

The background of the cover is a lush tropical scene. A thick, dark tree trunk runs vertically down the center. It is covered in heart-shaped, green leaves, likely from a Philodendron. The background is filled with various other tropical plants, including palm fronds and other green foliage, creating a dense, vibrant jungle atmosphere. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day in a forest.

The

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Privacy Policy

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: Doris Happel sends us a photo of *B. convolvulaceae* climbing a palm at the Garden of the Four Arts in Palm Beach. See it this Convention.

Back: Charles Henthorne took this photo of the amazing bloom of *B. burkillii*.

In This Issue

Those Palm Beach members keep tempting us with information about the upcoming convention! We introduce a new feature from Julie Vanderwilt telling us about the world of begonias online. We learn about new developments in commercial begonias from various web sources. And Australia again provides us with thoughtful begonia articles.

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B. malabarica (seed from Rekha Morris) blooms, winter 2009.

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**Remember
All Dues
Should be In by Now
to the Membership Chair**

President's Message

Spring is fast approaching and our winter rest period is just about over. It is time to start washing pots, seeing if your pruners are sharp and watching the weather so you will be ready when you can start pruning. Since I live in So. California these words of advice only apply to us. Every part of the country is different when it comes to growing conditions and plant care. The one thing I do know is that you wait until the weather warms up especially at night before you start to prune and even take your plants outside. What do I mean by warm up? This means the threat of frost is over and this is different in all parts of the U.S. If you have just moved from one growing region to another it is going to take a while to find out what does well in that area. You will even learn what kind of begonias grow well in that area. One thing I have learned in the twenty five years I have been growing begonias is to never give up on a begonia unless you have given it at least three chances to grow. If you are having trouble growing a certain begonia move it to a different place in your growing area, give it more or less light, fertilize it a little more or a little less, pull it out of the pot and look at the roots and see if they are healthy, and then last before you give up on that plant try just ignoring it. Sometimes you can give to much TLC to a begonia.

Things have been rather quiet in the Begonia Society the last few months. I do have one exciting development to report on. We have a member who has volunteered to be the new editor. Her name is **Linda Tamblin** from Kansas City, Kansas. Linda has a degree in Journalism, has done the newsletters for the Cactus and Succulent Society and American Gesneriad Society, worked for Allen Press as a proof reader and created the on-line newsletter

for Sprint's training department. I have read a sample of her writing and I did like the way she writes. I think she will be a good choice to replace Freda as Editor. I know Freda will help her with a few issues of the *Begonian* until she learns the ropes. I am not positive what issue she will start with but I think it will be the May/June issue and Freda will be there to help her with any questions or problems that arise. I know Freda has always needed articles for the *Begonian* so if you have anything you would like to write about now is the time to get them in.

We also have an important event coming up and I hope everyone can come. The convention this year is in Palm Beach Florida, April 29th to May 3rd. Be sure and look in your packet and fly the day before the first tour. The 29th is a Wednesday and sometimes there is a pre-convention tour and you don't want to miss that. We usually fly on Monday and get there in time if there is a Tuesday tour. If you have never been to Florida you don't know what you have been missing. The begonias are double the size they are here in California and they are so beautiful they will take your breath away. Don't miss it or you will be sorry. I don't know just when the packets will be mailed so be watching for them and sign up right away.

See You In Florida,
Mary Sakamoto

Editor's Notes

It is difficult to believe that with this issue, twelve years of editing the *Begonian* will come to an end. Yes! We have a new editor, Linda Tamblin of Kansas City. You have met her a couple of times in the last few issues as she works to begin an ABS Branch there and you even have a photo of her on page 190 in the Septem-

ber/October issue of the *Begonian*. We are doubly fortunate in that Linda already has the computer skills and knowledge of the program InDesign required to do our journal. She has experience editing other plant newsletters and is fast accumulating the knowledge of begonias. I will be assisting her in every way possible as I hope you will in the days ahead. All branches should now put her on their mailing list; her mailing address is 5635 Woodward, Merriam, KS 66202 and her email address is begoniaskc@yahoo.com. She will be giving you other information in the May/June issue.

I was pleased to be able to do one final issue after a new editor was chosen as it gives me a chance to say farewell as editor. I shall always be proud of the issues I have edited and those of you who have contributed and written so outstandingly for our readers. I treasure those who only tentatively agreed to submit articles, saying they were not writers, but then became regular contributors over the years and exceedingly good ones at that. A big thank you to every single writer, photographer, and artist who has contributed.

Since I am short on articles for this issue, I am going to take the privilege of reminiscing and commenting a bit. Forgive me if I ramble. I began as editor with the September/October issue of 1997 after a short time as editor of the Southwest Region *Begonia Leaflet*. I took the role with some trepidation as I knew few ABS members outside those in SWR and had been to only two national

Continued on page 48.

Letters to the Editor

Looking for a Beauty

Does anyone still have B. 'Julie Vanderwilt', hybridized by **Rudy Ziesen-**

henne and, of course, named after me? I have killed mine as has **Mike Flaherty**, and I would really like to grow it again. I will be glad to buy or trade for it.

Julie Vanderwilt, CA



B. 'Julie Vanderwilt'; photo by Julie Vanderwilt.

Jack Golding

[Jack Golding has been ill for some weeks and this is a report on his progress from his daughter.]

Dad had his pacemaker removed yesterday in an attempt to destroy the source of the MERSA infection. He is in good spirits in ICU for a few days. He's ready for his computer so that he can get back to work as he has a lot of writing and corresponding to do. It will be a while until that happens, and several weeks until he will be back home, but I'm sure he will make every effort to be in contact again soon. He has a very strong, positive outlook on life and can't wait to get back to his begonias!

Jack thanks everyone for their good thoughts, kind wishes and prayers. He has appreciated everyone's concern and thoughtfulness.

Marilyn White

Continued on page 76.



Doris Happel shows us two more begonias growing in the Society of the Four Arts Garden. Above are the big sheltering leaves of B. valida and below is a begonia whose name we have to love: B. 'Bunny Hug'.



Convention 2009
April 28- May 3 2009 West Palm Beach Florida

Bewitched, Bothered, Begonia'd
by Nancy Cohen

Convention planning is moving ahead with great excitement, guided by Convention Chairs **Charles Jaros** and **Doris Happel**. We have great seminars, wonderful tours, a huge fabulous sale and show, and some surprises in store for you.

The convention will be held at the Palm Beach airport Hilton—very convenient to the airport, I95, downtown West Palm Beach and Palm Beach. Lots of room for our meetings, shows, seminars, and banquets. Nice rooms too. Room rates are \$99 single or double, 3 or 4 to a room \$109.

If 10 or more people are interested, **Maxine Zinman** has agreed to start off on Tuesday with a Judging School.

Wednesday we get to tour private Palm Beach gardens and the beautiful Society of the Fours Arts Garden, where our member **Johanna Kitson** has transformed this wonderful old (1939) garden into a begonia and shade paradise. After lunch in Palm Beach we visit the magnificent Flagler Museum and the spectacular baobob tree behind the museum on the shores of Lake Worth.

Thursday three of our members open up their begonia-filled gardens, we lunch at the famed Equestrian Club in Wellington, and we visit two fabulous exotic plant nurseries.

Friday, after the show is judged, we tour the American Orchid Society garden, which is rich in begonias donated by the Begonia Society of the Palm Beaches in 2000 when the garden was first planted, and **Gene Joyner's** Unbelievable Acres, home of almost unbelievable 10 foot tall and wide begonias.

Saturday we are far too busy with seminars and the ABS luncheon to tour, but for those who can stay on, Sunday we travel to **Tim Anderson's** Palm Hammock Orchid Estate in Miami.

Seminars on Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday morning will include Terrariums, Asian begonias, Pack Trials (ever wonder how a new begonia gets into the Trade?), and the president of the Scottish Begonia Society will give a great lecture.

The Plant Sale will be huge, with 4,000 begonias from Florida's top begonia nurseries. Many will be rare and unusual, including new hybrids and newly discovered species. This year you don't have to wait in line—just register early. Convention registrations will be numbered as they are received; that number becomes your position in line to get into the sale on Friday evening! Also, to encourage you to buy a lot of begonias, we will have UPS on site Saturday afternoon to pack and send your purchases home (and avoid those terrible new airline suitcase charges.)

We have a lot of good growers among Florida ABS members so we expect a terrific show. Grand and division trophies will be beautiful keepsakes—begonia bowls, individually handcrafted by New York ceramist Ruth Sachs. This year we are including a Junior Division, a Design Division, and Florida Hybrid Division in the show.

Food and drink is excellent at the Hilton, the Tampa Bay chapter is hosting the Hospitality suite and has some surprises up their sleeve (bring your best PJs, you'll need them) , and our chapter really looks forward to welcoming you. The weather promises to be fabulous too.

Convention packets will be in the mail in mid January; a registration form will be posted on the ABS web site 3 days later. Register early—your registration number is the key to Plant Sale entry.

Join us....

Continued from page 45.

conventions at that time. My knowledge of begonias was skimpy as well. I had used the Microsoft version of Publisher, but had no experience with PageMaker or the requirements of color printing. I had a lot of learning to do, but now I think how fortunate I was to be required to have that necessity. I have learned so much and am sure I would be quite computer illiterate without that need.

Everything had to be typed back then and submissions came by mail. Now, almost everything comes in as a file and programs can talk to each other so that just about everything in the *Begonian* today is from a file, submitted by email. But then I was lucky compared to earlier editors who only a short time before had to assemble by cut and paste!

Jack Golding, who has been quite ill recently, I want to particularly recognize because he is one of the great treasures of ABS and I can never tell you how patient and helpful he was to me over the years - and remains so even today. Rightfully, Jack always wants us to use the correct names of our begonias and goes to great lengths to help us do that. I know Jack has helped me learn more about begonias than anyone else. I have always struggled to live up to his high standards for nomenclature (and all else *Begonia!*) and always try to get the correct names.

My very special thanks to Jack and best wishes for a speedy recovery.

When I first began growing begonias there was no web, and color begonia photos of any kind were a treasure. Now, the web shows us photos of almost any kind of plant we wish to see or know about with a few key clicks. Begonia photos are everywhere there. I think of StarTrek's replicator and wonder if that kind of unimaginable feat for plants lies in wait for us!

When I began growing begonias, there were only a few unidentified begonias, now our listing is over 500 as more and more exploration goes on. But I suspect we have lost more begonias to cultivation than we have gained as I look today at show lists and publications and miss many that I have grown or known over the years. Keeping what we have is as important as the new I think. I urge everyone to support **Rekha Morris'** SOS, but also to grow a few of the older hybrids as well.

Opposite, you will find an article by **Julie Vanderwilt** entitled "Begonia Blog." Some of you who still do not use the internet may not recognize the term "Blog" which is defined by Microsoft as: "Web site on which an individual or group of users produces an ongoing narrative." They were particularly big this election cycle as opinions on the web flourished. It is another sign of the changing times.

So much has changed and so fast!

Begonia Blog

By *Julie Vanderwilt*
Santa Barbara, California

This article combines tips from several sources; past *Begonians*, the Yahoo Begonia Group and a foremost expert on the subject of begonias, **Michael Ludwig**. Michael lives in San Diego and is a longtime begoniaphile and member of many begonia branches, including our own Rudolf Ziesenhenné Branch in Santa Barbara, California.

First the Internet. We have a large contingent of begonia lovers on our Yahoo Begonia Group who converse with pictures, tips, growing ideas, etc. You can join by going to the link Beginiasubscribe@yahoogroups.com. Recent discussions have included a very interesting thread about *Begonia bipinnatifida*, how to grow it, how to propagate it, how to water it, etc.

And recently we had a thread started by MAL editor, **Sandy Boyd**, on what our favorite top ten begonias are. **Johanna Zinn's** list included all species! And here is a list submitted by **Chris Block** from Medina, Ohio.

1. *Begonia gehrtii*
2. *Begonia hispida* var. *cuculifera*
3. *Begonia rajah*
4. *Begonia* 'Munchkin'
5. *Begonia* 'Cachuma'
6. *Begonia angularis*
7. *Begonia kenworthyae*
8. *Begonia chloroneura*
9. *Begonia* 'Midnight Sun'
10. *Begonia luxurians*
11. *Begonia* 'Kit Jeans Mounger'

12. *Begonia* 'Oliver Twist'
13. *Begonia* 'Butterfly'

Next, excerpted from the Rudolf Ziesenhenné Branch May 2007 newsletter, Michael Ludwig gave a fascinating program on everything from seed-starting to controlling pests on our begonias. Here are some of his tips and tricks:

Propagation:

1. Use milled sphagnum to lightly cover seeds.
2. Chamomile tea helps damp off.
3. Bottom heat & lights speed up seedling growth.
4. Cuttings in water—use coleus or impatiens pieces cut in 1" lengths. Regenerate the water for the next seedlings by putting through a filter and adding a little hydrogen peroxide. Add Superthrive when watering.
5. Brown tips on begonia leaves can mean lack of humidity or an excess of water salts.
6. Low pH causes halos on leaves—use dolomite lime in soil mix.
7. Put up lath strips north to south to prevent leaf burn.

Perk up your plants:

1. Foliar feeding with Epsom salts

makes plants look vibrant.

2. Water with wormcasting tea or use as a top dressing.
3. Isopropyl alcohol, 25% - 50% mixed with water will dispatch mealy bugs & scale.
4. Cinnamon sprinkled on leaves or misted with water will help with mildew.
5. Neem & seaweed is a good mix for pests.

And finally we have Round Robins. Long before the web, begonia lovers conversed by way of Round Robins. There were "flights" on different topics; growing under lights, greenhouses, terrariums and bowls, cuttings, seed, Rexes, species to name a few. Each flight could have eight members. You would sign up for one or more Robins and soon you would receive a packet of letters on your topic. You would add a letter with your findings and maybe some pictures and send everything on to the next person on the list. Here is an excerpt from the Round Robin in the July 1973 *Begonian*.

John Scott of Australia said he had grown B. luxurians for a number of years and has had mixed results with it. It is doing better now than ever on the floor of his glasshouse close under his bromeliads

where it gets many sprays of water.

From the Propagation flight in the April 1976 *Begonian*:

Also regarding propagation, Ellen Jacobson, Colorado, puts her cuttings in water for one week, then pots them up using no plastic for protection. Ellen says that so far she's lost no cuttings, and she's had no rot or wilt. She says this has worked beautifully with cane, hairy, small-leaved and Rieger begonias, as well as with fuchsias, hoyas, plectranthus and geraniums.

How lucky we are today to have access to the internet and answers to everything we could want to know about begonias. Don't forget to visit the ABS website at **www.begonias.com** for pictures, growing

tips, events, branch information, SOS and much more. And while you're there, check out the *Begonian* DVDs 1 and 2. They are currently on sale for \$30 each or \$50 for both. There is a wealth of information by begonia experts and novices alike that will provide many hours of begonia enjoyment and enlightenment.

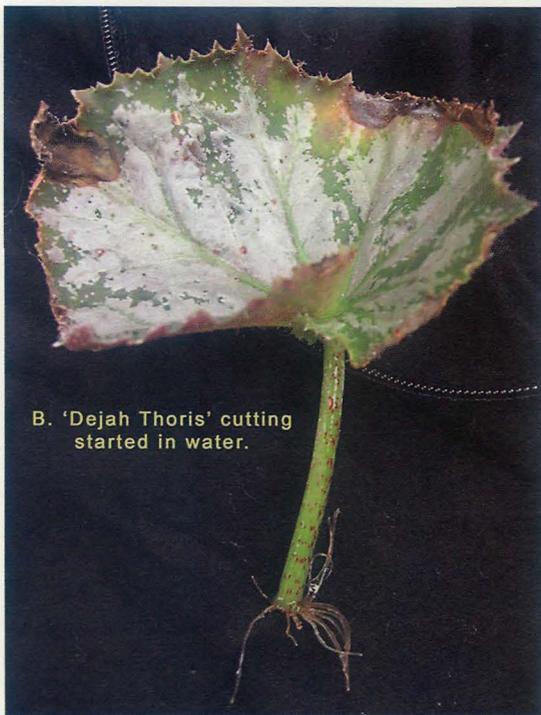
Julie Vanderwilt is our treasured website editor with computer skills we all admire. We thank her for promising a regular column on web doings. ~FH

What can you see at www.begonias.org?

- Learn how to join ABS.
- Shop for books and cds.
- Check out the list of registered begonias.
- See a list of branches and how to contact them.
- Get the latest convention news including registration information.
- See begonias of every classification in beautiful color.

Visit Today!

The begonia photos we can find on the web today are simply amazing - and equally so are the number of varieties found. I know these photos by **Julie Vanderwilt** can be found there somewhere, but here they are in print for us: Below, *B. angularis* and to the right a leaf cutting of *B. 'Dejah Thoris'* that has rooted in water.



B. 'Dejah Thoris' cutting started in water.



BEGONIA burkillii Dunn

by Charles Henthorne,

Plano, TX

For those of you who attended the American Begonia Society Convention this past year, particularly the banquet on Saturday night, you might remember the, sometimes wild, bidding for plants that **Rekha Morris** donated. One of those plants which I won, bidding a high price, and worth every cent of it was *B. burkillii*.

Leora and I are always interested in getting new and rare begonias for our collection. We particularly like to see how they will grow in a terrarium environment.

When I saw this begonia I knew I had to have it at any cost. Even though it was a small plant I could see the potential there for a plant that would be fantastic in a terrarium, and would be an attractive one on top of that. I was rewarded over the last few months by seeing this plant thrive, grow, and bloom in its terrarium.

Recently, it has given us a bloom, with more to open, which is an incredible 3" across. One of the photos shows the bloom [see back cover]. We are eagerly awaiting more blooms so that we might try pollinating, in order to obtain viable seed for distribution to others who might like to try to grow this plant.

Begonia burkillii, is one of those begonias with brown coloration in its leaves. Along with the shape of the leave and the color(see photo), and the bloom this begonia will be one that we want to keep permanently in our collection. It seems to thrive in a humid, and cool environment within the terrarium. We are growing it in an enclosed terrarium, in subdued artificial light, and on the lower shelf of one of our growing stands. From the day we

brought it to its new home, it has thrived and gotten bigger.

When the blooms came along, we knew we were doing the right things for it is succeeding in maturing, and giving us flowers. The huge size, and slightly pink coloration of the bloom lends to the bold and vivid colors of the leaf. Along with its size which is 3" across, the bloom comes out very close to the base of the plant. It has very little stem length and therefore is bundled in among the leaves. It is readily visible though, due to its size. I always like to study any available literature I can find on the new begonia that we occasionally add to our collection. With the acquisition of this one, I did not change my habits. I have studied all available literature I can find, and found some very interesting facts. I am not going into a lot of technical details, but will leave that to those who find technical work enjoyable. However, I will share some of what I have found.

Begonia burkillii, is referred to by Golding, J. & D.C. Wasshausen. 2002 *Begoniaceae, Edition 2*. Part1; annotated species list, Part 11; illustrated key, abridgement and supplement. It is closely affiliated to *B. balansana* and *B. handelii*. It is very poorly known, and is considered rare and endangered in Arunachal Pradesh, in the Abor Hills area(300-1000m), where our own **Rekha Morris** has collected it. Its distributional range is tropical Asia, and the Indian subcontinent of India, Arunachal Pradesh to be exact. It was discovered in Myanmar in the year 2002. It is rare in cultivation. It is in the Section *-Sphenanthera*, Division; *Magnoliophyta*. The name *Begonia burkillii*, had its name verified on Nov 13, 2002 by ARS System



*Charles Henthorne shows us here that the leaf on *B. burkillii* is no less spectacular than its bloom shown on the back cover.*

maic Botanists. Efforts are being made to introduce this and other threatened species to the Indian Botanic Garden.

This plant is without a doubt my favorite of all the terrarium plants we grow. Up until this time, it has proven to be a strong, fairly fast growing begonia.

It is also easy for us to propagate using wedges and/or stem cuttings to start new plants. Also the rooting and growing of new plantlets is a somewhat fast endeavor. For those of you who would like

to try this interesting plant, look in April at the Convention. There might just be plants for sale there.

If you are lucky enough to find one, grab it and try it. Leora and I would be interested in knowing if any other begonia grows this, either in or out of a terrarium. Let us know if you do, and how your plant is doing. I'm sure that anyone who gets it will feel the same about it as we do.

Enjoy!

Rhizomatous in Spring

by Lyla Kilpatrick,
Australia

*Taken from the Vol. No. 80, Spring 2008
The Queensland Begonia Society, Inc.
Journal with thanks. FH*

Pruning and repotting our rhizomatous is a more relaxed affair than when we dealt with the other varieties in early spring because we attend to our rhizomatous as they finish blooming and this can span a couple of months. Mature plants, which have possibly been in the same mix for 12 months, have produced much foliage and then masses of blossom, will be exhausted. They need a fresh supply of soil and nourishment. Most rhizomatous prefer a slightly lighter mix than some other varieties and this can be achieved by adding more Perlite to your normal mix. About 1 Perlite to 3 parts mix.

It should be warm enough now to activate slow release fertiliser, but in addition, at least until the newly potted plant has recovered and is actively growing, foliar feeding will be beneficial.

Pruning

Before starting to prune, remove any remaining flower stalks and old, taty or diseased leaves. How to prune depends

on the diameter of the rhizome:

Slender Creeping Rhizomes (*B.* "Libby Lee", "Red Doll") which usually root as they creep along the soil are best divided. Wash the mix away from the root half and you will be able to see where to cut, making sure each section has roots. These pieces can be potted separately or 2 - 4 pieces placed in a larger container. The separate pieces should have the cut end placed near the rim of the pot so that the growing tip will reach across the container. If planting 3 - 4 pieces, place the cut ends centrally and the growing tips will radiate outwards. When these reach the pot rim, the tiny growing tips can be removed and you will soon have a full plant.

Medium Creeping Rhizomes (*B.* "Cleopatra", "Crystal Brook") can also often be divided in the same way. Because these types have longer, sturdier rhizomes, these may need to be cut back to about half their length. If the plant has a definite central section, prune the rhizomes back to 8 - 10 cm. and place the plant in the center of the container. Any pruned sections which have roots can be potted up. As the rhizomes grow and reach the edge of the

container, prune off the tips to force out central growth.

Large Rhizomes (*B. 'Erythrophylla'*, *heracleifolia*) cause us the most headaches. If planted in the centre of the container and let be, usually one or two rhizomes with a few tip leaves head for the rim. These often make no central growth so we have a couple of old, maybe ugly, bare rhizomes. Once again if there is central growth, place the plant centrally in the container and prune the tips. If, as is often the case, there is one only large rhizome, place the rooted section near the rim of the pot so that the rhizome can grow across. When it reach the opposite rim, prune about 2 - 3 cm. off the growing tip. This should force out new growths along the rhizomes making a full plant.

Containers.

The smaller the rhizomes and the leaves, the more shallow the container can be because these plant will grow a proportionately smaller root system. However, I believe it is a mistake to place the larger varieties in very shallow containers because they will produce normally large root systems and soon become pot bound. A wide container about 1.5 cm deep is ideal.

Watering.

Because most rhizomes grow on or into the soil surface and are naturally fleshy we do have to be careful about keeping the soil too wet and allowing the rhizomes to rot. This applies particularly in winter and to newly potted plants at any time, but during our hot, dry summers there is little danger of overwatering mature plants.

Propagating.

Short tips which have been removed can be propagated as normal tip cuttings,

but longer pieces of rhizome should be placed one third their depth horizontally into the propagating mix. When well rooted, each section which has produced growth buds can be severed and potted up as individual plants. Nearly all rhizomatous can be propagated from leaves - leaf stem cuttings where 2 cm or so of the stem is left attached to the leaf and the stem inserted into the mix, or leaf wedges where the leaf is cut into sections. Each section must contain a main vein and this is inserted about one third its length into the propagating mix. Leaves especially will produce plantlets. Sooner if placed into a closed container.

The following two articles are also by June McBryde in the same issue as the above.

Cheap Fertiliser... Think Weeds!

Weeds, forever to be cursed by gardeners, may just not be such a pest as you might think. Yes, I know they've never heard of drought and seem to grow regardless and it doesn't seem fair when, in spite of all loving care and attention, our begonias give up the ghost whereas weeds continue their rampant march through our gardens.

However, weeds are easily disposed of when they appear in our begonia pots, and it is really only in the garden that they take up so much time when trying to keep it weed-free.

Why do weeds thrive in comparison to so many cultivated plants? Colin Campbell, writing in the *Courier Mail* of 29 December 2001, had this to say: "One of the reasons for weed survival against all the odds is their ability to extract nutrients

and water that other, more desirable plants are unable to obtain. Many of the weed species have taproots that go down a long way, mining nutrients from the soil as they go. This results in nutrient-rich foliage that the smart gardener can turn into a liquid fertiliser to water their wanted plants.

“Some simply throw the weeds into a drum, covering with water and leave to steep for a few weeks. The liquid is then ready to be drawn off and applied to vegetables or, indeed, any plants that need a bit of a kick along. It is important to pull the weeds out before they run to seed. However, if a few are missed and let run to seed, the seeds will usually float to the top of the water. They can then be scooped off and placed in a plastic bag to go to the tip.

“Another method is to place the weeds in a hessian bag and suspend it for a few weeks in a drum of water. The nutrient-rich liquid is then used as before.”

This cheaply obtained fertiliser may be worth trying on begonias. If you do try it, why not tell others of your success or otherwise through the journal?

More Cheap Fertiliser?

I keep a bucket in the bushhouse into which I toss chewed, damaged and old begonia leaves. Over the last few weeks we have had good rain, and this bucket, leaves and all, filled with rain water. For a couple of weeks after this, I am unable to attend to the garden, but when I next went into the bushhouse, I noticed that the rain water in the bucket had turned brownish, the same as what happens to the weed/water in the article commencing on page 35 [see above. FH]

Surely, the begonia leaf water must

also be full of nutrients from the begonia leaves. This was my reasoning, so I have used it to hand water my plants, and intend to keep a bucket of leaves and water there from now on. I must take care not to toss leaves in the bucket which are mildewed, mite or other disease affected. Also, I don't intend this watering to take the place of my normal fertilizing program, but I also think the water is too valuable not to be used.

Thank you, June McBryde, and thank you also as Journal editor, for all the help the Journal has been to fill my pages over the years. Freda Holley

Begonia valida by June Crane, Australia

This article was taken from the Vol. No. 81 Summer 2008 Queensland Begonia Society Journal. It was a Species Talk at their September meeting; these talks are regular features of their meetings

This species *B. valida* originated in Brazil. A Mr. Goebel discovered and described this plant in 1915. This begonia is in the section *Pritzelia* and is thick-stemmed and large leaved. It is tree-like, and in 2007 at my place was up to 2.5 m tall until a bush turkey and I had a run-in and the turkey landed from the top of the bushhouse roof into the middle of the clump. This year after severe cut back, the plant is 1.7 m high and in full flower. The new leaves and flower spikes emerge from sheath-like formations, which fall off.

The small, white flowers with many yellow stamens stand well above the leaves. The inflorescences, very much branched are up to 20 to 23 cm. across, with both male and female flowers present. The

unopened buds resemble little pearls or tiny past parcels. The male flower has four tepals, two large and two small. The female flower has three large and two small tepals, with one large wing on the side of the ovary. The peduncle or flower stalk is 16 to 20 cm long. The leaf is lobed and large, up to 20 cm or more across, and dark green with a serrulated (finely toothed) margin, and has a rough surface. Veining on the back of the leaves is very pronounced. The petiole or leaf stalk is distinctly grooved for its entire length and has a collar-like ridge or outgrowth at the top

The cane-like stems are up to 5 cm thick when mature, brownish, and lighter longitudinal or spot marking on the stem.

My plant is in the garden and gets full sun until about 2:00 p.m. and is exposed to all the wind as well. It is not staked and has formed a clump about 30 to 40 cm across with many stems, some of which have branched. It receives only the good Lord's water and, maybe once a year, a sprinkle of Organic Life chook pellets.

Just think what it could be like, if really looked after. It may even grow so large as the one **Mark Tebbitt** writes about of page 117 of his book *Begonias*, which he saw in the Montreal Botanical Gardens, nearly to the roof of a 25 ft. tall display house. That would be a sight to see. There again, one wouldn't be able to fully appreciate the wonderful heads of flowers if that were the case.

Whilst my plant is in full flower now, I also had a flower spike in the table display at our 2008 show in February, which created much comment. This is a great begonia to grow in your garden.

References: *Begonias* by Mark Tebbitt; *Begonias: The complete Reference Guide* by Thompson and Thompson; leaf identification and help by Ivy McFarlane.

Yes, ABS members, your editor is left

wondering too what a bush turkey and Organic Life chook pellets are. Perhaps, June will write us an email with definitions! B. valida is a begonia with which I have been fascinated for years and still grow on since Tamsin Boardman brought me a plant all the way to California which I then took home and later used to hybridized B. 'Gideon'. My own plant has never been anywhere near that tall and I wonder if June's plant was in the ground or in a pot. [See also the photo on page 46.]

New Guinea Begonias by Janet Gagul, Biological Sciences, University of Papua New Guinea

This article is taken with thanks from Vol. 18, No. 4, December 2008, Begonia Australis, Journal of the Association of Australian Begonia Societies (INC). We thank editor Mrs. Linda Broman and the Association.

General Begonia Information

With *Symbegonia* now recognized as a section in *Begonia*, the family *Begoniaceae* comprises only 2 genera, *Begonia* and *Hillebrandia*.

Begonia is the largest genus in the family and is distributed throughout the tropical and subtropical regions except for Australia. The genus also occurs in temperate regions such as China and the Himalayas and at high altitudes in New Guinea.

Begonia comprises more than 1500 species distributed in 63 sections worldwide.

Hillebrandia is monospecific, con-

taining only one species (*H. sandwicensis*), which is endemic to the Hawaiian Archipelago. *Hillebrandia* is differentiated from *Begonia* by its semi inferior incomplete ovary with more numerous fruits that dehisce between the styles; and the more highly differentiated sepals and petals.

Biogeography and Biodiversity of New Guinea Begonias

New Guinea is the largest tropical island country in the world. Geographically, New Guinea comprises 2 political regions, Papua (formerly known as Irian Jaya) and West Papua (formerly known as West Irian) Provinces of Indonesia and the independent state of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Most areas in New Guinea are rugged and inaccessible for major development. Access into the forest is often limited by steep slopes and surrounding mountain terrains, often with limestone karst. Thus, not many studies have been done to assess the biodiversity.

Such inaccessible areas may perhaps become biodiversity reserves, which contain high levels of endemism. In 2005 **Mark Tebbitt** from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York described a new *Begonia* species (*B. argenteomarginata* Tebbitt) from Elimbari in Simbu Province, PNG, a limestone karst area, which is endemic to New Guinea. At present a revision is being made of section *Symbegonia* (Gagul in press) which recognizes 14 new taxa (9 new species and 5 subspecies).

New Guinea diversity of *Begonia* is poorly known with most areas inadequately collected and documented. Begonias occur throughout New Guinea from 50 - 3000 m above sea level and have a great economic potential for the horticultural industry. Many New Guinea species are widely cultivated by enthusiastic begonia growers all over the world, but little recent research has

been done on the family in New Guinea. For instance, *B. argenteomarginata* Tebbitt, which has been in cultivation for over 40 years, was not scientifically named until 2004.

No one knows the exact number of *Begonia* species that exist in New Guinea and it is impossible to guess at this stage. However, a total of 79 species in 3 sections (*Petermannia*, *Symbegonia*, *Diploclinium*) have been recorded for New Guinea. Section *Petermannia* is the largest with 55 species; section *Symbegonia* comprises 13 known species all endemic to New Guinea, and Section *Diploclinium* contains 7 species. The remaining 4 species are unplaced in any of the existing sections.

We also thank Janet Gagul for this article. She was a featured speaker at the March 2008 AABS Convention in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia in March 2008. She is described as a resident of Papua New Guinea having a passion for begonias who uses her holidays and enlists the help of her siblings in her search for begonias so that she can document them. I was unaware of the number of Symbegonia species. I also look forward to her promise that in her next article she will send an updated list of all the New Guinea Begonia species. I will ask Linda to include this in a future issue of the Begonian.

Fill the Pages

This issue is very lean on contributions and without the aide of the Australian Journals and my own wordiness, this issue would be thin indeed. Don't let that happen to the new editor. Everyone! Fill her mailbox and email with your contributions. I know you can do that as you so often have. Share your begonia knowledge, keep the *Begonian* interesting! ~FH

Membership Notes

by Donna Marsheck,
Membership Chairman.

How can it be dues time again? Time sure goes fast when we are having fun!

There have been many, many calls on dues submissions so thought we might talk about it :0)

For ALL ABS members, our dues are due each December 31st to coincide with the fiscal year of ABS, December 31st to January 1st. [We'll talk about NEW ABS members in just a minute...]

There are some members who still have anniversary dates on the mailing envelope [month you joined ABS]. That is because those members have not prorated the annual fee, send \$25 each year, and we don't want to appropriate money that belongs to you.

Let's break this down. On the mailing envelope are numbers, i.e. 200906. That means the member joined in June and dues are paid until June of 2009 – because the member has yet to prorate their dues to December 31st.

We have broken this down and printed it in *The Begonian*, but that was some time ago and perhaps it was a bit confusing. So, let's do it again: If your number, on the mailing envelope, is anything other than 200912 [or Dec '09], you need only pay the amount below to bring your dues up to date **to 200912; December 31, 2009.**

Date	Pay USA, Canada & Mexico	Pay Overseas
200902 [Feb.]	\$23.10	\$41.25
200903 [March]	\$21.	\$37.50
200904 [April]	\$18.90	\$33.75
200905 [May]	\$16.80	\$30.
200906 [June]	\$14.70	\$26.25
200907 [July]	\$12.60	\$22.50
200908 [August]	\$10.50	\$18.75
200909 [Sept.]	\$8.40	\$15.
200910 [October]	\$6.30	\$11.25
200911 [November]	\$4.20	7.50

*Those members who have let their membership lapse in 2008 and want the missing "back" issues, **MUST** pay the prorated rate for 2008 and add \$25 or \$45 for 2009. Please, email me to check on the availability of each "back" issue as some months are gone.*

Several Branches are sending a membership list with names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses and a branch check for dues. Those branch member dues have been prorated and are up to date. Ahhhhhh, that is wonderful! [and, I thank Buxton and Astro branches for being starts in that area!] Some branches have their members be responsible for ABS dues, and that is okay. However, some members [with anniversary

dues dates] forget and are dropped off the ABS mailing list and that makes for unhappy members. Then we have a plethora of [email] conversation to get that straightened out. Because we put reminders in *The Begonian*, we do not send out dues notices anymore, and we assume/hope that each member catches said “dues reminder/s”.

That brings us to NEW members.

ABS gains new members throughout the year. When New Member packets are mailed, an enclosed letter explains ABS dues and each new member dues are prorated to December 31st. Nearly all new members send the prorated dues within a month. So, that is working well.

New Member packets include a membership card, the current issue of *The Begonian*, a welcome and dues letter that includes a statement about information being shared within the organization, and a packet of begonia seed with instructions for planting.

Since the last report in October, we have gained 28 members: eleven in October, five in November, eight in December, and four to January 6, 2009:

AI-1; MA-1; RI-3; CA-5; GA-2; OR-2; MN-2; WA-1; TX-4; MI-1; MO-1; VA-1; ME-1; PA-1; Washington, DE-1; and Canada-1. These new members are classified as NIB members – those who do not have a branch affiliation.

It would be most helpful if branches would send a membership list each year so notations in the “Master File” could be updated on affiliations for each member. Where known, the Master File has all branch affiliations for each member, the date when member joined, email address/s, phone numbers, a record of all past years dues paid dates, if mailing address is different than home address [PO Boxes], businesses owned by member if appropriate to the plant world, Life memberships and said date, complimentary issues, Libraries, etc., and if names can/cannot be shared within the organization. Member information is NEVER shared outside the organization. Perhaps when the branches send a membership list it could include the year each member joined. That should spark some stories!

That is what keeps the membership chairman busy!

Please email or send new addresses as soon as possible and any other changes in email address and phone numbers. It costs ABS double for each issue resent, whether to a new address or to replace an issue that never was received. ZIP CODES/POSTAL CODES are SO VERY IMPORTANT!

Overseas members, please send me your postal codes. It will assure the speedy delivery of *The Begonian* and save this chairman the chore of resending issues. My NEW address:

Donna Marsheck
402163 W. 2650 Dr.
Bartlesville, OK [USA]
74006-0555.

You may reach me at dmarsheck@yahoo.com or leave a message on my cell: 1-918-440-1325. I get a great deal of email, so keep “bugging” me until I answer.....and.....Please take care, Donna

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Begonian Terrarium Questions

by Johanna Zinn

Can you bring plants to shows in plastic containers?

Plants can be exhibited in plastic containers. However, the containers should be show worthy, or of a quality that does not detract from the attractiveness of the plant. Pretzel barrels or animal cracker barrels work well for growing terrarium plants, but they are generally not suitable for a convention or judged plant show. Clear plastic ice buckets inverted and placed on top of one another may look attractive enough to be entered in shows. There are many types of plastic containers designed to be terrariums that may be used for shows if they are not yellowed, stained, cracked or scratched. Small flaws in the plastic, especially on the bottom of the container, may not show up when the plant is in the container. When judges assess a plant in a terrarium, a suitable container is worth a fair percentage of the total point score. Sometimes exhibitors bring attractive, interesting, unusual, or rare plants to branch shows in less than perfect containers in order to have the plant seen by club members or the public, not to win ribbons. Check the rules for the show in which you want to exhibit, or talk with the Show Chairman.

Where should you put your plants after they have been planted in terrariums?

Terrarium plants should not be placed where they will be in direct sun-

light. Direct sunlight will quickly raise the temperature in a closed container and 'cook' your plant. Even if the container is not closed, direct sunlight may burn the leaves. Bright indirect light or fluorescent lights work well. I have an open plant stand which is tucked between two light stands. I have plants on that stand that prefer less heat and/or light. There are several begonias suitable for terrariums which are happy in north windows where they receive no sunlight. Plants which grow and bloom in unobstructed north windows include *B. rajah*, *B. versicolor*, *B. decora*, *B. U476*, *B. crispula*, *B. turrialbae*, and *B. soli-mutata*.

I'm having trouble getting the African yellow blooming Begonias to keep blooming. I'm sure that it is a light problem. How do you handle them?

There could be several reasons that your African yellow blooming begonias are not in bloom, or do not continue blooming. Too little light could decrease the number of blooms on your begonias. Also, terrarium plants are often grown in sphagnum moss which does not provide much in the way of nutrients. In addition, plants generally bloom better when they are mature. Finally, begonias are often seasonal bloomers. **Millie Thompson** could coax a bloom out of a begonia better than most of us. Here is what she listed for blooming times and/or amount of bloom on several of the African Begonias. *B. microsperma* [syn. *ficicola*] blooms in the spring. Moderate blooms appear on *B. staudtii* from spring to fall. *B. prismatocarpa* is listed as ever-blooming; profuse. *B. quadrialata* blooms from spring to fall in moderate amounts. *B. 'Buttercup'*, a cross between *B. prismatocarpa* and *B. microsperma*, blooms well at

intervals year round. The Thompsons did not list *B. quadralata ssp. nimbaensis*, but mine is blooming now, in November. My *B. duncan-thomasii* is also in bloom now and blooms sparsely. My plants often have their own internal calendar, and bloom whenever they feel the urge.

Plant lights may be left on for 12 to 14 hours to stimulate blooms. I leave my lights on for 12 hours and get blooms using full spectrum or a combination of cool white and warm white fluorescent bulbs. Some growers adjust the timing on their lights to simulate seasonal changes in day/night length. However, I don't want to spend the time changing my timers, so my plants have to settle for an equatorial 12 hour day/night length. Many of the plants in the north windows bloom with natural light, but I have not been successful getting the yellow flowering African begonias to bloom there. Because I don't want my plants to outgrow their containers too quickly, I don't fertilize them heavily. I use a ¼ to ½ strength solution three to four times a year when I water. More frequent fertilization may increase blooms or lengthen blooming times.

Update on Southwest Region ABS by Freda Holley

As many of you know, I have served as Director of SWR for the last two years and now I am pleased to tell you that new officers have been elected. They are:

Doug Byrom, Director
Don Miller, Vice Director
Ann Salisbury, Treasurer
Lisa Holmes, Secretary
Wanda Macnair, Nat. Director

San Antonio was scheduled to host

the Southwest Region Get-Together, but at the last minute voted not to do it and did not find another branch to host. Therefore, there will be no Get-Together this year. New officers took office effective with the new year.

Charles Henthorne continues to work with the Ft. Worth Botanic Gardens on housing the **Millie Thompson** materials and reports good progress.

Elizabeth Cassimatis and the Mae Blanton Branch are working on the 2010 Get-Together which will allow us to visit the Ft. Worth Botanic Gardens and see their new begonia greenhouse and their progress with the species bank.

Good News! Cascade Branch Revives

The resurrected Cascade Branch of the ABS met Sunday January 18, 2009 at Portland Nursery in Portland, Oregon. Members from Salem, Oregon to Seattle, Washington attended.

Dan Heims, of Terra Nova Nursery, presided. Members Sue and Jane brought an assortment of suitable containers, fishbowls, and other glassware that could be used for terrariums. Wally brought rescued fish aquariums for sale. Dan Heims, the Crooks, commercial growers in the area, and **Wally Wagner** brought plants to purchase.

Wally Wagner, past ABS National President and begonia pioneer, conducted a seminar in terrarium selection and planting. Emphasis was on size, soil, lighting, and types of begonias suitable for terrariums.

On a sunny but bone-chilling day, all had a warm, friendly time and learned a lot about terrariums.

Try Everything

There is some value in being a contrarian. As one, no piece of advice can come your way that you are not driven to try out the opposite. So it was with the advice that begonias have to be grown in shallow pots as they have spreading root systems.

Thus, I took one of those tall thick stemmed unidentifieds I grow and placed it into a pecan growing pot. You may have one of these or may have seen one at your nursery. They are very tall, narrow pots that permit the tap root of the pecan to elongate.

The begonia grew like topsy - growing very tall and when I tried to move it this fall, I found that the roots had escaped into the ground beneath the pot where those roots seemed very happy indeed!

Of course, I don't advise trying this with just any plant - it should be a tall grower and a plant you can live without if the original advice turns out to be correct

for that particular plant. As with all plants and in fact people as well, all depends on the individual.

I've also found that some erect going rhizomes are quite happy in taller pots and indeed very tall ones like *B. 'Selph's Mahagony'* actually need the additional height to support their elongated stems. In their case, I keep a considerable upper part of the pot for that purpose.

One other instance in which I've found it paid to be the contrarian was on the advice that cane leaf cuttings won't produce new plants. I've found that *B. coccinea* (the true one with flesh leaves and brilliant red blooms) roots readily from leaves. You may be surprised also to know that most thick stems such as *B. valida*, *reneformis*, and *scabrida* will also root from a leaf. I usually leave the full leaf and a rather long petiole to stick deep into the potting soil.

What's begonia growing if not an adventure where you can try everything once. ~FH

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Contributions of seed from the membership make the Seed Fund more diverse. Please self pollinate your species begonias, collect the seeds and send them to the seed fund. We depend on your contributions.

Seed featured this issue:
Definitely rare \$3.00 per packet.
First listing since collected:

B. novogranatae

This seed is from a plant grown by **Michael Ludwig**. See **Thelma O'Reilly's** article July/Aug 1985, and Michael Ludwig's "Beyond the Dust" March/April 2007. Thanks Michael!

We have plenty of the following:

- B. barkeri*
- B. bolivensis*
- B. cinnabarina*
- B. cucullata var. arenosicola*
- B. karwinskyana*
- B. ludwigii*

Remember 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.

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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 Begonia Hybrids" edited by Howard Berg dated 9/13/2005

Rex Begonia Developments

In an article in the *Greenhouse Product News*, November 2002 Volume: 12 Number: 11, author **Rick Schoellhorn**, assistant professor of floriculture at the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, writes about new developments in the Rex begonia.

He says that they are being revisited as a bedding plant today. As well, he says they [U. of FL.] have been trialing plants to test them for heat tolerance as well as winter hardiness.

The trialed 37 cultivars and found the following to be top selections for Florida growing. Growers are noted after

the names:

- 'Chocolate Man', Milestone Agriculture. Silver and brown foliage with bright pink flowers in fall. A great fall combination of colors and exceptional vigor and leaf spot resistance.
- 'Maui Mist', Proven Winners. Striking pink-purple and silver-toned leaves with deep, blackish green edges, vigorous.
- 'Snow Queen', Milestone Agriculture. Leaves are predominantly bright silver, strong growth, disease-tolerant.
- 'Fairy', Milestone Agriculture. Predominantly silver-toned foliage.
- 'Chicago Fire', Proven Winners. Purple and green with silver markings in the centers of the leaf.
- 'Boston Cherries and Chocolate', Proven Winners. Reds, purples and silvers spotted over the dark leaves.
- 'Silver Queen', Milestone Agriculture. Another predominantly silver foliage type with a darker green edge on the leaf.
- 'Tita', Milestone Agriculture. A predominantly red-brown foliage with fewer highlights of any kind. In comparison to other hybrids, a bit drab, but these plants really performed well and would be a great addition to mixed containers.

The article also touts a number of other rhizomatous begonias that are felt to have potential in this field, including: *B. gigantea* (?*), *nelumbiifolia*, *hearacleifolia*, 'Benito-chiba', and *bowerii*.

*Perhaps, *B. arborensis*, a species with that synonymy.



This beautiful portrait of B. 'Bonfire', another B. boliviensis cultivar, sitting in the afternoon sun, accompanies Norman Winter's column right.

Bounty Of Begonias Is Coming In Spring

By Norman Winter,

MSU Horticulturist, Central Mississippi Research & Extension Center

2009 looks to be the Year of the Begonia.

This is not an official proclamation but my expectation of the incredible new begonias that will debut this spring. From hanging baskets to the landscape, begonia lovers can rejoice.

For color, nothing will beat 'Nonstop Fire'. This is a tuberous begonia from Benary Seed that loads up with 4-inch double blossoms. 'Nonstop Fire', or *Begonia tuberhybrida*, is a blaze of orange and yellow. The orange radiates from the outer petals much like embers in a fireplace. The plants develop lateral branches, giving a great mounded look for baskets and planters.

Nonstop begonias don't like to be over watered; you'll have a happier plant if you keep it slightly dry, watering only when needed or when it is dry to the touch. Even though tuberous begonias aren't the stalwart performers of the Deep South, you'll treasure these flowers for several weeks.

Proven Winners is introducing two new series of *Begonia boliviensis*, 'Mandalay' and 'Bellagio'. These tuberous begonias can overwinter in large, well-drained containers in zones 7B and 8. Both the 'Mandalay' and the 'Bellagio' are incredible in hanging baskets, large containers and window boxes.

This 'Bellagio' Apricot produces large double blossoms that hang downward in exotic fashion. It reaches about 12 inches in height and spreads nearly 30 inches. (Photo by Norman Winter/MSU Extension Service)

Some might argue that these are not true tuberous begonias, but they do form tubers when day lengths are short. They exhibit much more heat tolerance than typical tuberous begonias.

The 'Mandalay' produces masses of single flowers on long, arching branches, and it will remind you somewhat of 'Bonfire'. 'Mandalay' will be available in a white-flowered selection called 'Pearl', a showy orange-red called 'Mandarin' and a hot pink called 'Flamingo'.

The 'Bellagio' series produces large double blossoms that hang downward in exotic fashion. It is available in three colors: Apricot, Blush (a soft white with pink) and Pink. These begonias reach about 12 inches in height and spread nearly 30 inches.

For the landscape, you need to think big -- really BIG. Benary Seed also is introducing the BIG begonia series. BIG was the hit of the California Pack Trials last April and has performed well in university trials across the country. [Available from Park Seed].

The BIG series, or *Begonia x benariensis*, represents the best breeding of angel wing and fibrous-type begonias. The flowers are 2 1/2 inches wide under cool temperatures and maintain quarter-sized blooms once summer sets in.

The leaves are huge, and the plants will push 2 feet tall and wide. They will be available in three colors: BIG Red with bronze leaf, BIG Red with green leaf and BIG Rose with bronze leaf. Like other landscape begonias, they will perform best in fertile, well-drained soil in sun to part sun.

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B. bartonea



Above left is the photo of the plant *B. bartonea* hort ('Winter Jewel') of Ivy McFarlane grown in a terrarium appearing in the *Australian Winter 2008 Queensland journal*. To its right are the forming seed pods on one of my plants of *B. U402* growing in higher light and to the right is the large plant - about 3 ft. by 3 ft. - growing in lower light.



Dark Small-Leaved Beauties

by Freda Holley,
Choudrant, LA

Small leaved shrub-like begonias have not been easy for me to grow. While I've admired large, beautiful plants of *B. foliosa* at shows, mine have always remained small, struggled, and soon died. *Begonia U402* has been one that has done better for me; so well in fact that I really can no longer describe it as small leaved. I wrote about this plant in the October/November 2008 *Begonia Leaflet*, but with the coming of winter, this plant has outdone itself. All the plants I have are blooming profusely since going into the greenhouse.

John Howell of San Antonio introduced me to this plant and he may have secured his plant from a Japanese grower. *Begonia*, Journal of the Japanese Begonia Society, in its January/March 1997 issue had a cover photo of this plant with an article by **Michiko Nakamura** translated by **Akira Tanaka**. This reports that it was imported by Ashizawa from Venezuela. John may have secured his plant from Michiko who attended some of our conventions. John said that it was the parent of *B. 'Winter Jewel'* while this article says it resembles *B. bartonea* (an older synonym for *B. 'Winter Jewel'*; it is always labeled *B. bartonea hort.* because it was found only in the garden and never again found in the wild. It thus was never published with a botanical description and hence cannot be identified as a species.).

I have never seen *B. 'Winter Jewel'*, but my interest in the two plants was stirred by the exhibit photo of this plant in the Winter, Vol. No. 79 2008, issue of the *Journal of the Queensland Begonia Society, Inc.* The display page on this says it was discovered in Puerto Rico in 1994 (probably taken from the Thompsons' *Begonia*

gonias description). As you can see in that photo, its leaves are very similar to those of *B. U402*, although much wider.

When I went to references to find this begonia, I found mention of *B. 'Winter Jewel'* or *B. bartonea* in every older text, but no reference in recent books. I had long assumed that this one was no longer grown, hence my surprise to see it in the Australian journal. I wonder now if anyone in the U.S. grows it. It is often mentioned as a terrarium plant in this older literature.

Only one book mentioned the similarity of *B. 'Winter Jewel'* to *B. schmidtiana*. Leaf color and flowers are very similar to both it and *B. U402*. In fact, to me they look like *B. schmidtiana* on steroids and were it not for the fact that I had seed on *B. U402* and these reproduced that plant unwaveringly, I could imagine that it might be a hybrid of this species.

In the September/October 1989 issue of the *Begonian*, **Francis Michaelson** of Orange City, Florida wrote about *B. 'Homossasa'*:

"I raised *B. ulmifolia* for years. I grew it because it was a species, but I never thought it was anything outstanding. I noticed that nobody ever tried to cross it, so I tried to use it and produce a more decorative plant.

"However, the little pollen available at that time was not mature enough, or the chromosome count on the crosses I tried was not compatible. Finally in 1976 I got a cross using *B. ulmifolia* as the female plant and *B. bartonea hort.* as the male parent. This produced *B. 'Homossasa'* which is named for a city and springs in Florida."

This plant I believe is still much grown in Florida.

Two other hybrids of *B.* 'Winter Jewel' are listed in the Thompsons' *Begonias*: *B.* 'Acibar' (*B. acida* x 'Winter Jewel') and *B.* 'Dresden Gold' (*B. olsoniae* x 'Winter Jewel'). *B. acida* has 38 chromosomes and *B. olsoniae* has 56 (*B. ulmifolia* is listed as having 30 chromosomes); somehow, neither of these seem likely crosses to me and neither looks anything like the male parent in the Thompson photos while the Florida hybrid does. Of course, I have never seen either of these plants growing. I also wonder if anyone grows either of these anywhere anymore?

As I said, I did once get seed from *B. U402* and since seedlings were identical to the parent, I feel sure it is a species. Since I have profuse bloom on the plants this winter, I am trying several crosses to see if I can get takers. I did try *B. U402* on *B. foliosa* and a *B. malabarica* (from **Rekha Morris** seed), but I could not get either to take..

The blooms on the *B.* 'Winter Jewel' photo appear to be a soft pink (in the literature it varies: some say white, some say soft pink) while those on my *B. U402* are decidedly white with no touch of pink. I thought at first that male blooms had two tepals, but finally caught one with two smaller intact tepals. These appear to fall very early. Female blooms have 5 tepals, 4 large, 1 small. I tried to find one with perhaps another small tepal thinking the female flower might be like that of the male, but could not so I believe 5 is the correct number. The bloom clusters are loose and a good size, matching well to the plant.

I have several plants and they differ a great deal in leaf size and overall plant size. Leaf color varies too. If the plant is placed in high light, the color of its leaves become very bronzy and leaf size is much reduced. In lower light, they are a more light, olive green. I have one that has so

far remained small and dark even growing beside the other in the greenhouse; I'm watching this one to see if age makes a difference. **Doug and Joyce Pridgen** - I have seen photos of beautiful plants grown by Doug and Joyce - suggested this light as the reason for differences in my plants and also say that in the lower light level they get larger leaves. The largest leaves I have now reach about 6 inches, but these emerge only when the stems become very elongated, undoubtedly from the low light. The smaller plants have much smaller leaves, some no more than 2 inches in length.

Mildew was mentioned as a problem on *B.* 'Winter Jewel' in several places. I did have a problem with this on *B. U402* last winter when a wave of this swept through my greenhouse along with mealy bugs to spread it; plants lost many leaves.

However, once the plants were out of the greenhouse and receiving a good dose of sun and heat, both problems quickly disappeared on all plants. I am hoping that was a one year event since I had previously had no problem with either.

Knowing that most shrubs respond well to pruning, I plan to prune back my largest plant severely come spring. I am trying to resist the urge to set too many seed on the plant as I have doomed some plants to death by letting them overbear in the past. With their growth rate, I will also fertilize them well. These reproduce very well from stem cuttings, and amazingly they also do extremely well as leaf or part-leaf cuttings.

No other problems with growing them has presented itself and to growers in our warmer areas, I highly recommend *B. U402* as a hardy, dark leaved beauty. I'm unsure how it will do in cooler areas.

Continued from page 69.

Last but certainly not least is the new *Volumia* series, *Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum*, coming from Syngenta Flowers. These were star performers in Mississippi State University trials. They are available in five colors, all with green leaves. ‘*Volumia Scarlet*’ and ‘*Volumia White*’ were the top performers in our trials, with the others not far behind. These are vigorous, well-branched plants reaching 12-15 inches tall in the sun. They have larger flowers than most landscape begonias.

Spring looks to be both fun and beautiful thanks to these new begonias. Be the first to get them in your neighborhood..

Other Recent Begonia Research

By Freda Holley

I found the above article in a web search. It did not appear when I simply googled begonias, but when I put in research on begonias, I got a whole other fascinating section of articles. If you have not tried this, be sure to do so.

In an article in the January 18, 2009 issue of *The New York Times*, appeared an article with this excerpt: “More recently the fibrous-rooted begonias have become popular for growing in hanging baskets for the same reason. Although many cultivars have been used for hanging basket culture, one spectacular new one with bright red flowers and cascades of deep-green foliage will be on the market in a few years. It is called ‘*Spartan Beauty*’ and was bred at Michigan State University.

“The new hanging-basket begonia is the culmination of eight years of research by Dr. Lowell Ewart, professor of horticulture. His goal was a seed-produced hanging basket plant. He made almost 1,000 different crosses using an old-fashioned basket type, a bedding begonia and a species. His final result was introduced in conjunction with the university’s dedication of its new horticultural demonstration gardens, which are five gardens in 7 and a half acres.”

And on a Chinese website, I found this news: B. ‘*Fragrant Queen*’ is a new Chinese hybrid which along with 13 other varieties including B. ‘*Purple Leaf*’, B. ‘*Purple Stem*’, B. ‘*Dalie*’ have been introduced in China. As you know there has been much recent activity on begonias in China.

In another article from the Agriculture Research Service of the USDA, there is a report on breeding cold hardy begonias in Mississippi. So far begonias that have been used and produced viable seed were *B. fisheri*, *cuclullata*, and ‘*Kaylen*’. B ‘*Barbara Rogers*’ was tried, but appeared sterile. It is suggested that the research will be useful in producing cold hardy begonias for the south.

In still another paper, I found a report on a research study of three levels of shading for begonias.(41, 62, and 76%). The conclusion? The optimum level was 62%

This was a quick web search and I am sure there are many other articles available. There were articles showing many new begonias being named as well, particularly in China.

Thus, when you do a web search be sure to vary your search entry to get the best results.

Conservation Comments

Bill Claybaugh

Conservation Chairman, ABS

B. 'Stars n Stripes', and "siblings"

In the spring of 2006 I crossed *B. nelumbiifolia* with *B. sericoneura* and made what has proven to be a most interesting set of cultivars. My goal from the outset was to create a begonia hybrid for the yard that would be large, fast growing, heat and cold resistant, and bloom profusely. The parents of this cross seemed a natural to me because I had grown both for years in my flower beds with reasonable success. Farther, both of these species were from Mexico, both in Section Gireoudia, and both had chromosome numbers of 28. A match made in Heaven!!

I selected *B. nelumbiifolia* as the pod parent because most seedlings seem to favor the female parent in appearance and I really like the large peltate leaves of this species. For the pollen parent, I had three variations of *B. sericoneura* to choose from but favored the plain green glabrous one, rather than the ones that are known by the synonyms *B. pilifera* (red stripe in the blade) or *B. hypolipara* (leaf blade with indument). This variation seemed to be the more hardy and adapted readily to my growing condition.

The seeds from the cross were fertile and I ended up with 75 small plants in 2 1/2 inch pots. From the very outset, I could tell there was something unusual happening. About a third of the seedlings developed rapidly and although the leaves were peltate, they also developed lobed incisions and later basal lobes. The other two-thirds of the plants although smaller, were non-uniform in leaf shape and plant size. Some plants developed with lobed margins, some entire margins, some with basal lobes and some without. Over the

next three years, I compared properties of these plants and finally settled on four plants that seemed to represent the best and the most unique results of this cross. I will now describe these new cultivars.

B. 'Stars n Stripes' The most outstanding cultivar from the cross. This rhizomatous plant grows to over three feet in height with leaves that average 12 inches in length and 9 inches in width. A few leaves get to over 18 inches in length. The blades are light green in color and are peltate, as is *B. nelumbiifolia*, but also have large overlapping basal lobes, as does *B. sericoneura*. The margin is considered lobed, with nine lobes total including the two basal lobes. The plant has a 4 to 5 foot high inflorescence, classified as a compound dichasium structure similar to that of the male parent, with deep pink colored flowers. This plant has been vegetatively propagated and it comes back true. I have now grown this cultivar in the Houston area for three summers and it takes the mid-day heat well plus recovers rapidly from winter freezing. The plant will take direct summer sun for several hours per day with no ill effects or can also be grown in a bright area with no direct sun.

B. 'Star View' This cultivar is an exact duplicate of *B. 'Stars n Stripes'* except in size. This plant rarely exceeds 18 inches in height and often is just 12 inches. The leaves are the same pale green, both peltate and with basal lobes, the blade margin is lobed, and the blades average six to ten inches in length. The smaller size has a certain advantages if one is seeking a more compact variety. For me, the plant fits well into a low 14 inch terracotta pot placed among succulents in a very sunny rock garden.

B. 'Small Number' This plant gave me lots of mental anguish for over two years while I was waiting for it to attain full maturity. Finally, now three years



Bill Claybaugh's photos show below B. 'Stars & Stripes' and, to the left, the comparison of the four leaves of the various cultivars about which he writes.



old, I know the plant looks and acts like a miniature version of *B. nelumbiifolia*. It has all the color and shape characteristics of its pod parent but not the size. The total plant never exceeds 18 inches in height and off-times only 12 inches. The blades are peltate, the margin entire, the same orbicular shape as the parent, but rarely exceed six inches in length. Again, if one is looking for a compact moderate sized, very tough, sun resistant plant with vivid green coloration, this is it.

B. 'Wrong Number' This final variation is indeed interesting in that it is exactly like *B. 'Small Number'* except it has one pair of very distinct basal lobes in each leaf. The incision is approximately 1/2 to 1 inches in depth from the outer perimeter, smoothly rounded and symmetrical. The pod parent, *B. nelumbiifolia*, will occasionally have a leaf with a small but distinct basal incision similar to that found in *B. 'Wrong Number'*, but the occurrence is very sporadic. For *B. 'Wrong Number'*, every leaf has the basal incision with a few of the leaves basifixed, not peltate, but these are again in the minority.

Reviewing the four plants in general, the most outstanding characteristic of *B. 'Stars n Stripes'* seems to be its peltate-cordate-incised leaves, imposing size, and outstanding floral display. The other three cultivars have distinct, uniquely shaped leaves and are very sun hardy.

Continued from page 45.

Request from Scotland

Whilst most of you reading the *Begonian* are fascinated by the incredible range of horticultural hybrids, I suspect few of you have had the opportunity to see *Begonia* hybrids in the wild. I am interested in hearing from anyone who

has, in particularly from section *Gireoudia* from Central America. Any descriptions of habitats and plant form, as well as photos would be very much appreciated.

Information about hybrids from elsewhere is also welcomed. This information will help *Begonia* research at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh.

Please email:

a.twyford@rbge.org.uk.

Many thanks.

Alex Twyford,

Edinburgh, Scotland

**We have a new editor;
Send articles (and let
there be many of them)
for the May/June issue
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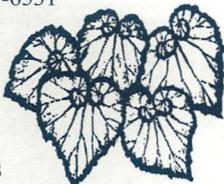
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Australia 2011

Next issue closing date: March 1, 2009

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