and flowering vines. Not only was there this horizontal array of *B. annulata* in four distinct forms, but as I tremulously looked around the slope below them I noticed two other species which grew vertically up along the slope among the ferns and alocasias. Unable to take good photographs in the dark I reluctantly headed for our base some 50 km away, and spent a restless night waiting for dawn to verify whether what I had seen in the deepening shadows

had been conjured by wishful thinking or were part of what was fast becoming the exhilarating reality of the Mishmi Hills.

The next day, Dec. 2nd, I saw hundreds of begonias along the 50 km route I had driven the night before. *B. griffithiana* in bloom spilled down bare cliffs at whose lower levels were scattered colonies of *B. hatacoa* also in bloom. Where there appeared to be seepage and greater ground moisture large clumps of *B. silletensis* subsp. *silletensis* dominated the astounding assortment of ferns and other tropical plants which sheathed these hills in layers of green. A narrow pass between two hills had been slashed of much of its growth to keep the road clear, but among the indomitable resurgence of growth I noticed cream variegated foliage, which on closer examinations proved to be those of *B. palmata* which I had first recorded in E Siang in 2006. Scattered in a few places were the large, contrasting palmately lobed, dark green leaves of *B. sikkimensis* among the many ferns which carpeted the cliffs in varying textures and shades of green from chartreuse to glaucous blue-green.

I moved through this lavish display of begonias taking photos, collecting seeds, and male and female flowers where available for the herbarium, but did so with an ever increasing sense of urgency to be back below the ledge of *B. annulata* to relive the "first, fine, careless rapture". Seeing them the second time and many times afterwards as I passed and re-passed them on my way deeper into the Mishmi Hills was as exquisitely intense as in the twilight hours of my first evening in Lohit.

Below the undulating horizontal layer of the several forms of *B. annulata* along the ledge of this cliff were four other species growing in sporadic vertically aligned clumps. A tall branching species with lanceolate leaves highlighted with red along the central veins grew into a striking

shrub-like form some 4' high and as wide. In order to identify it I began searching each of these clumps for flowers, and on the largest of these plants was surprised to find small, green baccate fruit along the leaf axils. These axillary, succulent fruit with four locules and other characteristics enabled **Dr. Mark Tebbitt** to identify this species as *B. acetosella* var. *hirtifolia* recorded in eastern Tibet [now China] and Burma [now Myanmar] but never before documented in India. Lacking the visual dominance of either *B. annulata* or *B. acetosella* var. *hirtifolia* along this stretch of the cliffs another species nevertheless made its presence felt by the contrast between its metallic green, acutely lobed, often sliver variegated foliage against the moss and selaginella through which it grew. With the ever generous help of **Jack Golding**, this species has been identified as a form of *B. palmata*, *B. U544*, although it differs both visually and in its growth habit from the forms of *B. palmata* mentioned earlier. A third species which grew up to the line of *B. annulata* in places may be *B. roxburghii* although this can only be ascertained with accuracy once it blooms. A fourth tall growing species with dark green, cordately ovate foliage with a large carmine splash on the reverse remains unidentified, *B. U542*.

In the next few days I explored this eastern region of Arunachal to within 5 km of the Chinese border in the course of which I documented many scattered colonies of the second form of *B. palmata*, *BU544*, and a few more clumps of *B. acetosella* var. *hirtifolia*, one of which at a much lower elevation was just beginning to bloom. There were more *B. silletensis* subsp. *silletensis*, **B. hatacoa**, a small scattering of *B. nepalensis*, and in a few exceedingly moist places I also documented *B. longifolia*. A species which may be *B. cathartii* [*B. U545*] grew in profuse colo-

nies on slightly drier and more protected concave depressions in the cliff sides, and just above the Tidding River Valley found another unidentified species with lax, purple black stems and obliquely ovate, silvery green foliage [*B. U543*]

In exploring along the Lohit, Delei and Tidding river valleys of Lohit and the cliffs above these I documented 15 species in less than a week, the most I have recorded for any single district of Arunachal or for that matter any single district in the states of Mexico I have explored so far. Despite all the many revelatory and thrilling trips of exploration I have undertaken in search of begonias in the old and the new world, none has been as rich in finds or has afforded me the sustained and undiminished sense of wonder and fulfillment as I experienced in Lohit.

In the bare and parchment colored landscape of our winter, I have but to shut my eyes to transport myself back to Lohit's hillsides covered with trees, shrubs, ferns, and vines with blooms and berries in yellow-gold, white, pink, scarlet, lilac and indigo-blue. However, it is also inescapably and sadly apparent to me that the most intensely felt moments of my life are now behind me: no matter where I explore there will never be another Lohit and its many layered, hanging gardens, which are the Mishmi Hills.

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to His Excellency **Sri S. K. Singh**, now Governor of Rajasthan, and his wife, Her Excellency **Srimati Manju Singh** for once again enabling me to document begonias in Arunachal. To them & to **Sri P. Lokhande**, Secretary to the Government of Arunachal in Itanagar, my deepest gratitude. My special thanks go also to **Sri J. P. Panthri**, Personal Security Officer to the Governor of



Above left is B. U545 which is possibly *B. cathcartii*. Above right is B. U515 which appears to be a silver variegated form of *B. palmata* from Lohit. Below are cuttings Rekha brought back rooting on paper.



Arunachal, who was both a highly conscientious security officer and an invaluable collector of begonia seeds and plants on cliffs beyond my reach; to Sri A. C. Das, who drove us safely through hundreds of miles of difficult terrain never once losing patience with the difficulties of this trip, & to Sri. Dube, District Commissioner in Tezu, Lohit, for his hospitality, and for enabling me to explore the highly travel restricted districts of Lohit and Anjaw for begonias.

This trip to India in November - December 2007 would not have been possible without the generous financial support from the Grants Committee of the ABS, and from various chapters and members of the American Begonia Society. I extend my appreciation to Mary Sakamoto, president of the ABS, Janet Brown, Normand Dufresne, Charles & Leora Henthorne, Jeanne Jones, Tom Keepin, Lulu Leonard, Wanda & Richard Macnair, Morris Mueller, Brad Negbauer, Carol & Peter Notaras, Thelma & Tim O'Reilly, The Atlanta Branch, the Alamo Branch, the Bessie Buxton Branch, the Dallas Area Branch, the Joan Coulat Sacramento Branch, the Margaret Lee Branch, the Rudolf Ziesenhenné Branch, the Begonia Society of Tampa Bay, the Begonia Society of Austin, the Melbourne Begonia Society of Australia, & the South Australian Begonia Society.

An account of Rekha Morris' exploration of the Western Ghats of Karnataka in November 2007 will follow in a subsequent issue of the *Begonian*.

Seeds made available to the ABS Seed Fund and those who supported my trip to India in Nov/ Dec. 2007. Seeds from Arunachal Pradesh, Nov./ Dec. 2007

[1] RM-AR-415 B. aborensis.
Although this is the first begonia I

documented in Arunachal in 2005, this is the first time I am able to share seeds of this species..

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| [2] RM-AR-550 | <i>B. acetosella</i> var. <i>hirtifolia</i> |
| [3] RM-AR-537 | <i>B. U 545</i> . Perhaps <i>B. cathcartii</i> ? |
| [4] RM-AR-486 | <i>B. griffithiana</i> * |
| [5] RM-AR-485 | <i>B. hatacoa</i> |
| [6] RM-AR-515 | <i>B. U544</i> . <i>B. palmata</i> – group 2*** |
| [7] RM-AR-488 | <i>B. silletensis</i> sub. <i>silletensis</i> ** |
| [8] RM-AR-455 | <i>B. sikkimensis</i> |
| [9] RM-AR-561 | <i>B. xanthina</i> |

*There were very few seed capsules of *B. griffithiana*, and the few I found were not entirely mature, so the viability of these seeds is uncertain.

**The same may also be true of the seeds of *B. silletensis*.

*** I am tentatively grouping *B. palmata* into 2 groups. This is a very variable species, and I have found certain variations of form and growth habit in the several forms I have documented so far.

Seeds from the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Nov. 2007

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| [10] RM-SI-310 | <i>B. dipetala</i> with red veins |
| [11] RM-SI-301 | <i>B. dipetala</i> with rich burgundy reverse foliage |
| [12] RM-SI-525 | <i>B. U525</i> , a species which flourishes on rocks and boulders |
| [13] RM-SI-316 | <i>B. U549</i> A stunning begonia with large pink flowers & silver leaves covered with red hair. I found this one in a private garden. |

IN THE MAILBOX

by Greg Sytch, Horticultural Correspondent

Summertime...And Begonia Livin' is Easy!

Summer is the season that begonias thrive! The long, warm days, ample humidity and bright light spur lots of growth. Canes send out tall shoots, rhizomatous flush with foliage after their blossoms have fallen, and most rexes have recovered from the winter doldrums. But, summer presents a new set of problems if you are not ready. My philosophy has always been, "be prepared"!

Since most growers in northern climates summer their plants outdoors, this is the time to check on rootbound plants. As the heat rises, plants that are rootbound will dry out more rapidly, often times they dry out too much. Repot with fresh soil, and see if you need to step them up a notch. Remember, only go up one pot size (i.e. 6" to an 8", 4" to a 6"). This prevents soil from becoming soggy in heavy rains. Fertilize with a weak solution and settle the plant in with a good watering. A newly potted plant does not require the "heavy hand" of a rootbound plant, so be careful. I have switched to making my own potting mix for smaller begonias, those in 6" pots or smaller. It is as follows:

- 2 parts good, fluffy peat moss (I use Majestic Earth)
- 2 parts perlite
- 1 part large vermiculite
- pinch of bone meal
- pinch of magnesium sulfate

As begonias get larger, they adapt to most any mix that drains well, so using your own mix is fine. Big canes may require a heavier mix to prevent them from

toppling over. I try and use bark-based mixes for canes in pots over 7 gallons. It helps when summer storms flare up!

While mildew is gone by June, summer viruses can spring up. Keep dead leaves removed, clean up debris in the growing area, and remove old leaves. This will keep the plant fresh and prevent the spreading of disease. While insects are few and far between with begonias, a good soapy spray never hurts. 7 drops of soap mixed in a gallon of water, shaken vigorously, should help. Add a little baking soda for fungus control, and feel free to include fertilizer. Make sure you spray the soil area so the mixture absorbs into the soil.

Finally, this is the time of year for cuttings. Using the above formula for cuttings works well, but you can feel free to add an additional part of perlite for drainage. Placing cuttings in the shade will help them root without stress, and a lucky summer thunderstorm will do wonders to settle them in. Cuttings root quickly in summer, so check often to see if they are ready for stepping up.

Summer is a great season to grow begonias. Take advantage of the weather and get them growing! You will be rewarded with abundant growth and blossoms!

Contact Greg Sytch ABS Horticultural Correspondent at 6329 Alaska Avenue, New Port Richey, FL 34653-4301; Ph: 727-841-9618; gsytch@cs.com.

**It's not
too late
to join
the fun in Houston!**

Begonia “Pink African Violet”

by Charles Henthorne, Dallas, TX

Over 30 years ago, when I first started to grow begonias, I heard about one of *Leslie Woodriff's* hybrids, that was called *B. “Pink African Violet”*. It was described to me, as very similar in appearance to a large leaved African Violet, and had multiple bloom stems on it when it bloomed. Since I grew African Violets at the time also, I wanted to find this one to add to my begonia collection. Thus began a long, interesting hunt for a specimen of this plant. Little did I realize that it would take me 30 years to find it.

Over the years, I asked many people if they had heard of it, or if they knew where I could get a start. I always came up empty handed. Finally, a year ago, I obtained a leaf, and immediately stuck it in one of my smaller terrariums. I waited—and waited—and waited, and then waited some more, for new little plantlets to show themselves. Finally after 6 to 7 weeks a small cluster of new growth showed itself above the growing medium. My adventure had started. After 3-4 weeks, I removed the mother leaf and placed my treasure into a little larger terrarium and immediately stuck the leaf down in its home again. The small plant took off and has become a spectacular addition to our collection. It has been in constant bloom and, as one of the photos shows, it has many bloom stems on the plant. Much to my surprise, what started out as a small to medium leaved plant, has become a very large specimen. Its' leaves rival that of the largerst leaved African Violet that I have seen. Also its deep pink blooms could stand beside the African Violet blooms, and win the prize. The leaves are quite thick and succulent feeling, and we have been very careful not to let water, or condensation, or fallen blooms rest on them for any length of time.

Growing it in a terrarium has turned out to be the right move, at least in our enviroment, in Texas. It seems to like the very high humidity, and the mixture of 1/2 long strand sphagnum peat, and 1/2 perlite that we use. Indeed, it has thrived beyond my wildest dreams. It has turned out to be one of my very favorite hybrids. When I started look for information on it for this article, I approached **Joan Coulat**, who knew **Leslie Woodriff** personally, for any information she might give me. She remembered growing it in the late 1970s', but has not had it for many years. The earliest reference I could find on it was the date 1978 when my good friend, **Millie Thompson**, mentioned it in her book, *Begonias* and catalog. It seems that Woodriff did not register it. Joan also told me about Leslie's famous bottle, which he painted black, and used for pollination of his begonias. The parent plants of *B. “Pink African Violet”* is listed as *B. socotrana*, and *B. herbacea*.

The largest leaf so far is a little over 6 inches long and 4.5 inches wide. The longest bloom stem is over 6 inches long. The female blooms open first with the male blooms being somewhat longer to open. It is classed as a tuberous, cheimantha-like deep pink; everblooming; profuse begonia. The definition of cheimantha is “a hybrid winter blooming begonia grown for its many dark pink flowers”. After seeing my mature plant blooming I can certainly agree with that definition. The synonym, ‘Christmas Begonia’, is also quite appropriate, as it first started to bloom around Christmas time.

We are anticipating showing this great plant in Huston at the 2008 Convention. We look forward to having others view this little known but great looking begonia.



Charles Henthorne photographs the charming flowers and fresh green leaves of Begonia 'Pink African Violet'.



Unidentified Begonia Numbers

by Charles Jaros, U Number Co-Director

During the ABS Board and Annual Meeting held this past September 2007 **Thelma O'Reilly** resigned her post as Director of the Unidentified Number Project. This project which Thelma has headed for many years is the ABS program that provides numbers for begonias collected from natural growing areas around the world.

In her letter she requested that I, Charles Jaros, and **Mary Bucholtz** be appointed "Unidentified Number" (U Number) Co-Directors; this was approved and was voted upon by the Board. Thelma has continued to bring up to date all U- number up to *U539*. All future requests for U Numbers should be made to Charles Jaros, U Number Co-Director, 200 Maureen Dr., Sanford, FL 32771; Ph: 407-328-0618; cjaros@cfl.rr.com

Mary and I request that collection information and plant descriptions be provided to us when "U" numbers are assigned; this information is invaluable to us in further research of the begonias and for publication in the *Begonian*. Since becoming co-directors, Mary and I have assigned U numbers up to *U557* to **Rekha Morris** and **Mary Sizemore**.

It is exciting to see so many wonderful begonias being collected, many I'm sure new to *Begoniaceae*. With your help we will be able to keep track of these collected treasures by assigning them "U" numbers.

I want to thank Thelma O'Reilly for her many years of hard work as "U" Number Director and both Mary and I will be working closely with her.

Join Southwest Region/ABS

Receive the *Begonia Leaflet* in alternate months with the *Begonian*. You do not have to live in the Southwest to join, but you must be a member of ABS.

**Dues: \$10 individual, \$15 family, \$10 Branch
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**Tampa Bay Branch
Wins First Place
At the
Florida State Fair, Horticultural Division
~ Third Year in a Row!
by Jeanette Breden Hall, Vice President
Begonia Society of Tampa Bay**

Ok, I know the title sounds a bit too much, but, for the past four years our branch has participated in the well-known Florida State Fair's Horticultural competition, held every February in Tampa. Typical societies we compete against include the Orchid Society, Gesnariads, Crotons, Aroids and others.

When I first joined the Tampa Bay Branch, **Shirley Brown** took me under her wing, as she had a habit of doing, and not only coerced me into preparing our monthly newsletter, but somehow, she convinced me that I should chair the 'Fair' committee. Being very naive and a novice as far as begonias were concerned, I bought into her encouragement and volunteered. And, as I later learned, when you volunteer for something, you do it for life.

The year I came on board was our second year competing at the Fair. Our committee met, brainstormed, came up with a theme entitled: 'The Magic of Begonias', and, with some borrowed statuaries, flying fairies, stars, and a lot of blood, sweat and tears, we came in First Place! Wow! Was I shocked!

So now comes another year. I was warned: *'No one ever comes in first place for a second year in a row'*. Well, don't ever tell me I can't do something. Our theme was 'The Secret Garden of Begonias'. We used lots of gnomes, whimsical creatures, singing birds, etc. So, just for the record, we did it again. We were all

amazed!

As you can imagine by now, the horticultural community is more than a little upset.

Do we dare try for a third year? You're darn right we did. And with our usual work, a new theme: 'Begonias in the Wild' using lots of borrowed life-like critters like raccoons, rabbits, alligators, ducks and more singing birds, we did it again - First Place! My, oh my!!!

But, lets not forget to give credit where credit is due. It all goes to our beloved begonias. No matter what you do to them, where you put them, they are the stars!

So, what's planned for next year? I think we all know.

**April 23 to May 3, 2009
Palm Beach, FL
ABS Convention
Make your plans
early for a Florida
Vacation!**

Terrarium Containers and Where to Find Them

by Johanna Zinn,
Fairfax, Virginia

For those of us who grow plants in terrariums, finding appropriate containers is sometimes a challenge. Even with internet shopping available to most of us, purchasing a terrarium that is just the right size, shape, height, appearance, or price can be difficult.

Fortunately, in addition to using containers designed as terrariums, begonias will grow in most clear containers that have a cover or can be covered. Some will grow well in the extra humidity provided by the sides of the container, and will not need a cover.

Glass containers that work well include bowls, brandy snifters, large hurricane lamps, cloches, fish bowls, pickle jars, aquariums, cake dish covers, trifle bowls, and display boxes or cases. Many of these can be purchased new at kitchen stores, craft stores, at discount stores such as Ross, Marshalls, or T.J.Maxx in the home section, or at pet stores.

Glass cloches or terrariums can be purchased at your local nurseries or via the internet or catalogues. Containers purchased without a cover can be sealed with glass circles or lids cut at a glass shop to fit the opening, or with plastic wrap or disposable plastic plates available at party or grocery stores. Used containers can be purchased at antique/junk shops, Goodwill or Salvation Army, or garage sales.

Plastic containers such as disposable salad bowls, fish bowls or aquariums, soda bottles, display boxes or small display cases, cloches, sweater boxes, clear ice buckets, large pretzel jars, or cookie containers are suitable for growing plants.

Party stores sell multiple sizes of disposable salad/fruit/punch bowls and some sell large clear ice buckets. Put one bowl or ice bucket on top of the other to make a terrarium. If the bowl or ice bucket has a rolled edge, the top and bottom can be held together with hair clips called claws. These come in multiple sizes that fit most rolled edges.

Some local nurseries stock a few bowl terrariums and Wardian cases, or may be willing to order one for you. Logee's [www.logees.com] has ten inch and fourteen inch plastic terrariums for sale that separate in the middle of the container. That makes it convenient to plant and groom your begonia. Lee Valley Tools [www.leevalley.com] has a package of 5 ventilating cloches that measure twelve inches high by thirteen and one-half inches wide. Put a deep saucer under the cloche for planting medium and you have created a contained atmosphere.

Craft stores such as Michaels or Hobby Lobby sell small to large inexpensive glass bowls. Botanic gardens often have gift shops that sell terrariums. Trade plant catalogues with friends or look at catalogues at local horticultural parks or libraries for terrariums for sale.

Type terrarium into Google or another search engine and you should have several options from which to choose. If you are determined and flexible, you should be able to find a container to suit most humidity-loving begonias.



*Johanna Zimm shows *B. amphioxus* growing in a glass clock case to the left above. To the right is a stock of glass containers and below are the various types of plastic containers that may be used. See her unidentified begonia growing in its container on the back cover.*



Growing a Unique Plant from Seed

by Kinsly Langenberg,
Waukegan, Illinois

Those of you who have solved my online jigsaw puzzles may recognize *Begonia curtii* Brade. I grew it from seed purchased online from **Mauro Peixoto**, a Brazilian tour guide and seed collector. Growing out *Begonia curtii* has been quite an adventure.

I hope you can tell from the pictures that it has much character. Most obvious are the huge persistent stipules. The leaves are large (up to 6" long in my experience so far), unequally obovate in outline with cordate base, glabrous, fleshy, apple green colored, rimmed in red (in bright light). This makes it an interesting landscape subject, if you have the room. It grew about 3 feet tall in the ground for me last summer. I have wintered-over (thus far!) several large specimens in 8" pots. So I classify it as a "survivor".

This begonia seems to tolerate a wide range of growing temperatures. It has thick succulent leaves, so if I miss it during my watering rounds, it doesn't collapse like some other *prima donna* species I will not mention by name. I also wonder if those persistent stipules are another anti-drought adaptation. It also can take full sunlight here in northern Illinois. However, for best appearance, I would recommend some midday shade.

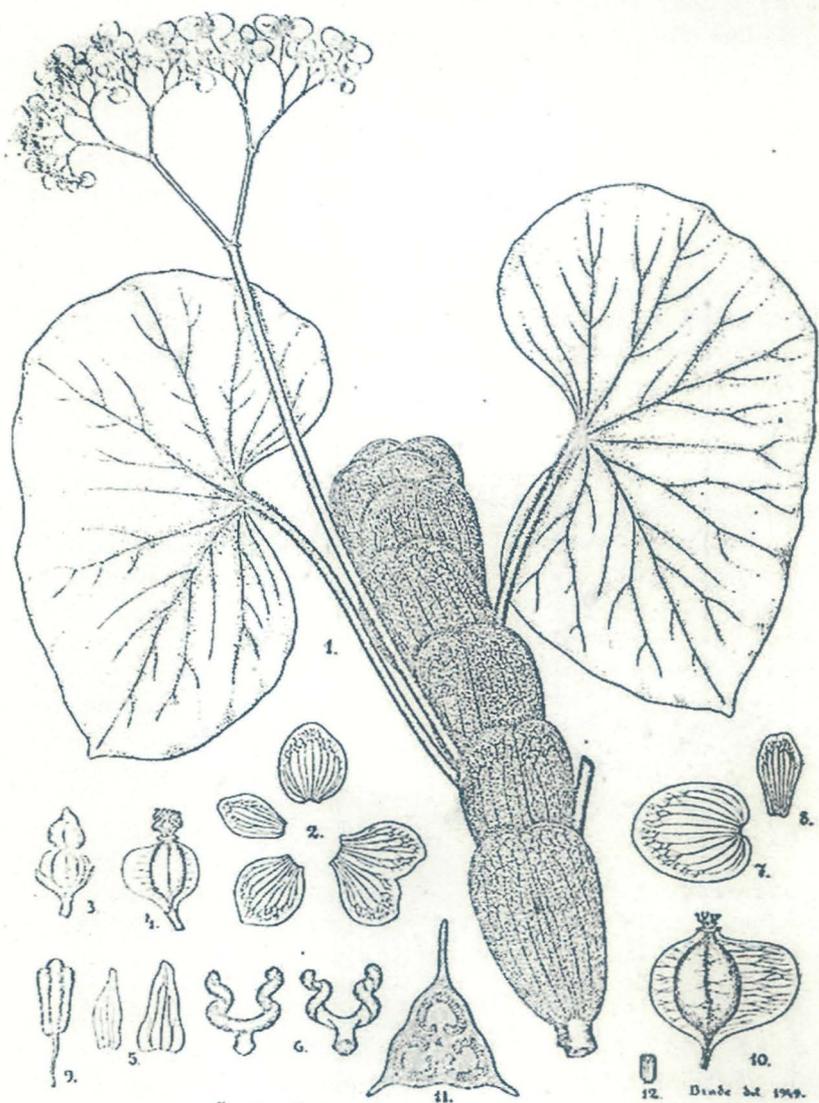
I was surprised and thrilled when it flowered at the end of its first season of growth. It sent up a very tall inflorescence. The one in my living room was about 3' long (!) which developed into a compound dichasium. As usual for many *Begonia*, the male flowers opened first and only after they had all dropped did the females emerge. The flowers are small and white.

Begonia curtii is similar to *B. venosa* Skan ex J. D. Hooker, but differs in that the leaves are glabrous, whereas the later has felted leaves. It was first named *Begonia velata* by **Dr. Alexandre Curt Brade**, who collected it in the mountains near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. "Velata" is Latin for "covered", a reference to those large membranous stipules that conceal the stem of the plant. Unfortunately, that name had already been given to another *Begonia* by **Lyman Smith** and **Bernice Schubert** of the Smithsonian Institute. So they, in turn, renamed the species in honor of Dr. Brade and published the new name in 1955. Dr. Brade had recently retired from the position of Head of the Department of Systematic Botany at the Botanical Garden of Rio de Janeiro. He published over fifty different Brazilian species in the years between 1943 and 1958. I am growing several of them.

Those seeds of *B. curtii* offered by the Seed Fund were collected in my living room last Spring, from I would guess about 8-10 seed pods. I hope to collect more this coming year. I am not sure what its blooming season is. Inside, it bloomed in spring. Outside it bloomed in fall. It has not flowered in the garage.

By the way, I wrote to Mauro for his permission to offer the seeds. He agreed, provided that I send him some of them first because he had lost his plant!

A new begonia to grow is a dream for all of us! Thank you, Kingsley. You may email him at kingsley.langenberg@gmail.com



Begonia Curtii

Brade's illustration of his *Begonia velata* (= *curtii* Sm. & Sch. 1955), Arq. Jard. Bot. Rio de Janeiro 10:133, pl. 2. 1950.

CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND LISTING

The Margaret Lee Branch, San Diego County, CA

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

Please self pollinate your species begonias, collect the seeds and send them to the seed fund. We depend on your contributions of seed to make a wider variety of species available to the members.

Thank you **Rekha Morris** for these seeds from Dominica and Central America. The following species' are now available thru the Seed Fund. Please see Rekha's article in the Sept/Oct 2007 issue of the Begonian. Page 178. It contains descriptions of the listed species.

Rarely listed:

\$2.00/ packet

- B. convallariodora*
- B. dominicalis* (pink flowers)
- B. glabra*
- B. involucrata*
- B. multinervia*
- B. oaxacana*
- B. sericoneura* (different plant from Mexico)
- B. undisilvestris*

Remember you can always request seed for past listings. The Jan/Feb issue lists all species we have available at the beginning of the year. If you have seed not listed, please send us some to share with others.

Packets of seeds of species and U

numbers are \$1.50. All packets of cultivars (including open pollinated) seeds are 50¢ per packet. Very rare seeds and newly collected seeds will be \$2.00 or more per packet. California residents please add 7.75 % sales tax. All orders must be accompanied by check or money order, payable in US funds ONLY, to The Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund.

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

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

DISCLAIMER: The seeds distributed by the seed fund are identified as received from the donors. The species names (in italics) reported here are correct based on the latest information from *Begoniaceae*, Ed. 2; Golding, and Wasshausen. Hybrid names are made consistent with the *ABS Check List of*

Conservation

Comments

Bill Claybaugh

Conservation Chairman, ABS

Propagating on Paper - Continued

My recent article on "Propagating on Paper" (Sept./Oct. '07) has stirred up a lot of interest throughout the Society with numerous e-mails coming in on different variations and results. So far all comments have been very positive and results have been average to good. The most uniform comment on the method as written is that a 10 percent solution of clorox is too strong for most leaves: most people have just abandon this step or have gone to a very weak solution.

When I first heard of this technique from Fukumi Smith, she told me the method was not new but didn't have a literature reference. To my surprise, in reading some old *Begonian* I found the method described as "Leaf Disc Propagation Technique" by H. B. Lagerstedt, Department of Horticulture, Oregon State University, the *Begonian*, March 1968. This was followed up by comments in the *Begonian* from the ABS Research Director "Leaf Disk Trials" by M C. L'Hommedieu in February 1969. I'll quickly summarize what these articles contain and note in particular what's new or has been confirmed.

The Lagerstedt study was intended

to study organ differentiation (formation of roots and growing points, i.e. buds) and the effects of different "plant growth regulators". "The technique consisted of cutting penny-sized round disks across the leaf veins", hence the name "leaf disc". These discs were treated for three to five minutes in a ten percent clorox solution, water washed, then floated on a "growth regulator solution". The primary solution studied was one containing indolebutyric acid (IBA) which we know as a commercial rooting hormone. These small discs were then cultured on various medium including paper towels, vermiculite, perlite and sand, all contained in a terrarium-like environment. It was noted that peat moss was not used as a medium because the author contended it retarded root growth. Also, Lagerstedt noted that "there was little benefit in using IBA with varieties that are normally easy to root" but if used, a solution of 100 ppm seemed optimum.

Four other observations were made that will serve us well today, namely:

(1) that no one set of conditions are optimum for all varieties, i.e., each variety requires its own experimentation. He noted that almost all varieties rooted with this method, whereas only about 70 percent also produced buds (I believe he was using only rhizomatous plants for this work based on previous statements, but cannot be certain.)

(2) Temperature was a major factor in the speed of rooting with 75 to 80 degrees F. much better than 65.

(3) Light intensity of 125 foot-candles seemed to be optimum for rooting and budding with higher levels actually inhibiting the growth. This is a major new piece of information and I will elaborate more on this below

(4) No fertilizer was used during propagation to discourage fungus and

algae growth.

In 1969, M. C. L'Hommedieu, Research Direction, ABS wrote of his results with this method. He noted the following:

(1) the 10 percent clorox solution was too strong for many varieties.

(2) without the use of IBA, it took about two months to get roots and plant growth. With a 100 ppm solution and a 30 minute soak, "...increased the time of rooting from two to four weeks..." (I suspect he meant it improved the rooting time by two to four weeks.)

(3) "Some varieties seem to be more susceptible to rot than others and also to take much longer to root.

(4) some *B. masoniana* disks took one month to root while other *B. masoniana* disks took up to six months.

(5) thick textured leaves appeared to be less susceptible to rotting than thin leaves.

Now let me elaborate more on the light intensity comment of Lagerstedt. After reading this article, I consulted **Jack Golding** on light intensities. He sent me a copy of his "Gardening Under Lights", a publication of the Brooklyn Botanical Garden Record. This handbook clearly defines light intensity measured in foot-candles as a function of light fixtures and distance from the tubes. **From this, Jack estimated that 125 foot-candles intensity corresponds to a distance of 18 (at the end) to 32 inches (at the center) below a two 40-watt tube fixture with a reflector.** Also, the damaging 500 foot-candle intensity occurs at 15 inches below the tubes near their center. (My common practice has been to place the shoe-boxes at 8 to 12 inches below these two-tube fixtures for 12 hours per day.)

While this information was developing, I accidentally left a shoe-box

of B. 'Deja Thoris' "cuttings on paper" in a rather dark corner of the office for about one week. This is a box of cuttings that had been in the shadehouse under lights for over two months without rooting. To my surprise when I found the box and looked at the wedges, all had rooted and two had small plantlets. **The major changes for that one week were a higher and more constant temperature, and very low light.** Wow! This unexpected result leads me to conclude the Lagerstedt study has considerable merit and I will definitely be exploring these temperature and light variables in future work.

See *Rekha Morris' photo of her cuttings on paper on page 91.*

Membership Report by Donna Marsheck, Membership Director

New members since January 4th are:
CA - 6; FL - 2; IA - 1; IL - 1; KS - 1; MI - 2; MD - 1; MO - 1; NJ - 1; NY - 2; OR - 1; PA - 1; TX - 2; and WY - 1.

Members joining our ABS Branches:
DALLAS - 1; DVB - 3; LBPC - 1; LHMB - 2; MCB - 1; PBB - 8; PVB - 1; RIV - 1; SBB - 1; SFO - 1; SGV - 1; TAMPA - 3; and WES - 1.

Members joining ABS from other countries: Argentina - 1; Australia - 1; France - 1; Germany - 1; United Kingdom - 2; and Thailand - 1.

It would be very helpful if each National Director kept me up to date on physical address changes in the branch membership. When an issue is returned to me because of an address change, it costs ABS \$1.31 to mail it again if and when I find the new address.

The mailing list submitted for this issue will have been for members whose 2008 dues were paid. I will bring you up to date on a member count in the July/August issue - help me make it a great!!

Take care,

Donna

BEGONIAS - THE GREAT ADVENTURE in Houston,

Texas

by Cheryl Lenert

It is almost here. It's always wonderful to get together with old friends and make new ones. We think you're going to like what we have in store for you.

It's not too late to look over your begonias and choose one or two to bring as entries. There are countless tales of members who were encouraged to enter something they hadn't considered and ended up walking away with major prizes.

And by the way, we have some pretty spectacular trophies for this convention.

Everyone who lives at least 250 miles from Houston should bring at least one traveling begonia. That is a four inch plant and you can enter one in each category. (Cane, rhizomatous ,shrub, thick stem, etc.)

We think the plant sale will be a big surprise with some of the varieties we have been able to acquire. We even surprised ourselves with some of the begonias we have been able to propagate just for you.

May is a beautiful time of year in Houston and Houston is going to be more beautiful with a big happy crowd of begonia lovers.

We have added a few exciting things to our line up. Check www.begonias.org for any last minute bulletins and up dates.

See you soon!

Tom Keepin and Cheryl Lenert

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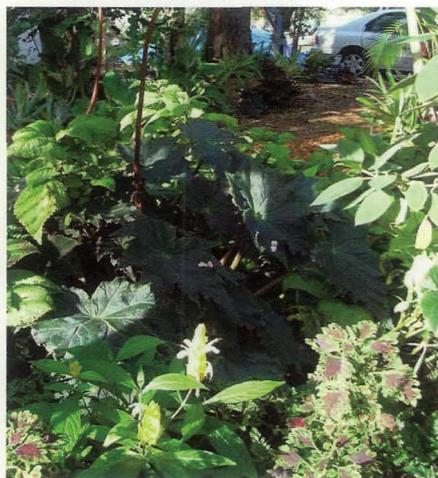
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Begonias clockwise:
B. diadema, B. heracleifolia,
B. 'Holleymoon', and
B. 'Caribbean King'.
For photo credits, see page
106.

Easy to Grow Rhizomatous Begonias in Various Areas

Johanna Zinn wrote in the last issue about easy to grow terrarium begonias. It occurred to me that perhaps this was a good theme to pursue with other begonias as well. Beginning begonia growers are always looking for easy to grow begonias, but all of us appreciate them as well.

One thing I have well learned as a result of growing begonias in four states over the last few years is that the begonias that grow well in one area do not necessarily grow well in another. Thus, I reached out to growers in various areas and countries to ask if they could write about begonias that were extremely easy in their areas. You will see in the coming pages that many have responded to my request.

Now, I would like to request that others join in this project by sending me a few paragraphs about those that grow well in their area. A photo would be appreciated as well. Won't you participate? This issue covers the rhizomatous begonias, but future issues will cover in this order: cane-like, shrub-like, Rex Cultivars, thick-stems, semperflorens, and tuberous.

The factors that make a major difference in how well begonias grow in various areas are many, but major differences have to do with temperature and humidity. Fortunately with begonias, these differences do not result in the success or failure with begonias in general as it does for many plant families, but only in which ones will succeed where. I maintain that no matter where you live there will be begonias that will do better in that environment than anywhere else. The truly great begonia is the one that seems to prosper everywhere - note how some appear in very different environments here. Growing begonias is always a great adventure!

We begin in Australia where Peter Sharp describes a begonia easy to grow there. ~FH

Australia

Begonia diadema by Peter Sharp

At first glance one would suppose that this is either a cane-like or a shrub-like begonia but it is actually classified by the Thompsons as rhizomatous, jointed at or below the surface, and indeed on closer inspection the joints can be clearly seen. The foliage is deeply cleft, glabrous, mid to dark green and heavily silver spotted. Grows into a beautifully rounded shape of medium height to about one metre, with a full leaf coverage.

Mark C. Tebbitt in his book *Begonias* reports that there is some doubt that *B. diadema* actually originated in Borneo and surmises that it is most closely related to the Himalayan begonias; he also reports that there is some debate as to whether it is in fact a true species, being instead perhaps an artificial hybrid.

This begonia is a superb, easily grown garden specimen here in Sydney, Australia, unaffected by either our hot summers or mild winters, and I have found that it does much better in the open garden than in a pot. Whether potted or not, all that it asks is an open growing medium and regular fertilizing. It likes a lightly shaded position with some morning sunshine and will produce light pink flowers

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South Florida

Favorite Rhizomatous Begonias by Johanna Kitson

South Florida grows some great begonias. Because of our climate, we can grow any that prefer our warm (85° F to 95° F), humid summers (in the 90%+ range) and mild winters (above freezing). Our soil is very sandy, therefore, garden beds can be amended with an organic mixture. I use a combination of peat, oak leaves, cypress needles and a light coating of mulch.

Begonia 'Caribbean King'

Perhaps one of South Florida's most vigorous landscape plants is *Begonia 'Caribbean King.'* Leaves are sometimes a foot across, star-shaped and a dark green with maroon undersides.

Pink blossoms rise two to three feet above the ground and appear in February lasting through mid April. The plant can take bright light with some full sun.

Propagation is easily achieved through leaf cuttings or pieces of the large

rhizomes.

B. 'Caribbean King' is a **Tim Anderson** hybrid created in Miami, Florida.

Begonia 'Holleymoon'

Begonia 'Holleymoon' is my largest growing begonia and has been in my yard since before the hurricanes hit three years ago. After the storm all the leaves were tattered, but the rhizomes resprouted and became huge plants once again.

The spring-green leaves are roundish in shape, pebbled on the leaf surface, and are all over a foot in diameter. Large white blossoms tower over the plant from February through April.

Leave plenty of room for this gem as the plant has spread from an original four inch size to several feet across and nearly thigh high.

It also propagates well from leaves and rhizome pieces. It was hybridized in Arkansas and Texas by **Freda Holley**.

Begonia heracleifolia

And, last but not least, another favorite rhizomatous is the green form of *Begonia heracleifolia* collected in Oxaca, Mexico, several years ago. The leaves are a medium green with very long pointed star-shaped leaves. So far, the plant has remained at about fifteen to eighteen inches high with rhizomes spreading outward ap-

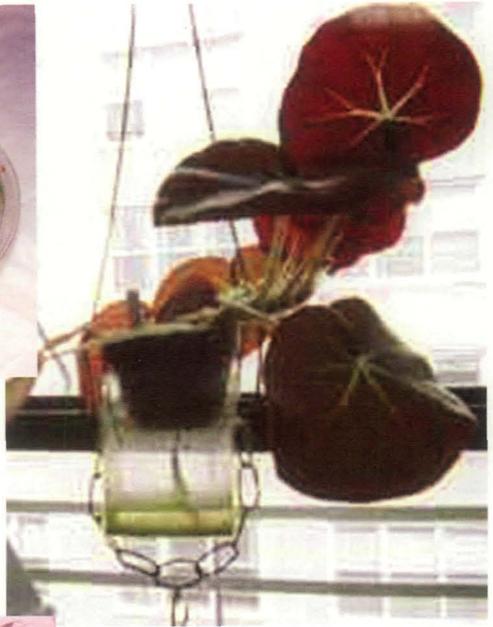


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Clockwise: B. 'Buttercup', B. 'Erythrophylla', leaves on Morris Mueller's plants of B. heracleifolia var. nigricans, 'Cachuma', and B. 'Bill's Beauty', and full plant of B. 'Cachuma'



B. heracleifolia var. nigricans

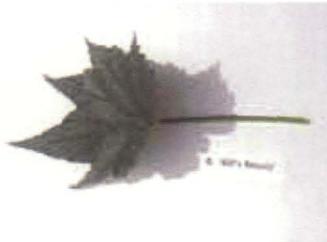
Photo credits, this article:
Page 106: **Peter Sharp** - B. diadema, all other photos by **Doris Happel**.

This page clockwise: B. 'Buttercup', file photo, unidentified photographer; **Brenda Riviera**, B. 'Erythrophylla'; **Paul Tsamitis**, begonia leaves; file photo, B. 'Cachuma', unidentified photographer.



B. 'Cachuma'

Page 114: Top 3 photos by **Bill Clabaugh**, bottom 3 photos, **F. Holley**.



B. 'Bill's Beauty'

proximately two feet across. It has seeded itself in my yard over the last few years coming up first on some old coral rock and the next year it seeded on an old rotten cypress stump. The mother plant is about twenty-five feet away from the offspring. Each of these begonias grows in different light conditions ranging from nearly full sun to shade under a large fern and trees, however, the size of the leaves doesn't seem to be affected by this change.

Sacramento, California

Easy Rhizomatous Begonias
by **Morris Mueller**

Begonia heracleifolia

B. heracleifolia and its numerous varieties are easy to grow, trouble-free plants here in the Central Valley of Northern California where the summers are hot and dry and the winters, while rarely freezing, are cool and moist. My only problem with them is mealy bug, which fortunately is seldom serious. People who have seen them in their natural range in Mexico remark on the great variability of this species.

Begonia 'Cachuma'

One of the easiest to grow of the rhizomatous hybrids is *B. 'Cachuma'*. It grows fast with no special care and is quite hardy. It was hybridized by **Rudy Ziesenhenn**e in 1975. It grows into a striking, large plant at maturity. The hairy stems

always invite people to "pet" them as the red covering looks so dense and soft.

B. 'Bill's Beauty'

There are two plants in cultivation named *B. 'Bill's Beauty.'* The one pictured here is easy to grow and rapidly makes a large show plant. Trouble-free of pests, except mealy bugs, it propagates readily. It appreciates bright light, but exposure to hot sun causes the leaf tips and edges to turn brown.

New York

Easy to Grow
by **Brenda Rivera and George Axiotakis, Knickerbocker Branch**

Begonia 'Erythrophylla'

The heirloom "beefsteak begonia" is thought to be a hybrid of the Mexican species *Begonia manicata* X *hydrocotylifolia*. Sometimes overlooked in favor of newer, flashier hybrids, this specimen shows that it remains a plant worthy of any collection. This specimen is growing in a water-wicked clay pot in a Manhattan north window. It started slowly, but once established it proved to be a fast, reliable grower.

Begonia 'Buttercup'

My Begonia 'Buttercup' grows in a large terrarium with *Episcia* 'Silver Skies,' *Philodendron* 'Pincushion' and Anubias 'nana.' It is growing on live Java Moss

on a lava rock, about 13" under four full-spectrum tubes. *B.* 'Buttercup' is a great **Mike Kartuz** hybrid of two west African species: the tiny creeping *Begonia prismatocarpa* and the bubble-leaved *B. ficicola*. Like these west African rhizomes, it has pretty yellow-orange flowers. (Alas, this guy is still about one to two weeks away from blooming. No complaints, though, as it is a volunteer who appeared one day!) This compact, mounding plant is great in bowls, or even on a moist pebble tray among your begonias and gesneriads. For those who find *B. prismatocarpa* a bit too temperamental, I highly recommend *Begonia* 'Buttercup.'

of two species, *B. hydrocotylifolia* and *B. manicata*. This is the oldest known begonia hybrid still in existence today with the possible exception of the natural hybrid *B.* 'Ricinifolia' which was named by Dietrich in 1847 as a cross of *B. heracleifolia* with *B. barkeri*. *B.* 'Erythrophylla' has existed all these years because its very thick leaves makes it easy to grow, even under low humidity conditions. The plant is easy to grow in the home or yard, in low or high light, will tolerate temperatures from the low 30's to 100 degrees F, and is easy to propagate from leaves. The plant flowers well in the early spring and can be grown in a pot or in a hanging basket.

Houston, Texas

Easy-to-Grow Rhizomatous Begonias by Bill Claybaugh

Begonia 'Erythrophylla'

The easiest begonia to grow, without doubt, is the hybrid *B.* 'Erythrophylla', sometimes called the "Beefsteak" begonia. This hybrid was created in 1849 in Germany by Von Warscewics from a cross

Begonia 'Persian Brocade'

Another easy to grow begonia hybrid is *B.* 'Persian Brocade'. This cross was made by Dillard in 1961 from *B. bowerae* and *B.* 'Maphil' (another *bowerae* cross of unknown parentage). The *bowerae* heritage gives this plant that great green/black color combination that is so attractive. This plant can be grown in the yard, in the home, and in the greenhouse under almost any conditions. The plant takes to pot culture or makes an outstanding hanging basket when the rhizomes are allowed to grow over the pot sides and naturally hang down.

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(Book prices include U.S. shipping. International shipping is extra.)

*Begonias *Gesneriads *Tropical

Begonia nelumbifolia

The one species begonia that is easiest to grow is *B. nelumbifolia*. This plant is a large, robust grower from central Mexico and has several very desirable characteristics. First and foremost, it is large and very heat tolerant. The plant typically grows over three feet in height with flower inflorescence over four feet. The leaves are oval in shape, light green, peltate, and over 10 inches in width. The plant has a very high tolerance to light so can be grown in the yard in full summer sun which is quite unique for a begonia. In the winter the leaves will freeze back, but the rhizome seems to be fairly cold tolerant and the plant usually comes back year after year. When grown in a pot, the plant does well too, but tends to stay smaller.

Choudrant, LA

by Freda Holley

Choudrant is similar in climate to Houston, but being in northern LA, it gets much colder in the winter. This year it was colder than it has been the coldest of the three winters we have been here. Summers tend to be both hotter and drier. Rhizomes do grow better there than they did for me either in Oklahoma or Arkansas. However, so many rhizomatous begonias do require

a cooler climate and will not survive here. I have never grown many rhizomes because of my preference for canes and thick stems, but a few do so well here and reproduce so easily that I do grow them. Of course, the *Begonia* 'Erythrophylla' does well here as it seems to everywhere and *Begonia nelumbifolia* gets very large, but following are those I most recommend for this area. I have seen all grow well in Houston as well.

Begonia 'Ricinifolia'

Bill mentions this natural hybrid above. I came across mine at a garage sale here in Ruston (contrary to our mail address, we really consider that we live in Ruston). I figured that anything offered in a garage sale would have to be hardy and so it has been. Moreover, leaves stuck down willy nilly in a pot produce a flock of offspring so it makes a good pass along plant. Although its leaves are plain green and spectacular only in vigor and size, right now with its many, many bloom stems of pink flowers it looks spectacular. I have found it to be much thirstier than most rhizomes and becomes dry very often, I think because of its extensive roots. I have taken no care at all of the plant, but it continues to grow larger and larger. I would certainly recommend this one to beginners.



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Begonias clockwise: *B. nelumbifolia*, 'Persian Brocade', 'Erythrophylla', 'Selph's Mahogany', 'Ricinifolia', and sericoneura.



Begonia 'Selph's Mahogany'

This begonia too was a chance find in Ruston where it was being sold by the horticulture department of Louisiana Tech University without a name. It is an hybrid originated by a woman named Selphy who hybridized in East Texas some years ago. In Berg's checklist it is listed as a hybrid of *B. 'Hercleicotyle'* and an unknown. It is not widely known, but it is a great upright rhizomatous begonia. This too is one of the easiest of all begonias to hybridize. Just like *B. 'Ricinifolia'* its leaves can be stuck in a pot to produce a multitude of plant in short order. Equally east is to take one of its large (nay, huge) rhizomes and cut it into pieces to make multiple plants.

Its leaves are the mahogany color from which the name is taken. When its flowers stems emerge they quickly shoot up 3 to 4 feet from a plant that is already 2 to 3 feet tall. Better have plenty of room

for this one!

Begonia sericoneura

Perhaps it is my careless growing habits, but it seems to me that the upright rhizomes are much easier to grow than those that hug the soil. Among the easiest to grow of the species in this category I have found to be *Begonia sericoneura*.

This is a species found in Central America. It comes in a number of versions with various synonyms; the main difference seems to be shape of the leaves. The version I am growing has cleft leaves with acute tips on its edges. Its flowers are not as dramatic as the two other begonias I mention here, rising only about 8 or 9 inches and sometimes not clearing the foliage. It does not reproduce quite as easily as the others either, but it does produce seed easily where the others do not.

A New Chinese Begonia

Begonia bamaensis (sect. *Coelocentrum*, Begoniaceae), a new species from limestone areas in Guangxi, China Yan LIU¹, Shin-Ming KU², and Ching-I PENG^{2,*}

1 Guangxi Institute of Botany, Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Guilin

541006, China

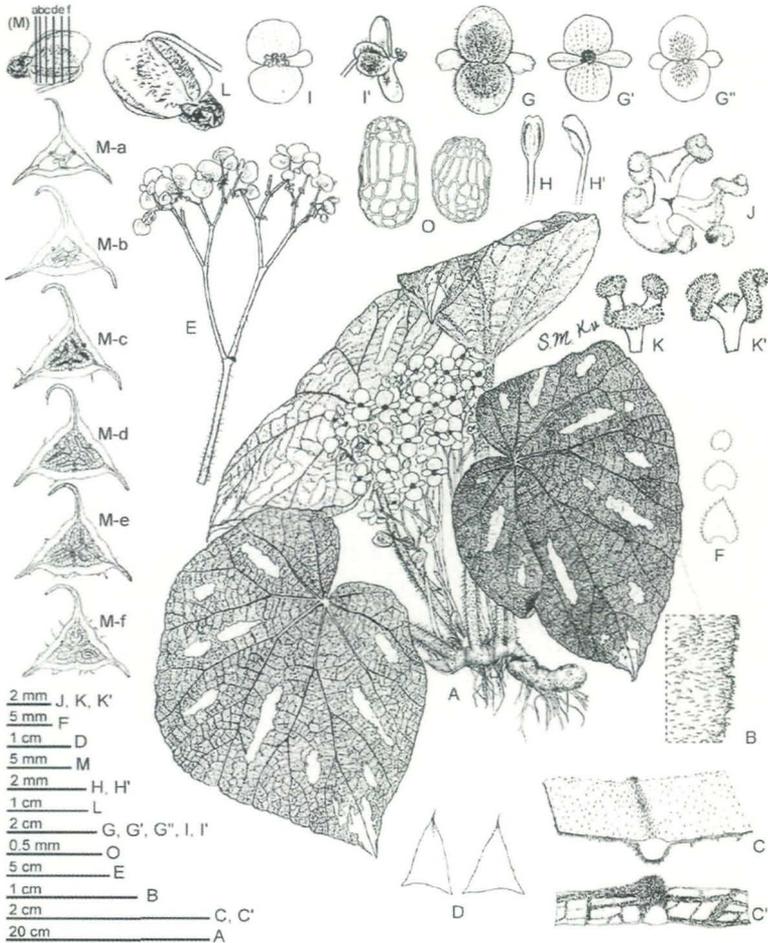
2 Herbarium (HAST), Research Center for Biodiversity, Academia Sinica,
Nangang, Taipei 115, Taiwan

(Received May 30, 2007; Accepted August 21, 2007)

ABSTRACT. *Begonia bamaensis* Yan Liu & C.-I Peng, a new species of sect. *Coelocentrum* from Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region, China, is described and illustrated. Its somatic chromosome number ($2n = 30$) is here reported. *Begonia bamaensis* is somewhat similar to *B. cirrosa* L.B. Smith & D.C. Wasshausen, differing in the leaves adaxially densely setulose or hispidulous and adorned with white bands or white patches between major veins; stipules abaxially glabrous or with few hairs along midrib; peduncle pilose or sparsely so; staminate flower with outer tepals 7-14.5 x 7-13.5 mm; ovary whitish or reddish pilose; capsule 7-12 mm long, and abaxial wing of capsule distinctly curved on one side. SEM micrographs of leaves of *B. bamaensis* revealed prominently elevated stomata complex, which is unique for the genus *Begonia*. Like many congeners in sect. *Coelocentrum*, *B. bamaensis* is a handsome species with

variegated leaves. It has a restricted distribution, currently known only from two nearby karst caves in western Guangxi.

Keywords: *Begonia bamaensis*; *Begonia cirrosa*; *Begonia morsei*; *Begonia bonii*; Begoniaceae; China; Chromosome number; Guangxi; Limestone flora; New species; Rare species; sect. *Coelocentrum*; Stomata complex.



466 *Botanical Studies*, Vol. 48, 2007

Figure 1. *Begonia bamaensis* Yan Liu & C.-I Peng. A, Habit; B, Leaf margin; C, C', Portion of leaf, showing indumentum on daxial and adaxial surfaces; D, Stipules; E, Inflorescence; F, Bracts; G, Staminate flower, showing ciliate margin and densely pilose abaxial surface; G' Staminate flower, face view; G'' Staminate flower, back view; H, H' stamens; I, Carpellate flower, face view; I', Carpellate flower, side view; J, K, K' Styles and stigmas; L, Capsule; M, Serial cross sections of fruit, showing parietal placentation and curved abaxial wing. All from the living plant (Peng 18752-A) cultivated in the experimental greenhouse.

LIU et al. — *Begonia bamaensis*, a new species from China 467

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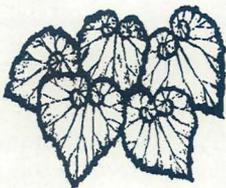
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July 19, 2008 Hours: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Place: Covenant Presbyterian Church 6323 W. 80th St. North west corner, Sepulveda & 80th. Los Angeles, CA 90045 Contact: **Janet Brown**, Show Chairman 310-670-4471 & FAX email: begoniabrown@yahoo.com

August 15-16, 2008, Gazebo, Santa Barbara, California. Annual Gazebo Show - its going to be spectacular. Contact: **Mike Flaherty** at 805-969-4367 or mikeflaherty@cox.net.

August 24, 2008 from 9-4 p.m Palos Verdes Begonia Show and Sale at the South Coast Botanic Gardens, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula 90274, We are having a judged show and fabulous plant sale. For information contact **Carol Knight**, cknight@lausd.net

September 4-7, 2008, Fall ABS Board Meeting, San Francisco, CA. Save the dates! More info to come.

April 29-May 3, 2009, Palm Beach, Florida, 2009 ABS Convention. More exciting info to come!

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