

The

Begonian

May/June 2009

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: Note the fantastic colors in the leaves of *Begonia taliensis*, a tuberous species, and one of the begonias discussed in *Dan Heim's* article on Hardy Begonias. **Back:** Another of *Dan Heim's* featured hardy plants, *Begonia boliviensis*, captures plenty of attention with those striking orange flowers and graceful habit. Check out page 90 for more!

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Begonia iridescens, is featured in an article this month by **Johanna Zinn**. **Charles and Leora Henthorne** are planning to donate *B. iridescens* plants for an auction after their terrarium seminar. Another great reason to be in West Palm Beach for the convention.

President's Message

The weather should be warming up and you should be spending some time with your begonias and other plants to get them ready for summer. Your pruning should be done, you should be fertilizing and watering on a regular basis but you want to wait to pot up until you see about three to four inches of new growth on your plants. If you pot up right after pruning your plants will sulk for a while and may even go into shock.

A few things to report on in the Begonia Society. I am sure you have read in the latest issue of the Begonian that we have a new editor. I would like to welcome Linda and I hope she gets lots of articles from you to make her job a little easier. I think she is doing the May/June issue by herself but I know Freda will be there to help her over the rough spots. I would also like to give a big thank you to Freda for doing the Begonian for the last ten years. It is a big job and while I have been president I haven't heard many complaints from her except maybe getting articles in on time. Freda, what are you going to do with all the extra time on your hands?

I received a call from *Mary Bucholtz*, Branch Relation Director, that she has received constitutions from two new branches and sent out information on the forming of a third. Mary will give her report at the convention and she will give you the names of our new branches. Maybe the third branch will be ready to go too.

I hope all of you had a chance to read *Donna Marsheck's*, the Membership Chair, article on when to pay your dues. This should clear up any confusion on when your dues are due, how to pay them and the amount to pay.

Members should be receiving the May/June issue of the Begonian just about the time that the convention is going on. I hope everyone who could go did because Florida branches really do put on a great convention. The ABS is still looking for a branch to hold the 2010 convention so if your branch is interested please let me know. I will close for now so until next issue have fun growing your begonias.

Mary Sakamoto

Letters to the Editor

Begonia 'Ed Thompson'

Does anyone have *B.* 'Ed Thompson', hybridized by **Gordon Lepisto**? I would like to have this for The Begonia Greenhouse at The Fort Worth Botanic Garden. **Millie Thompson's** sister visited the Greenhouse and expressed an interest in this begonia. The Gardens has *B.* 'Millie Thompson' and we have promised to try and find *B.* 'Ed Thompson'. We will be glad to buy it or trade for it.

Please contact **Deborah Garrett**, curator of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden Begonia Species Bank, at deborah.garrett@fortworthgov.org. Thanks again!

Elizabeth Cassimatis

Volunteer at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden
Begonia Species Greenhouse



Photo by Gordon Lepisto

Begonia 'Ed Thompson' medium-leaved
non-spiral

Palm Beach: Convention-Goers Paradise

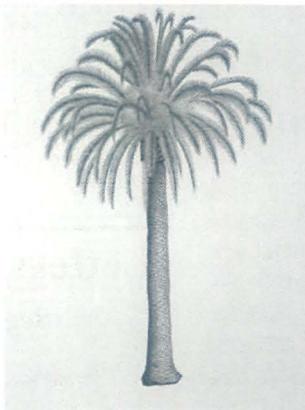
There are many wonderful things to do in Palm Beach and environs while you're at our ABS Convention. The PB Airport Hilton offers a free **trolley service** that will take you to **Cityplace (great shopping and restaurants)** and downtown West Palm Beach; they'll even arrange pickup from downtown West Palm Beach after hours.

The trolley will take you to **Sunfest**, our waterfront **music and art festival**. Sunfest runs from April 29 to May 3. There are three stages with James Taylor, David Cole, UB40, 'Classic Albums Live' and Spyro Gyra scheduled to play. A juried **fine arts and crafts show** with 165 artists' work will be on display and food, fun, and drink in the streets. Go to www.sunfest.com for more information.

Clematis by Night is the downtown Thursday night street festival, featuring the area's best rock, r&b, reggae, blues, soul, swing, and Latin music. It's free, and in addition to the great live music Clematis Street is the place to be to taste mouth-watering food and for sidewalk shopping. Take the trolley! Go to www.clematisbynight.net for more info.

Lots of beautiful **beach** for swimming, shelling, or stargazing--try Palm Beach. Get there via Millionaires Row--Southern Boulevard east to A1A. Ogle the beautiful homes.

Shop Palm Beach's glamor-



ous Worth Avenue, lunch at Taboo or one of the charming outdoor restaurants in the Vias, the tiny courtyards off Worth Avenue.

More exciting **shopping** can be found at West Palm Beach's famous Antique Row (US1, Dixie Highway, between Belvedere Road and Southern Boulevard.) For more **outdoor activities**, try the Palm Beach Zoo, Mounts Botanical Garden, Lion Country Safari,

or one of the many fabulous nature preserves. The Hilton will have brochures, and the friendly members of the Begonia Society of the Palm Beaches will be happy to recommend favorites. I prom-

Membership Report

This will be my last membership report. It has been a privilege to serve in this capacity for ABS and to work with **Carol [Notaras]**. She has been wonderfully helpful from the beginning of my term that started in 2005. I have met and worked with so many wonderful people, it will be strange not receiving all the phone calls, emails and personal notes that accompanied so many of the dues checks. Please be assured that I will forward emails and mail on to the new membership chairman and hopefully the transition will run smoothly!

Since Jan 6th we have gained 45 new members: Astro Branch, 1; Buxton Branch 1; Fred A Barkley 2; Long

Continued on page 108

In the Mailbox

by *Greg Sytch*

Horticultural Correspondent

After a few years of growing orchids, I have come up with a few more "tricks" in growing begonias. Charcoal is recommended in the orchid mix to sweeten the soil, or prevent decay of the potting material. Why not try that on begonias? After all, some of my larger specimens have been in their pots for a number of years and I am sure they could use the benefit of charcoal. Charcoal also adds drainage since it is very slow to break down. I have begun mixing it with all my 6" pots or larger.

Another ingredient I am experimenting with is lava rock. I buy a bag of red lava rock and crush it but good. I use a tamper tool on a plastic sheet. Once the lava rock is crushed, I mix it among my larger potted plants. It also adds drainage and is slow to break down.

We shall see how the results pan out.

This winter here in Tampa Bay has been a challenge. Easily the coldest in my 21 years of living here, we had 5 different freezes with the lowest being 28F and a HEAVY frost. My open back yard gets much colder than my canopied front. I used frost cloth over the begonias inside my shadehouses (uncovered except for shade cloth) and other than some tops damaged, all the plants came through in good shape. They were slow to recover because it did not warm up like it usually does. In fact, I have registered 10 nights below 35F. Despite all this chill, begonias are showing signs of growing, blooming and recovering quite well. They are hardy specimens. My landscape specimens in my front yard, with overhead protection, were barely touched! Food for thought.

With a new editor comes a new

challenge. If you have any questions, comments or need advice, feel free to email me at gsytch@cs.com, snail mail me at 6329 Alaska Ave, New Port Richey FL 34653 or call 727-841-9618. Have a great spring/summer season! GregContact Greg Sytch with all your questions about growing at **Gregory Sytch**, 6329 Alaska Avenue, New Port Richey, FL 34653-4301; Ph: 727-841-9618; gsytch@cs.com

New Slate Of Officers for the Upcoming Election

President - Cheryl Lenert

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2nd VP - Doris Happel

Secretary - Richard Macnair

Treasurer - Carol Notaras

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Editor's Notes

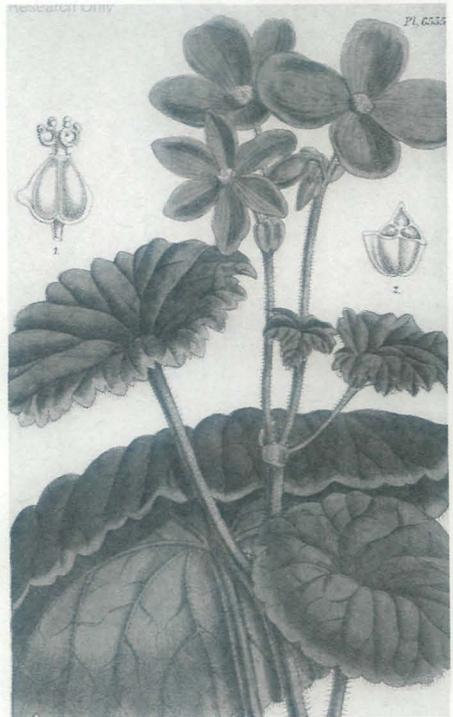
As I have worked on my first issue of the *Begonian* many things have crossed my mind. First and foremost, I must say Freda Holley has done an amazing job on this publication. She brought the *Begonian* into the 21st century both with technology and with the many years of dedicated service she has given. Over this last two months I can plainly see that preparing *The Begonian* for publication is a difficult task, which she made look easy. Thanks so much, Freda. You have left me some pretty big shoes to fill and I know it will take some time to match the meticulous attention to detail and dedicated quality of your work.

Since I am fairly new to the ABS I am looking forward to working with and getting to know more of you. So far I have been very impressed with the folks who have helped and contributed to this issue of *The Begonian*. A society's journal is often the first face newcomers have of the group so I encourage everyone to contribute –whether with articles, growing tips, letters to the editor, photos, or even suggestions for ideas or changes you would like to see made. As many plant societies are experiencing declining memberships one of my goals will be to find ways to get new members excited about the joys of growing and knowing Begonias. So – some thoughts for regular columns or articles include a beginner's forum, an occasional report from branches especially focusing on great program ideas other groups might use, and perhaps a member's spotlight focusing on what, where and how a particular person grows. Do you have an idea? Would you be willing to submit an article and photos? Do you draw or have begonia clip art you would like to offer? Let your passion for *Begonias* shine through and inspire you!

Also I would like to ask all contributors to please start submitting all photos in an electronic format. This will save us money! Please email photos to me at begoniaskc@yahoo.com or have a CD made of your photos and send them to me at: **Linda Tambllyn**, 5635 Woodward, Merriam, KS 66202. Remember the deadline for submissions is 2 months before the issue publication so for the July/ August issue the deadline will be May 1; the deadline for the September/October issue will be July 1 and so on.

Again – thanks so much for giving me an opportunity to serve the American Begonia Society. I will try to continue the tradition that Freda passed to me of producing an informative and entertaining journal.

Linda Tambllyn



Begonia socotrana

*A Curtis's Botanical Magazine Print from
www.begonias.org*



Photographing Insect Pollination of Begonias

Article & photos by Kingsley Langenberg
Waukegan, Illinois

I photograph my begonias just about every day. One summer morning (2008), I was sitting on my back porch with my Nikon D50 digital SLR camera, fitted with a 55mm Micro-Nikkor-P manual-focus lens, taking very close-up pictures of interesting details. I use these pictures for making online jigsaw puzzles, which I post to <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Begonias>.

I noticed a small insect alight on a nearby flower and recognized that this would be an opportunity to catch it in the act of pollination. So I followed it, snapping photos frequently, as it bustled around the flowers. The little critter was a Common Fruit Fly, *Drosophila melanogaster* (from the Greek for "dark-bellied dew lover") and it was probably doing what it loved.

You can imagine how frustrating it was to try to get an in-focus picture of this busy "bee" as it flitted from flower to flower. The depth-of-focus on the lens I was using is measured in millimeters. There are 25mm to the inch and I had just a few for leeway.

Keep in mind that I was using a manual-focus lens. Rather than twisting the lens to change the focal length, I let that be and attempted to stay a constant distance from the subject which required much head-bobbing (and possibly a few cuss words.)

I probably took more than a hundred pictures – it must have sounded like a presidential news conference with all those "ka-zzzzzz-ick"s.

In my memory of this photo-op, I began to root aloud for my subject to move on to a female flower. It seemed

to prefer the males – don't ask me why, I'm not an authority on fruit fly behavior.

At length my wish came true and the fruit fly did land on a female flower, me following behind cheering, bobbing, cussing and clicking. I probably took more than a hundred pictures – it must have sounded like a presidential news conference with all those "ka-zzzzzz-ick"s.

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In Search of: Hardy Begonias

Article and photos by Dan Heim

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Enter "Hardy Begonias" on Google™ and you will find that 99% of the entries point to a single species; *Begonia grandis* (syn *B. evansiana*). From the frozen heights of Machu Picchu in the Andes to exotic locales in China, new species are surfacing that show promise in the hardy arena. There are truly only a handful of hardy species among the 1500 species of begonias. So, how does one find them? Research and exploration.

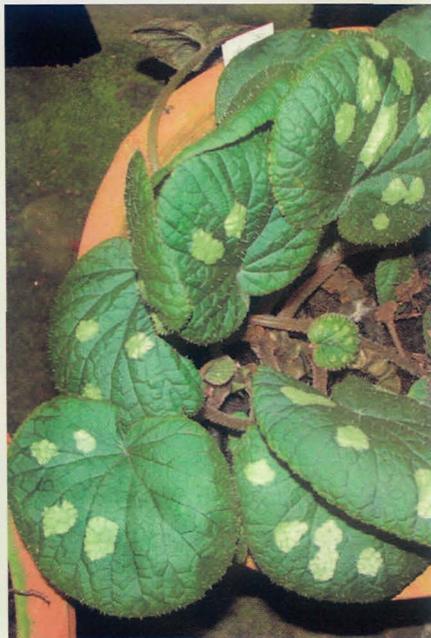
In my Begonia talk, I show a page taken from the Flora of China (Ohwi). Most floras present a species, who discovered it, and when it was first described. Local names transliterated from the Chinese (in this case) and the name written in Chinese. Next comes the botanical description of what the plant is (i.e. Herb) then in excruciating detail, all the parts, from petioles to pedicels. Flower colors, blooming time, and precise measurements of all said parts. What comes next is very important; the locale description (i.e. Broad-leaved forests, moist shady sites) and the elevation. Finally, the province where it is located is given. Given this information for *Begonia pedatifida*, for example, I know that it grows in Hunan at 5100' and is a very good candidate for winter hardiness. Within a single specie there can be different collections with variability in leaf shape, leaf coloration, and flower color. As a breeder, this opens new areas for some exciting new crosses.

There are roughly 150 species of Begonia from China, those that are native to elevations of 5,000' and up are rare, but useful. A trip to the Kunming Botanical Garden in China impressed me with extensive greenhouses and lath houses dedi-

cated to Begonia collection and breeding.

When you look towards Begonia locales in South Africa or the Andes, you may find species living at 11,000' and above! Visitors to Machu Picchu report beautiful tuberous species of Begonias spilling from the cracks of the ruins. The Begonia species *pearcii*, *veitchii*, and *boliviensis* are all tuberous species living at cool, misty 10,000' elevation. Knowing this, you can understand why these plants do poorly in the American south with hot, humid nights foreign to these plants. These are the great-grandparents of many of the tuberous spp. we know today. It is my belief that through inbreeding and the introduction of different species, that most tuberous varieties have lost their hardiness. What I have seen in new collections from these high elevations is an increased ability to withstand cold.

What all hardy begonias need is some sort of structure to store energy and food for the following year's growth. I had received a "hardy" *Semperflorens* begonia years ago, bred by Craig Walker. If you look at the roots of a normal "semp" begonia, they are fibrous. This one was different, with a definite fleshy "pseudo tuber" that insured new growth the following year. (See picture) Operating out of the USDA Research station in Poplarville, Mississippi, Dr. Cecil Pounders has done much breeding work with Begonias 'Kaylen', 'Barbara Rogers', *B. cucullata*, and *B. fischeri* – all showing levels of hardiness in the deep south. Dr. Pounders is doing a large number of crosses with ornamental cultivars to come up with varieties that are attractive and frost-hardy. In my recent trips to Texas and Alabama, I was surprised to find a number of rhi-



Clockwise from the top:
Begonia grandis spp. *sinensis*;
B. gulinquingensis;
B. sutherlandii

zomatous species that took degrees of frost. Dawn Stover, a research associate with the SFA Mast Arboretum in Nagadoches was potting up a begonia with strong *B. heracleifolia* heritage on one of my stops there. She said that it's the one they call the "hardy" one down there. Tony Avent of Plant Delights nursery in North Carolina even lists *B. heracleifolia* 'Nigricans' as hardy to 15 degrees.

At issue is what varieties can take a northern winter? If you're talking zone 4 or 5 – you're out of luck. There are those who have surprising microclimates. I'll never forget that Cole Burrell had a hardy banana in Minnesota! I have even heard of South African *Begonia sutherlandii* thriving in a zone 5 garden under some pines! Back to our Google™ search, *Begonia grandis* is by far, the easiest hardy Begonia to find.

Forms of *Begonia grandis*. All cultivars are hardy to Zone 6. They prefer shade and free-draining, well-composted



Begonia evansiana

soils, and a slightly acidic soil around pH 6.0. They do well in competitive root situations. Height ranges from 15"-24" and flowers are typically few clustered, drooping and said to be fragrant.



Begonia grandis 'Claret Jug'

Begonia grandis ssp. *grandis* (syn. *evansiana*) – a tuberous, deciduous herbaceous perennial having olive green leaves with red backs and/or red veins, pink flowers in fall var. *alba* - Light green leaves with veins red-netted on the back, white flowers in fall.

Begonia grandis ‘Claret jug’ – Smaller leaves with blood red backs. Better branched than the species and has pink flowers. British cultivar.93

Begonia grandis ‘Sapporo’ – a very vigorous Japanese selection from Japan’s northernmost island. Very large, up to 36” in bloom! Joints are red.

Begonia grandis ‘Simsii’- Larger in all aspects as the species.

Begonia grandis ‘Wildwood Purity’ – yet another dark-backed form with large white flowers from breeder Thurman Maness in Chapel Hill, NC.



Begonia chitoensis (syn. *B. ravenii*)

Begonia grandis ‘Heron’s Pirouette’ – collected in Japan by Dan Hinkley. Green leaves and larger pink flowers in large clusters.

Begonia grandis ‘Pink Parasol’ – A larger pink-flowered form than the species. collected by Bleddyn Wynn Jones in Shikoku, Japan. His nursery is Crug Farm in Wales.

Begonia grandis ‘Wildwood Splendor’ – another dark-backed form with large pink flowers from breeder Thurman Maness in Chapel Hill, NC.

Begonia grandis ssp. *sinensis* (syn. *B. chinensis*) Green leaves, and a mounding habit. Very petite when compared to the species. Light pink, small flowers.

Begonia grandis ssp. *chinensis* ‘Red

Undies' – a small dark-pink flowered selection collected by Bleddyn Wynn Jones in China. 94 Leaves are red-backed. Low, mounding habit. From Crug Farm. ***Begonia grandis* ssp. *chinensis* 'Wolong Rose'** – mounding form brought back by Darrel Probst from Szechuan, China.

Several hybrids have been made of *B. grandis*, but have not shown hardiness. I have been making numerous crosses to the best forms with other Chinese species and am very encouraged by the results. Patent laws prevent me from providing photography and a full description. All I can tell you is there are some exciting plants in store!

Begonia boliviensis – a South American native to the Andes, this plant has been integral to a number of tuberous *Begonia* crosses. Orange flowers atop plants, 4' tall. Many of the new hybrids like *B. 'Bonfire'* show little hardiness. One does better by purchasing wild-collected plants like the ones from Plant Delights Nursery. Plants need a dry, well-drained spot in winter. Zone 7B.

***Begonia chitoensis* (syn. *B. ravenii*)** BSWJ1954 A collection from Crug Farm in the central mountains of Taiwan. Tony Avent offers this as a Zone 7B. In our greenhouses it has been very vigorous with apple-green leaves and pink flowers, easily 2 feet wide by 30" tall. A red-flushed form has been seen by Tony.

Begonia cucullata* var. *arenosicola – a progenitor of the modern *Semperflorens* *Begonia* from Brazil and Argentina which lends hardiness to such plants as *Begonia* 'Barbara Rogers', *Begonia* 'Kaylen', and *Begonia* 'Cragmont'. White flowers, "semp-like green leaves", and curious below-ground bulb-

lets which allow overwintering. Late to emerge in spring. Thought to be bred out of modern *Semperflorens* hybrids. ***Begonia emeiensis*** – this curious *Begonia* from Szechuan province in China shows some hardiness (7B-10). Why curious? It forms large, fat tubers on its thick, apple-green leaves in fall! Strong grower to 20" tall and pink flowers. ***Begonia hemsleyana*** – native to forests, valleys, shaded moist environments at 4000 feet in Guangxi and SE Yunnan (Vietnam) Pink flowers over dark olive palmate and serrate foliage. Some forms are plain green, others spotted on the young foliage, and one more petite form exists with spotted foliage all season. The latter form was offered by Logee's Greenhouses as U404, a possible subspecies of *B. hemsleyana*. <http://www.logees.com/prodinfo.asp?number=B3047-2>

Begonia gulinquingensis – an unusual Chinese species from Yunnan growing at 5200' elevation. The spotting pattern is unlike any other *Begonia*. This picture was taken at the Kunming Botanical Garden in China. 8" tall and 12" wide.

Begonia muliensis – Grown next to *B. taliensis* to which it is confused, you will notice the leaves are thicker, less lobed, and more matte in the finish. It is supposed to be as hardy as *B. taliensis* in the Zone 8A realm. It is a Chinese species listed in the Flora of China.

***Begonia palmata* (syn. *B. laciniata*)** – a species from Taiwan and Southern China (Yunnan), 96 probably hardy to Zone 8B (15-20 degrees F). Leaves are palmate and used by the indigenous people in cooking and as an astringent.

Begonia pedatifida – Wonderful hardy *Begonia* with thick palmate leaves. Certain clones have leaves that are quite cut.



*Above: Begonia 'Kaylen' Below: Begonia 'Metallic Mist'
Inset: Begonia 'Kaylen' with winter storage "bulblets"*





Begonia 'Metallic Mist'
emerging in spring

Other forms have pronounced red veins. Flowers are pale pink. Height to 15" tall. Rhizomes are quite thick. This has been absolutely hardy in Portland, OR in Zone 7B. Likes moist, composty soils.

Begonia sutherlandii - A petite South African species, nearly everblooming with small coral-orange flowers. Somewhat prone to mildew if stressed. Has had its hardiness proclaimed by surprising replies in Zone 5 to Zone 9. It needs major dry and 96 drainage in winter. Height is 10" and spread can be several feet.

Begonia taliensis - One collection was pretty enough to be on the cover of the Heronswood catalog. Large leaves

to 12" wide, lobed and beset with patches of green, silver and purple. Tuberos and zoned at 8. Prefers shade and well-composted soils. One of the parents of *B. 'Silver Splendor'*

Begonia cultivars showing some hardiness:

Begonia 'Barbara Rogers' - Barbara Rogers of Anderson, South Carolina had this white flowered Begonia which truly resembles a *Semperflorens* Begonia (but was found to be hardy to Zone 7b). This plant has dark green foliage and can reach 3' tall +! This plant is sterile.

Begonia 'Cragmont' - Bred by Craig Walker of Tennessee, this Begonia shows similar hardiness to *B. 'Barbara Rogers'* but has lustrous bronze foliage and nice *double* pink flowers. It can also reach the 3' height and does well in full sun.



Begonia palmata



Begonia 'Metalic Mist' flowers

Begonia 'Kaylen' – also bred by Craig Walker of Tennessee, this *Begonia* shows similar hardiness to *B. 'Barbara Rogers'*. Bronze foliage and nice pink flowers. It can reach 3' in height and does well in full sun. Given to me by Alan Armitage of the University of Georgia.

Begonia 'Metalic Mist' – the first of a series of Terra Nova Nurseries' patented introductions. With years of patient breeding and selection, this hybrid of *Begonia taliensis* and *Begonia pedatifida* has yielded a plant with lobed silver leaves etched in charcoal gray with large pink flowers. It was selected from a population of silvered seedlings and showed the greatest vigor. Both parents were selections in themselves of having highly colored foliage. There is a silver mutation with red veins that may be named and introduced in the future. This has survived one Washington, DC winter and is classified as a Zone

7B. Winner of the '08 ABS Convention 'Best New Commercial Introduction'.

Begonia 'Silver Splendor' – here's another Terra Nova hybrid using a select form of *B. hemsleyana* and a highly colored form of *Begonia taliensis*. Leaves are palmate and the growth habit is upright. Plants are very vigorous and do well in containers. Hardiness is estimated at Zone 8.

Many of the "hardy" forms can be kept in Northern climates in a cool garage or room that stays above 32 degrees. Do keep them on the dry side during their dormant period. With all of the new species being discovered, I can hope that there will be a new hardy *Begonia* coming to your garden very soon!

Resources:

Begonias Timber Press Mark C. Teb-

Continued on page 101

Conservation Comments

Bill Claybaugh

Conservation Chairman, ABS

Hybridization Techniques

It is spring, and an excellent time of year to begin a hybridization program. Starting now in early May, we have time to pollinate, develop seeds, and get our seedlings growing during the warm part of the year. This is always best because it mirrors nature's way. In September/October of 2006, I wrote in the *Begonian* about "Hybridization Considerations". That article covered five topics that every hybridizer should consider before beginning any program to create new cultivars. Briefly, the considerations discussed for selection of the parent plants were (1) Genetic compatibility, (2) Growth habit (3) Unique aspects, (4) Leaf characteristics, and (5) Adaptability. The present article carries the discussion farther and deals with the actual mechanics of hybridization. These methods are applicable to cultivars or species and have been shown to be successful over several years of trial.

Pollination/fertilization Before beginning the actual fertilization process, it is necessary to realize that begonia flowers are somewhat unique in the flower world. First, there are distinct male and female flowers, unlike most flowers that contain both sex parts on one blossom. The begonia female flower has a seed pod, i.e. a capsule, located below the sepals and usually three pistils located above. The pistil consists of a style and a stigma, the stigma being at the terminal end of the pistil, usually yellow and sticky. The male begonia flower does not have a seed capsule but does have a collection of stamens above the sepals. The terminal part of the stamen are the anthers, yellow in color and consisting of two chambers in

which the pollen is contained. A very important consideration for the hybridizer is the fact that each of these flowers must attain a certain age before (1) the female flower (stigma) is receptive to the pollen and (2) the anther on the male flower will open and release the pollen. This age requirement for successful pollination dictates that the hybridizer try several times, over several days, in order to improve the probability of success. I usually start pollinating a female flower that has been open for three days, and continue once daily for four trials total. I pick a male flower and try to "dust" the stigma of the female flower by touching the anthers against the stigma. The male flowers are selected by noting those with the sepals fully open, which usually occurs four to seven days after starting to open.

There are numerous ways one can isolate the female flowers from other begonias to insure no unwanted pollination occurs by insects, but this is rarely necessary. Begonias in general have neither odor nor readily available pollen to attract insects, hence they have a low probability of being accidentally pollinated. It does occur of course, or we would never have fertile seeds appear on our plants, so there is always a degree of risk unless precautions are taken. The one noted exception are the *Semperflorens* which easily self-pollinated themselves by pollen falling from the male flower onto the female flower.

Collecting of seeds If pollination is successful, the female flower will usually drop its sepals within four to seven days leaving the fertile seed pod hang-

ing. The seed pod will then take several weeks or months to turn brown and dry sufficient to release seeds. When the pod is dry, it can be picked and opened to give the very fine seeds. This is best done on a white sheet of paper where the seeds can be contained and then separated from the "chaff" by rolling the fertile seeds down a fold in the paper.

Planting seeds Begonia seeds need moisture, light, and time to germinate. Fine milled sphagnum moss, which is wet but not "soggy", works well as a potting medium. Small paper cups with holes in the bottom are often used as containers. Seeds are lightly sprinkled on the top of the moistened sphagnum moss then the cup placed in a plastic container which itself contains about one-half inch of wet perlite. This plastic container is then covered with cling wrap and placed under florescent lights if available. If one is using a two tube (40 watt each) light fixture, the seeds should be about 12 to 18 inches below the lights. The temperature must be monitored for both day and night time conditions and adjustments made to maintain the temperature to about 75 to 80 degrees F for best germination.

Growing seedlings The first seedlings should appear in about 12 to 14 days. Some seeds may germinate sooner (Semperflorens sometimes as quickly as 6 days) and some much longer (some Asian species). After germination, one should wait a few weeks, then begin watering with a very dilute fertilizer solution, about one-eight to one-fourth normal strength. Sometimes a soluble rooting hormone helps at this stage of development. Temperature and humidity must be maintained at conditions previously mentioned.

Separation When the seedlings are about one inch in height, they may be removed from their original potting medium, separated into groups of one to four, and transplanted into larger pots. I find it best to gently lay the new seedlings on the new potting mix (perlite/peatmoss) and gently wash their roots into the medium with a fine stream of water from a spray bottle. It seems best to handle the plants by their leaves, not the stem, to prevent stem damage. After the plants have adapted to their new pot, one can gradually starting changing their growing conditions by lowering the

Continued on next page



Begonia Buttercup (right), growing entirely on a lava rock. George Axiotakis (Knickerbocker Branch) started this plant "with a bit of NZ sphagnum and java moss did the rest!" George's growing area has about 70-75% ambient humidity.

Conservation Comments *(continued)*

temperature and decreasing the humidity. In a few months, they should be strong enough to live in an environment enjoyed by your other more mature begonias.

Selection The final step in hybridization is to finally select which seedlings to keep and which to throw away. This is a difficult activity because we love them all, but know that only the strong, health and unique should survive. I have found it necessary to keep the new plants at least one, and better two or three years, to see which are “keepers”. For the really unique plants, perhaps an unexpected spiral basal lobe or unusual leaf color, one must be sure it is permanent. The best way to test this

feature if through vegetative propagation. If the unique feature is duplicated in the next generation of plants, then it is probably permanent and it's time to smile and congratulate your self on a success.

We all enjoy caring for and growing begonias, but to create your own hybrid is another level of enjoyment. Try it and see.

Correction

In the January/February edition of the *Begonian*, I made a mistake in the English translation of the name *B. Benitsubomi*. It should be translated as follows: as “Red Bud” (Beni = the color red, and tsubomi = a flower bud). I previously split the word *Benitsubomi* in the wrong place.



Begonia collection at Kunming Botanical Garden in China (see pg. 90)

In Search of: Hardy Begonias

(continued from pg. 97)

bitt ISBN 0-88192-733-3

Begonias the Complete Reference

Guide Mildred Thompson ISBN

0-8129-0824-4

Encyclopedia of Begonia Naoyuki

Uemura (in Japanese w/ Latin) ISBN

4-416-40306-2

American Begonia Society www.begonias.org/

Terra Nova Nurseries, Inc. website:

www.terranovanurseries.com

<http://flora.huh.harvard.edu/china/mss/volume13/Begoniaceae.pdf> Begonias

of China

<http://www.raretrees.org/begogra2.html>

Begonia grandis and hardy Begonia listing

Wholesale sources:

Terra Nova Nurseries, Inc. website:

www.terranovanurseries.com

Retail sources:

Plant Delights Nursery <http://www.plantdelights.com/Catalog/Current/welcome.php>

Heronswood Nursery <http://heronswood.resultspage.com/search?w=Begonia&category=&zone=&zipcode=&siting=&flowercolor=&x=0&y=0>

Green Thumbs Galore

<http://www.greenthumbsgalore.com/perennial.html>

Dutch Gardens

<http://www.dutchgardens.com/Metallic+Mist+Begonia/21092,31518S,default,cp.html>

Big Dipper Farm

<http://www.bigdipperfarm.com/cgi-bin/searchstuff.pl?Botanical=Begonia>



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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.

This issue instead of repeating the list of seed listed in the Jan/Feb Issue, we are requesting your help in filling orders submitted to the Seed Fund. As a result of the Jan/Feb listing we have sent out 220 packets of seed in two months. We were not able to meet all requests. We NEED seed of the following:

B. carrieae
B. curtii
B. deliciosa
B. dichroa
B. dregei
B. echinosepala
B. egregia
B. foliosa
B. gehrtii
B. grandis
B. hydrocotylifolia
B. johnstonii
B. lindleyana
B. lubbersii
B. nelumbiifolia
B. obscura
B. olsoniae
B. pearcei
B. pinetorum
B. reneformis
B. rex
B. tayabensis
B. tomentosa
B. wollnyi
B. xanthina
B. 'Cachuma'
B. 'Hawaiian Sunset'
B. Rex cultivars

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.

Remember the Jan/Feb issue lists all species we have available at the beginning of the year. If we receive seed in an amount too small to fill at least 10 orders, you may not see it listed in the Begonian. Therefore, you may ask us for a species you do not see listed. If we have or can locate the species, we will notify you. If you have seed not listed, please send us some to share with others.

The one new arrival this issue is:

B. 'Shanzi' (flowers are white with a pink edge, tuberous)

Thank you, Robert Wagner, for your seed contribution.

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.

Please send your order with payment to:

**AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY
CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND
Dean Turney
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Encinitas, CA 92024
e-mail: dean@deansmail.us**

Costs of mailing:

US only: 1-12 packets \$1; 13-24, \$1.35; 25-36, \$1.71; 37-48 (2 cans), \$2.30; 49-60, \$2.66.

Canada only: 1-12 packets, \$1.10; 13-24, \$1.46; 25-36, \$1.82; 37-48 (2 cans) \$2.35; 49-60, \$2.71.

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

Pruning in Spring

By Lyla Kirkpatrick
Western Australian Society newsletter,

Why prune Begonias? Mainly to stimulate fresh, vigorous growth and perhaps to aim for a more pleasing shape. If left unpruned, the existing stems (of cane-like begonias) will continue to slowly grow. The old leaves will be shed and replaced by mediocre ones. Where flowers have been produced in leaf axils, very few begonias will have growth buds, so the likely result will be a length of bare stem. Not a pretty sight. When a stem is pruned back to a node with a healthy growing tip, the energy and nourishment is forced into this shoot and it will soon develop a fresh stem.

Another reason for pruning is to remove unhealthy, unsightly or spindly growths. Usually, unsightly and unhealthy go together and it is rare for two-year-old stems to be attractive. These should be removed at soil level or down to the lowest growing tip. This is when the plant is encouraged to produce fresh subterranean growths, which will emerge as basal shoots. Spindly growths are neither of

Continued on page 108

*See you in
West Palm Beach!*

Begonia U484 and B. U484 sport

by Doris Happel

About five years ago, our branch got some plants of B. U484 for the first time. They were supposed to be sold at the West Palm Beach Tropical Flower Show, but nobody bought them because they were not in bloom at the time. I have since learned from my own experience in selling begonias that it is very hard to sell non-blooming begonias to the general public. A few of our members bought the plants and took them home. They are actually lovely plants, great in the



BU484 Sport

landscape here in our warm climate, and late bloomers for rhizomatous, being flush with flowers in April and May. I noticed in my own garden the resemblance of U484 to B. 'Mirage.' They bloom at the same time, the flowers look alike, and the leaf shape is the same. B. 'Mirage' is more silvery.

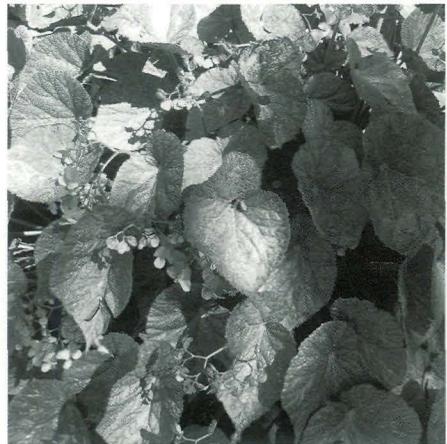
Our original plants came from Harmony Foliage. After propagating

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Begonia U484

U484 for several years, one of their leaf wedge cuttings came up with a variation, which has a curly edge to the leaves and a slight spiral. The sport appears to be a more vigorous plant as well. Harmony now grows the sport exclusively because it is a better-looking begonia.

I still have many of the original U484 plants in my garden, but I also am propagating only the sport.

Charles Jaros reports that Mary Sizemore brought B. U484 back from Thailand in 2004 or 2005. I believe Gene Salisbury wrote about it in 2006 in the *Begonian*.



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*Clockwise from top right:
Begonia "Joooles Moon";
Begonia 'Conee Boswell St.
Louis' (both photos by Julie
Vandewilt); Begonia "Art
Hodes" (photo by Doris Happel);
Begonia novogranatae (photo by
Mike Ludwig)*



Begonia Blog

by Julie Vanderwilt
Santa Barbara, California

An interesting topic on the Yahoo Begonia group recently was identification of begonias. **Wally Wagner**, past president of the American Begonia Society, posed a question about a begonia he'd seen recently. He wondered if it was B. 'Art Hodges' or B. 'Art Hoges'. **Doris Happel** wrote that it could B. 'Art Hodes', which she grew outside in shade at her home in Florida. She sent a picture to help with identification. Then someone else wrote that Art Hodes was a jazz musician and wasn't there a hybridizer who named his hybrids after jazz singers? My begonia database showed that the hybridizer was **Martin Johnson**, creator of many beautiful hybrids still popular today:

Begonia Name	Parents
Art Hodes	
Cleo Brown	Sisquoc x Cleopatra x bowerae Zip
Connee Boswell	palmata var. palmata x diadema
George Zack	Beatrice Haddrell x heracleifolia var. nigricans
Jelly Roll Morton	Erythrophylla Helix x wollnyi
Little Brother Montgomery	
Turk Murphy	hispidavillosa f. nigramarga x heracleifolia var. nigricans
Wingy Manone	seedling wollnyi x(BowtiquexCleopatra)x bowerae nigramarga

Art Hodes was one of the generation of white Chicagoans—Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, Wingy Manone—who witnessed and embraced the New Orleans style jazz that came to Chicago in the early 20s. He played piano with other jazz musicians like Jelly Roll Morton and Wingy Manone.

Another begonia hybridizer who named his hybrids after 60s rock and roll tunes was Walter Dworkin. More about him next time.

So come join us on our Yahoo group for lots of interesting begonia questions and answers. Send email to Bonogias-subscribe@yahoo.com with the word Subscribe in the subject line.

My next topic is near and dear to my heart. It is the story of B. 'Joooles Moon' and how **anyone** can create a new begonia. I'm not saying that all new hybrids are worth saving, but I believe B. 'Joooles Moon' is a winner.

I became interested in begonias in 1998 when a neighbor gave me a cutting of B. 'Viaudi' ('Duchartrei' x *pictaviensis*) that her mother had been growing for years. I stuck the cutting in the ground and voila! a beautiful shrub emerged covered with hairy pink flowers. Any plant that flowers for months is a winner in my book, so I went with my neighbor to a nursery she knew

Continued on page 116

Pruning in Spring

(Continued from page 103)

use to plant or grower and can be great disease havens. Just get rid of them.

So we are left with a plant devoid of old, mature growth but hopefully with two, three or more healthy stems from the last one or two season's growth. If these are vigorous basal shoots they will grow rapidly and perhaps give the plant an unbalanced appearance (especially the superba canes). They can be cut back by about half to a growth bud, which should slow their growth to match the rest of the plant. Usually, the tall-growing varieties, when pruned, will not bush out below the cut, but will continue to grow a single stem. Nearly always where the new stem has emerged from the old, there will be two growth buds and if the grower has the courage and time, these can be forced into growth by severely pruning back the single fresh stem. The advantage being more growths and foliage.

The intermediate and dwarf canes, shrub-like and semi-tuberous will usually branch out readily from the lower stem when pruned, making multiple branches. Most of these types are suitable for hanging containers.

Why do we prune in early spring? To take advantage of the energetic sap flow caused by higher temperatures and longer daylight hours. Most of the intermediate and dwarf canes, shrub-like and semi-tuberous will grow and bloom early in the season and may require tip pruning later in the season to maintain a pleasing shape. Some of the

tall-growing canes take much longer to produce blossom – maybe a full growing season – so to enjoy autumn blossom it is necessary to prune early.

Of course, pruning alone will not cause the plant to produce its best growth. It must be repotted into fresh, good quality mix. If the root-ball needs reducing, doing so will cause it to make fresh, healthy roots. To complete the job, and to get the best results, the plant needs food. We recommend a suitable amount of slow-release fertilizer and in addition liquid and/or foliar feeding until the plant is beautifully re-grown. Continued liquid/foliar feeding is the grower's choice.

The upright tuberous are not pruned. The pendulas can be tip pruned to encourage more side branches. The rhizomatous are pruned if necessary as flowering finishes.

Membership Report

(continued from page 85)

Beach Parent Chapter 1; Palm Beaches Branch 9; Rhode Island Branch 3; Sacramento Branch 2; Tampa Bay Branch 3; Westchester Branch 1. New members not in a branch: CA 1; FL 2; GA 1; IL 1; KS 1; MO 3; MS 1; NC 1; NM 1; NY 2; OH 1; OR 3; PA 1; TN 1; TX 2 and one new member from Switzerland. Twenty-five members have been 'reinstated' so far this year; one was a member in 2005 and the others came back from being members in 2006 & 2007.

Take care everyone, Donna (Editor's Note: **Paul Rothstein** has graciously agreed to take over the Membership Chair for Donna. Watch for more information in the July/August issue.)

Begonia iridescens Dunn

By Johanna Zinn

At the Houston Convention last May, I won a small plant of *Begonia iridescens* that Rekha Morris auctioned to benefit the Conservation Fund. I am delighted with the plant that has developed from that prize.

B. iridescens is a rhizomatous begonia that has been found in the Abor Hills in the eastern Himalayas, and on the frontier of Burma and Tibet.¹ Rekha's notes indicate that the plants she found were located in a gorge near Gohpur in E. Siang, Arunachal, India. It was assigned the Unidentified Species Number 547 {U547}. Rekha stated that *B. iridescens* is a lower elevation plant, that she found it at fifteen hundred to two thousand feet, and that it was always found growing on a sharp gradient. She said that when she collected it in December, it was the dry season for NE India, and most *B. iridescens* plants were dormant. Rekha found several plants growing on a steep cliff adjacent to a deep gully where water was trickling down the hill. She writes that *B. iridescens* is often found growing in rocks with two eight to ten inch leaves pressed flat against the rocks.² Information found on herbarium specimens on the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh web site, on the South East Asian Data Base, indicates that *B. iridescens* was found growing in deep shade at fifteen hundred to fifty-one hundred feet, and was growing flat against rocks or the ground. A note on one of the herbarium specimens also mentions that the collected plant had two large blue green irides-

cent leaves growing against soil or rocks.

My plant has about 20 leaves growing from a one eighth to one quarter inch thick, light red rhizome that is covered with a moderate amount of medium length red hairs. Asymmetrical leaves emerge from narrowly triangular persistent stipules. The largest leaves on my plant are five to six inches in length along the center vein and five to six inches wide. Two of the oldest leaves are almost circular in shape; the remaining leaves are asymmetrical broad ovals. All have cordate bases and short acuminate apices. The leaf margins are entire and crenulate. Soft red hairs line the leaf margins; occasional white or red hairs are present up to one-quarter inch back from the leaf edges. The leaves are crisp and damage easily.

The leaves gently curl under, perhaps because they have no rocks or firm soil against which they can flatten. Young leaves are red green; the upper sides of mature leaves are medium to dark green with long silver-white splashes between the veins. The area around the veins retains a red undertone as the leaves mature, especially on the underside of the leaf. The back of the leaf is a medium green with red areas along the larger veins. The veins on the upper part of the leaf are red and depressed which causes a slight puckering of the leaf surface. There are a few widely scattered red hairs on the top of the veins. The back of the leaves have raised red veins that are covered with short red hairs. The one to four inch petioles are green with a moderate covering of red hair and attach to the leaf at a pale red umbo.

My plant started to form an inflorescence for the first time in early February. At this time, there are only two

1 Hughes, M. and Pullan, M. [2007]. Southeast Asian Begonia Database. Electronic publication accessible via www.rbge.org.uk

2 Morris, Rekha. Personal communication via e-mail. 9/29/2008



Begonia iridescens, a beautiful species with delicate flowers
(photos by Johanna Zimm)



male blooms on the plant. The blooms are pale pink with four tepals. The two larger outer tepals are pale pink with red hairs on the middle and lower back of the tepals. The two smaller inner tepals are very pale pink and have shallow notches on the outer tips of the tepals. The blooms are one and one quarter inches long and wide. Bracts are green and triangular; peduncles and pedicels are green covered with medium length red hairs. The female bloom has formed, but not yet opened.

When I returned home with my new plant, I put it, pot and all, into a terrarium to recover from the trip. When a new leaf started to unfurl, I felt that the plant would tolerate being moved into a new container and medium. Rekha's description of *B. iridescens* habitat suggested that it would prefer a free draining medium. Although Rekha wasn't certain that *B. iridescens* would need a terrarium, I wanted to be able to control the growing conditions until I learned more about the plant. I mixed a handful of perlite with my usual chopped sphagnum moss and placed that mix over perlite and charcoal. Since I didn't have a rock crevice, slabs of rock, or a cliff handy, I spread Vole Block³ over the surface of the moss before putting the plant into the medium. The Vole Block keeps the leaves lifted slightly off the damp sphagnum moss.

Initially, I placed the terrarium on a plant stand under two full spectrum fluorescent lights. When the leaves began to curl under, I thought the plant was receiving too much light, so I moved it to a small table between two plant stands where it would receive bright, but less intense light. The leaf curl is less away from the direct light, but the leaves still curl under slightly as they

3 Vole Block is a commercial product made up of pebble sized pieces of expanded slate.

mature. It is growing well in lower light and has developed its first inflorescence.

Watering the plant has been a challenge. Because *B. iridescens* leaves naturally grow pressed against the ground or rock on which they are growing, all the lower leaves are lying on the moss/Vole Block or on each other. I water only when the medium is almost dry, and use a watering can with a long narrow spout to put the water directly onto the medium. Even with careful watering, moisture builds up on the leaves that are covered by other leaves. A few emerging leaves have rotted, but none of the adult leaves have rotted yet. I fertilize three to four times a year with a liquid fertilizer at one quarter the strength recommended on the label.

The leaves are continuing to grow, and it may soon outgrow the eighteen inch terrarium in which it is growing. I do have a larger terrarium, but I am hoping that it may be able to tolerate the sixty-five percent humidity in the walk-in-terrarium. I have started leaf wedges, and hope to try a plant out of an enclosed container soon. Charles and Leora Henthorne are planning to donate *B. iridescens* plants for an auction after their terrarium seminar. Perhaps the fortunate winners will share their experiences growing this beautiful plant.

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New Cultivars

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Applications to Register *Begonia* cultivars may be obtained from Gene Salisbury, P.O. Box 52, Tonkawa, OK 74653. Forms must be typed or printed in ink and accompanied by a \$2 check payable to the American Begonia Society. Clear photos for publication in the *Begonian*, drawings and dried specimens are requested. ABS is the International Registration Authority for *Begonia* cultivar names. In the listing of the cultivar parents below, the female (seed) parent is given first.

Begonia 'Silver Splendor' No. 1002 *Begonia* (*B. hemsleyana* x *Begonia taliensis* [select]) 'Silver Splendor'

This shrub-like cultivar reaches a height of 20" at maturity. It is upright with deep red stems and petioles. Leaves are RHS green 139A with International silver black 202D. They are irregularly palmately lobed with 4 -7 main lobes, terminal lobes often cut to the base. Leaves grow to 6 1/2" wide and 8" long with irregularly toothed margins and are

scabrous on both top and bottom with 8 main veins. Petiole length is about 9". Stipules are about 6" in length with a width of about 2" with RHS176B at base and RHS152A at the top. Stipules are triangular, cupped and deciduous.

Tepals are RHS red-purple 65A. Ovaries are RHS 153A - 174B and are broadly elliptic to obovate. Male flower diameter measures about 3" with 4 tepals and flower clusters of 8. Female flowers are about 1 1/2" in diameter with 5 - 10 tepals and a flower cluster of 4. Length of the

Continued on next page

Begonia 'Blue Wing'

By Charles Henthorne

Several years ago, when I first met Leora and before we were married, she introduced me to this beautiful plant. She cannot remember where she got her initial start of it, nor how long she has had it. The colors in the photo above are true and not enhanced in any way. She stated that she has almost lost it a few times over the years, but it has always come back better than before.

It is presently in a terrarium 18" tall and 16" square and has filled the terrarium up completely. The individual mature leaves vary in shape however most

end up as you see above. The mature leave on the middle middle is approx. 18" across, and along with the other mature leaves, is presently giving us a show that we are enjoying immensely. It has never bloomed for us but we are hopefully that some day we will see its blooms. It is not surprise that we consider the leaves reward enough for us to leave it in our collection.

We have given several people starts of this over the years, but I have heard of no one who is presently growing it besides Leora and I. Our growing

Continued on next page



*Above: Begonia 'Silver Splendor' (photo by Dan Heims)
Below: Begonia 'Blue Wing' (photo by Charles Henthorne)*





Begonia hemsleyana, female parent of *Begonia* 'Silver Splendor'

New Cultivars (continued)

flower peduncle is about 2 1/3". Blooming season is summer with few flower clusters.

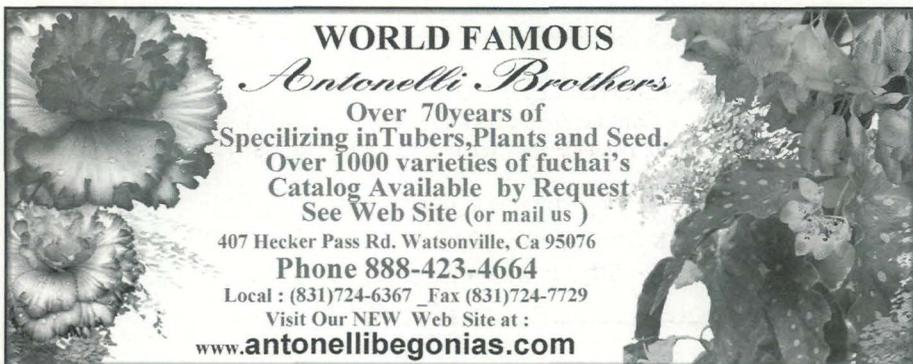
Begonia "Silver Splendor" can be recognized by its upright habit, shrubby, large palmate leaves that are heavily silvered and showy pink flowers. Compared to *B. hemsleyana* parent, it is silvered rather than green and deeply palmately divided rather than lobed. Compared to *B. taliensis* this is taller, shrubbier and the leaves are deeply palmately divided rather than palmately lobed.

This cultivar has been recommended and tested for registration by **Janet Egger**, 10051 S Macksburg Rd., Canby, OR 97013.

Dan Heims, PO BOX 23938, TIGOURD, OR 97281-3938, developed this plant in 2007. First bloom was recorded in 2008 and first distribution was in 2009.

This plant is being propagated by Terra Nova Nurseries, Inc., PO BOX 23938, TIGOURD, OR 97281-3938, and is in the status of Plant Patent applied for : PPAF.

This plant was registered on January 25, 2009.



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Begonia 'Blue Wing' (continued)

conditions are the same as with our other terrariums. It receives fluorescent lighting 8 hours a day directly overhead which sets directly on the top of the terrarium. We do keep it a little drier than most of our other terrariums. We try to let the potting medium, which is the long strand sphagnum moss and perlite mixture, dry on the top before we add a little water. The terrarium remains completely sealed unless we are watering, or grooming the plant. At those times we remove the cover only long enough to complete our task, and then we cover it tightly again. As you can see, the plant is presently thriving, and it now looks the best it has looked in the last 4 years or so.

At this point you might be asking yourselves, 'where can I get a start of this?' Well, if you come to the ABS convention in West Palm Beach in a few months, you will hear Leora and I speaking on

the subject of "terrariums". At the end of our talk is going to be a special auction of some rarer terrarium begonias, which, more than likely, will not be available at the regular plant sale, and which will only be represented by one or two plants of each begonia. There will be mostly species, with a few hybrids thrown in. All proceeds from this sale will be going to the conservation fund of the American Begonia Society. Do not be surprised if you find one of these beauties, rooted and ready to take home and enjoy for many years to come. That is if you are lucky enough to bid on and win it.

So with the above article I hope I have tempted some of you to make the journey to our annual convention for the American Begonia Society. For more information on the convention see the American Begonia Society web site. If you have not discovered that site yet, please ask someone for the email address. It's easy to find if you google also. We hope to see you there

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Begonia Blog (continued from page 107)

of where the owner grew beautiful begonias. Well, that was **Rudolf Ziesenne**, and my foray into begonias began.

Rudy's nursery was glorious. I didn't realize it then, but he had begonias from all over the world, hybrids from everyone, everywhere, and, of course, his own beautiful hybrids. I started collecting. The nursery was full of gorgeous species and famous hybrids from hybridizers like **Kit Jeans Mounger, Goldie Frost, Thelma O'Reilly, Leslie Woodriff, Mabel Corwin, Dorothy Caviness, Ruth Pease, Irene Nuss, Bob Cole, Michael Kartuz, Walter Dworkin** and **Patrick Worley** to name just a few. I didn't know it then, but I was in begonia heaven!

But I digress. So **Rudy** gave me a bunch of old **Begonians**, and I began to read about these fascinating plants. I read about propagation, male & female flowers, optimum time of day to introduce the flowers to each other, what to look for in a

cross and other tips from the best. At that time I was still working, and my office was in a fluorescent-lit basement. Not the perfect environment, but not bad either. Temperature was controlled, and lights were on about sixteen hours a day.

I brought in a few begonias to see how they would fare, and to my delight, some of them flowered! Then one day I noticed male and female flowers at the same time. Unfortunately, since I really didn't know much about hybridizing back then, I didn't keep track of who was the male or female parent. But I boldly took a male flower and brushed it against a female flower. Sometime later I discovered dried flower pods. The begonia parents were B. 'Joe Hayden' and B. *heracleiaefolia*. So just before leaving for vacation for two weeks, I found a margarine tub, put in some soil, and sprinkled the tiny, tiny seeds on top. I put on the lid, put it on top of the terminal of my VAX mini-computer (always on) and went off for sun and fun.

When I returned, there was a sea of little green sprouts in the container. I was thrilled! I potted them on and had many beautiful little plants. There were several really beautiful begonias but back then, I was rather blasé about the care of my begonias and ultimately only one made it. So I gave a cutting to Mike Flaherty, and then I lost the only one I had left! But the next Christmas he brought me a beautiful full-grown B. 'Jooles Moon'. This is a good time to mention that we should always make cuttings of our favorite begonias to give to friends because when you lose it,

and, if you're anything like me, you will, someone else will have it, and you can get a cutting back.

Again I recommend to everyone the two DVDs with Begonians from 1934 through 1979. There is so much good information there. You can learn to hybridize from the best! And the third DVD is in the works. They are searchable and printable, and all color photos are maintained beautifully. And be sure to check out the ABS website, www.begonias.org, for lots of helpful information and gorgeous pictures.

And one more interesting topic from the Yahoo Begonia group. Anita wrote asking if anyone had a picture or could describe the tuberous *Begonia novogranatae*. Michael Ludwig sent a picture and described how he plants the top of the bulb just above the soil, because it will drop its leaves or rot if kept too wet. He also wrote an article titled "Beyond the Dust" in the March/April 2007 Begonian explaining how he saved the begonia and set seed for the Seed Fund.

Kingsley Langenberg tells me that this species has been known by many different names through the years, and one of those names, B. *quetamensis*, is a synonym that may still be encountered. He added that the name *novogranatae* means "of Nueva Granada" in reference to an old Spanish colonial name for Colombia.

So that's it for this issue's Begonia Blog. See you next time!

www.begonias.org

COMING EVENTS

*April 29-May 3, 2009, Palm Beach, Florida, 2009 ABS
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Next issue closing date: May 1

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