

The

BEGONIAN

May/June 2010

The Begonian

Publication of the
American Begonia Society

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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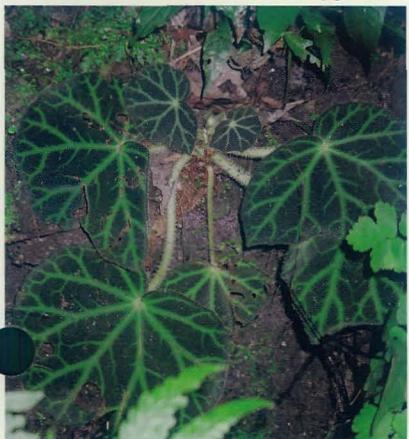
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Above: Hybrid Rex.
Grown and photographed by Freda Holley



From Peter Sharp - *B. cubensis* pg. 102



A new species, *B. pseudodaedalea* pg.88



B. U062 seedling - A Begoniac Winter in Northern Louisiana pg. 108

In This Issue

- 88 *B. U533* now
- B. pseudodaedalea*
- 93 Supplement for
- Begonia morrisiorum*
- 94 Our Little Friends
- 97 Mauro Peixoto:
- Plantsman Extraordinaire
- 102 *Begonia cubensis* Hasskarl
- 104 Growing Tall-Growing
- Canes for Show
- 106 Miniature Sinningias
- 108 A Begoniac Winter
- in North Louisiana

Regular Features

- 84 President's Message
- 84 2010 SOUTHWEST
- REGION GET TOGETHER
- 85 More Convention News!
- 86 Holiday Greetings 2010
- 86 Letter to the Editor
- 86 Westchester Begonia Society
- 1959-2010
- 87 SOS Newsletter
- 92 Attention Branch Officers
- 110 IN THE MAILBOX
- 114 American Begonia
- Society Book Store

Front cover: *B. 'Crestabruchii'* showing its brilliant red hairs. This large leaved rhizomatous begonia needs lots of space to accomodate it but pays off as quite an impressive specimen plant.

Photo by William McLaughlin, Curator US Botanic Gardens, Washington DC

Back cover: Pictured here much larger than life, *B. prismatocarpa* 'Variegation' is one of the smallest begonias. Its love of humidity makes it perfect for terrarium life. *Photo by Tony Pinto*

2010 SOUTHWEST REGION GET TOGETHER

MAY 19, 20, 21, 22

There's still time to go!

For more information: ABS website www.begonias.org/events/SWR

Elizabeth Cassimatis 214-662-3562

Reservations: www.thetrinityfortworth.com

or call toll free 1-877-9FORTWORTH (1-877-936-789-6784)

President's Message

The recent changes to the Save Our Species program have given me reason to think about just what it means to be saving species.

First of all, I want to assure you that Rekha Morris is still the very active Director of SOS. The only real change is that the articles will now be archived in the Begonian instead of the more casual format of the past. Rekha continues to be our on-going champion with the exciting collections she has procured, researched and distributed.

We owe all the begonias in our possession to the explorers who have taken the time and interest in the wonderful family of begonias and to those who are still running a race against time to save what they can in the wilds.

Modern day collectors all tell stories about areas previously visited being completely destroyed before their next trip. Anything growing in these areas has been lost for the future. That's why they feel such urgency in making as many discoveries as they can as fast as they can.

Each one of us becomes a part of this process when we grow the seeds and plants and nurture what we love. In doing so, we become a very valuable link in this entire process. Perhaps we all need to reconsider the importance of what we do.

We propagate. We fertilize, we water, and we research. Some of us have large areas and many specimens but others are limited to only a very few select favorites.

It doesn't matter!

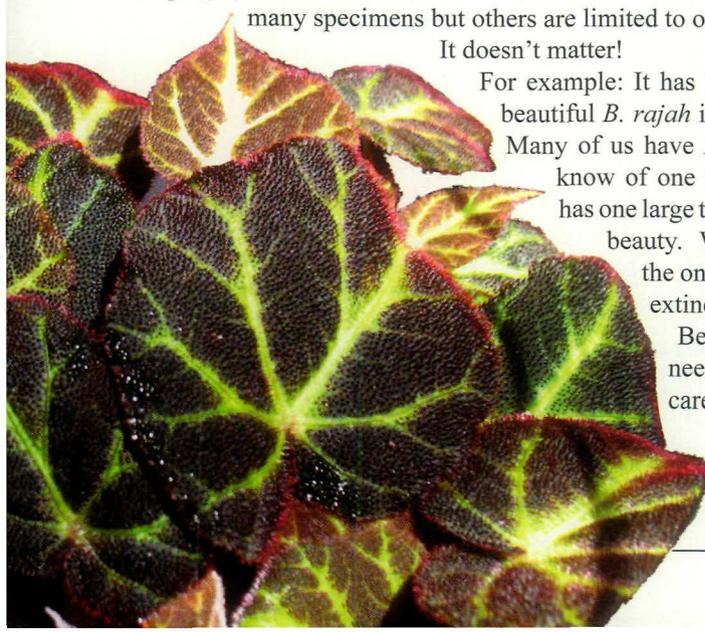
For example: It has been strongly suggested that the beautiful *B. rajah* is no longer available in the wild. Many of us have *B. rajah* in our collections but I know of one member with limited space who has one large terrarium with nothing but this one beauty. We are all, each in our own way, the ones responsible for keeping it from extinction. What a loss that would be!

Because we love what we do, we need to take pride in our abilities as caretakers.

We're all in this together!
Cheryl

B. decora. Photo by Tony Pinto

THE BEGONIAN



More Convention News!

Speakers, Speakers, boy do we have the best ever. Coming back is Antoon Hoefnagles from the Netherlands who gave a wonderful, beautiful presentation many years ago. Then, of course, we cannot miss Dr. Rekha Morris back from her great, and sad adventures to India. She had talked to Dr. Ching-I Peng from Taiwan before she got to India. He has helped tremendously with collecting of seeds for the Chinese specie plants in Quarry Hill Botanical Garden (our second tour on Wednesday) and he has agreed to be here. Now where do I go but to Mark Tebbitt, what more do you need to know about him after his great book, *Begonias, Cultivation, Identification, and Natural History*. Can't wait to hear what

he has to tell us. Then a complete departure will be Mike Flaherty and his wonderful adventures into the great estates of Montecito, CA. Plan to begin your convention on Tuesday to Hakone Japanese Tea Garden and a wonderful Japanese lunch.

Accommodations at Embassy Suites, South San Francisco, 250 Gateway Blvd., South San Francisco. 94080. 1-650-589-3400, www.embassysuites.com or 1-800-EMBASSY
For more information: Carol - 415-931-4912; cnotaras@sbcglobal.net

At the upcoming convention Mike Flaherty will present a fascinating look at Montecito estates and gardens.

Top, left: A picturesque corner of Mike's own Montecito garden. Photo by Mike Flaherty.

Below: Mike was instrumental at last year's Gazebo Flower and Begonia Show featuring elegant displays like this one. Photo by Gary Hunt



Holiday Greetings 2010

Congratulations to our branches and member donors for a very successful Holiday Greetings campaign this past year. By providing enough donations for a little more than we need to publish one issue of the Begonian, it enables us to keep our dues low.

Now is the time to consider donations for this year, which are definitely deductible. For years, we would have much of the magazine devoted to individual holiday greetings. Then Freda Holley initiated the idea of one page listing all donors in order to have more room for Begonia articles and photos. This seems to have worked well, but we still need your help.

Individual donations are also very valued at any amount. This year the cut-off date will be Sept. 7. We will accept donations at any time until then. However, if checks could be ready in August at the time of our convention in S.F., they could easily be passed on to the treasurer.

Visit Today!
www.begonias.org

Letter to the Editor

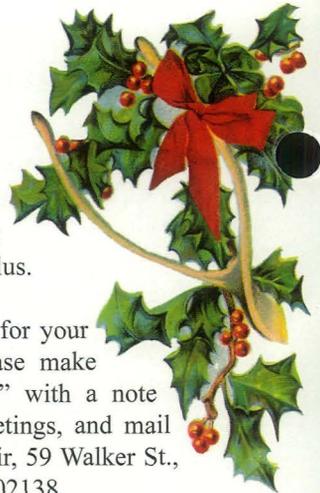
I just visited the ABS webpage and noticed a change in the list of branches. Julie Vanderwilt has added more information so interested people can find a branch in their area. Meeting addresses, times and dates were added. Great job, Julie!

I hope all the other branches that don't have that information on the list will contact Julie and have her add it. Maybe we will start getting some new recruits for members if we are easier to find.

Bobbie West, President
Doug Frost Branch, Stanton CA

Categories are:
Bronze, \$1-\$50;
Silver, \$51-\$100;
Gold, \$101-\$150;
Platinum, \$151 plus.

We thank you for your generosity. Please make checks to "ABS" with a note for Holiday Greetings, and mail to Wanda Macnair, 59 Walker St., Cambridge, MA 02138.



Westchester Begonia Society 1959-2010 51st Annual Begonia Show & Sale

Theme: Begonia Renaissance
Honoree: Julie Vanderwilt

This year our Judged Show is just one month before the ABS Convention in San Francisco. We are honoring Internet Editor, Julie Vanderwilt, for her innovative work in begonia growing and hybridizing. Our show features spectacular begonias, bromeliads, ferns and orchids with show entries from the best growers in Southern California. One day only.

Date: Saturday, July 17, 2010
Hours: 9:00 am- 4:00 pm.
Place: Covenant Presbyterian
Church, 6323 W. 80th St., Northwest
corner, Sepulveda & 80th, Los Angeles,
CA 90045
Ample, easy and free parking.
Admission free.

Contact: Janet Brown, Show Chairman,
310-670-4471
begoniabrown@yahoo.com

Important Announcement Regarding the SOS Newsletter

From 2010 the SOS Newsletter has been assimilated into *The Begonian*.

I have enjoyed working with all those who have adopted species and sent me articles and notes for the SOS Newsletter. Thank you for your enthusiasm and contributions.

I am now passing on the editorship of articles on adopted species to *The Begonian* where these articles will receive all the attention and care that they merit.

As you are all aware my trips to document begonias in the Eastern Himalayas & the Western Ghats of India as well as in the Eastern Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico is becoming increasingly time consuming. So it was with deep gratitude that I welcomed The Begonian's offer to take over the publication of articles, which until now have been submitted, to me for the SOS Newsletter.

I will continue to keep track of all those

who wish to adopt species and periodically update the species adopted on the ABS web site.

The Save Our Species program of the ABS is designed to encourage members to grow species and thereby keep them alive in cultivation as their habitats around the world are disappearing or have already disappeared.

Adopting one or more species is quite simple: Select a species or several, inform me by sending an e-mail to the address below [please note that this is my new e-mail address], share seeds, rhizomes and plants with others, and write about your experience of growing these species in *The Begonian*.

Happy and successful growing,

Rekha Morris

e-mail: shivavana@gmail.com



B. imperialis

Photo by Charles Henthorne



Both forms of *B. pseudodaedalea* in the greenhouse

Two new *Begonia* (Begoniaceae, section *Gireoudia*) species from Oaxaca, Mexico Part 2: *B. U533* now *B. pseudodaedalea*

Article & photos by Rekha Morris and Patrick McMillan

While working in the herbarium in Oaxaca City, Mexico in October 2005, I met Silvia Salas of SERBO [Society for the Study of Biotic Resources of Oaxaca], who had been documenting the flora of low elevation hills [approximately 500 m] in the northeastern section of Pochutla district of Oaxaca. She mentioned finding several begonias in these hills, and invited me to

look at the herbarium specimens housed in SERBO's offices in the southern section of Oaxaca City. The species represented in their collection were unidentified, however, I recognized several such as *B. nelumbiifolia*, *B. heracleifolia*, and *B. squarrosa*, but there were a couple I did not recognize. This was a section of Oaxaca I had not explored nor had I come across

any mention of begonias from this region of Oaxaca in the literature I had surveyed [my trip to Oaxaca in 2005 is described in the 2006 issue of *The Begonian*].

Reluctantly cutting short my exploration for begonias in the cool, moist mountains of Oaxaca [around 5000'], we headed south to Pochutla and then east towards Chiapas. We drove eastwards along the highway skirting the Pacific Ocean well past Huatulco, and then took a dirt road heading north to Santa Maria Xadani. The approximately 25 km drive through dry, dusty low elevation hills did not auger well for begonia exploration, however, past Santa Maria Xadani the dirt road ran parallel to a river, and the habitat here was markedly different. Some 6 km further along this road I saw the white flowers of begonias growing on boulders above the river. Although this species was one I did not recognize, I was searching for a large leaved species which had been documented near a waterfall and which I was told was about 2 km above this river. The dirt road soon ended at the river whose waters ran swiftly over large river rocks, which made it impossible for our car to negotiate.

Since it was already a little past 4:00 p.m., I did not want to waste the remaining hour or so of daylight, and quickly crossed over to continue uphill in search of the waterfall. Michael drove back to the last hacienda we had seen to try and borrow a pick-up truck. By the time he caught up with me on foot, I was well into the hills, and sure that I had gone at least 2 km. The information Michael returned with was that the pick-up truck we had seen was out of order, the waterfall with begonias in its vicinity was close to 5 km away from the river, and worse still, since the coffee estates in this region had

begun to be abandoned with the plummeting price of coffee, the jaguar was making a comeback. The owner of the hacienda had urged Michael to hurry and get me out of the hills well before dusk.

Disheartened, I slowly swung around a bend in the hills and was surprised to see a woman collecting wild flowers, the first human being I had seen since passing Santa Maria Xadani. Inquiring about the waterfall, we were informed that it was above a botanical research station about 3 km further into the hills, and none other than Silvia Salas with her research team was there! Unable to leave without seeing this unidentified begonia, we spent the night at the research center courtesy of Silvia Salas, and next morning headed for the waterfall about 1/2 km uphill. I was disappointed to see only two species around this waterfall, *B. heracleifolia* and *B. squarrosa*. There was no sign of the species, which had begun to haunt my waking hours, and kept me from sleeping at night. This species we learned was around yet another waterfall, so we headed downhill with a guide. About a km from the river we had crossed the previous day, we took a barely visible path through thick undergrowth, which wound around



Flowers of *B. pseudodaedalea*

a hill, then downwards to Sandy River, so named as for most of the year it is quite dry and sandy. The sound of a waterfall heard well before we sighted Sandy River spurred us downhill. Once we came in sight of the waterfall the guide left us, pointing across the river to the top of the next hill as a begonia habitat.

I carefully made my way across the river from boulder to boulder, as Michael refreshed himself by splashing in the cool water. Climbing part way up the hill, I was so enervated by the hot, steamy, mosquito infested habitat that I leaned against a boulder to take a sip of water. As I lowered my backpack I got my first glimpse of the begonia I had been searching for, and which I registered with the American Begonia Society as *B. U533*. Relieved that I would not need to climb all the way to the top of the hill I slowly began photographing the large, dark, maroon-green leaves with the veins highlighted in chartreuse. Looking at the reticulation of veins, my initial thought was that I had found the legendary *B. daedalea* [see illustration, *The Begonian*, Jan '70, p9.] , which has not been found again since its discovery ca. 1860, and has not been in cultivation since 1902 (Ziesenhenné, 1970). The rhizomes rose vertically against rocks and boulders, and each had at least 4-5 leaves spreading horizontally outwards from the rhizomes. There were no flowers or capsules. In cultivation it blooms in April, and evidently goes dormant in the dry season, which was fast approaching.



B. pseudodaedalea in situ

Later in the day I located a small colony of the same species with uniform celery green foliage about a km. west of Santa Maria Xadani . These also grew on a bank above a tiny stream. The name for this begonia, *B. pseudodaedalea*, described below by Patrick McMillan, reflects my initial misidentification of this extraordinary species.

RM

Begonia pseudodaedalea McMillan & Morris

Section *Gireoudia*, *rhizomae perennis*

herba, caulis, folium, et petiolus multicellularum sericei villi. Bracteae inflorescentium albae et breves et orbiculae. Vasculi subaequis pennis

Holotype: *PDM*, s.n.(CLEMS), specimen made from plant cultivated at Clemson University greenhouses from a rhizome collected from above Sandy River in extreme northeastern Pochutla district of Oaxaca, Mexico.

Additional specimens examined were made from cultivated plants originally collected from the locations noted:

RM05-30, 23 October 2005 (CLEMS);

RM05-30 (CLEMS);

RM05-31 (CLEMS).

Perennial herb; rhizomes glabrous, short to elongate, 21-29 mm wide, repent with extremely short internodes, typically less than 3.0 mm long. The tips of the rhizomes very densely beset with large stipules. Leaf blades chartaceous, evenly green or green along veins with deep purple coloration between veins, palmately 7-9 nerved, oblique, asymmetrically broadly depressed-ovate, obovate or suborbicular (6.5) 9.5 – 15 cm X (4.5) 5.5 – 9.0 cm; leaf base cordate with lobes slightly overlapping; leaf apices abrupt acuminate. Leaf surface minutely papillose and densely and evenly long strigose above with translucent (when fresh) multicellular trichomes 0.75-1.5 mm long; lower surface densely and evenly strigose between veins with translucent (when fresh) multicellular trichomes 0.75-1.90 mm long and lower veins densely villous with translucent (when fresh) multicellular trichomes 1.5-3.15 mm long. Petioles 3.0-20 cm long, 5-7 mm wide, ascending to horizontal or decumbent, densely villous with translucent multicellular trichomes 1.5-6.9 mm long. Stipules persistent, 12.0-33.0 mm long and 10.5-16.6 mm wide, asymmetrically triangular to deltoid with long setaceous tips, surface and margins

glabrous, keel prominent and densely ciliate for the entire length with cilia to 7.0 mm long. Inflorescence strongly asymmetrical; peduncles, 3-5 mm wide at widest point, densely villous, 26-30 cm tall, 15-19.5 cm to first node. Bracts translucent when fresh, drying light brown, persistent, to 9 mm long and 10 mm wide, found at main nodes along branches and at each subsequent node on branchlets, clasping and enveloping the branch, broadly ovate to rhombic, sparsely villous with a few long-villous trichomes at apex. Staminate flowers with pedicels 8.0-16.2 mm long, tepals 2, white, suborbicular to orbicular, 6.8-9.1 mm long, 7.0 – 9.1 mm wide, glabrous on outer and inner surfaces, margins entire; stamens 11-14, filaments 1.2-1.6 mm long, borne on a slightly raised torus, rather loosely arranged; anthers oblong, 1.4-2.0 mm long. Pistillate flowers with pedicels 7.2-21.0 mm long, tepals 2, white, suborbicular to orbicular, 6.2-7.4 mm long, 6.0-7.4 mm wide, glabrous on inner and outer surface; ovary glabrous; styles fused basally, stigmas lunate. Capsule body broad ovate, trilocular with bipartite placentae, 9.7-11.5 mm long, 6.2-7.8 mm wide at widest point, pale to whitish, very thin, and nearly translucent at maturity; wings 3, broadly lunate, the upper 4.7-5.2 mm tall, as wide as the capsule at base, the second and third wings only slightly smaller, asymmetrically lunate 3.7-4.7 mm long, as wide as the capsule at the base.

Habitat: Epilithic on or in shallow soil over calcium-rich or volcanic rock in semi-deciduous or evergreen broad-leaf tropical forests at low elevations.

Range: This species has only been found along Sandy River in extreme northeastern Pochutla district of Oaxaca, Mexico. This distinctive species is found in association with another unidentified species, which remains to be described.

This distinctive species could not be easily confused with any other Mexican



B. pseudodaedalea

species of section *Gireoudia*. The densely villous indument of the petioles and vestiture of the leaves consists of sericeous villi. These villi are multicellular for nearly their entire length and are composed of broadly rectangular, bullate cells, which are remarkably transparent when fresh and dry to a light brown coloration. Most other members of the section display whiplash trichomes (Burt-Utley 1985). The distinctive short-orbicular and persistent pale bracts found in the inflorescence are distinctive among Mexican species in this section. The subequal capsule wings are also uncommon in section *Gireoudia*, being found in only a few taxa, e.g. *B. peltata*, *B. sericoneura*.

Literature Cited:

Burt-Utley, K. 1985. A revision of Central American species of *Begonia* section *Gireoudia* (Begoniaceae). *Tulane Studies in Zoology and Botany* 25: 3-123.

Morris, R. 2006. "October in the Sierra Madre When Tuberous Begonias Bloom,"

The Begonian, 75: 47- 54.

Ziesenhenne, R. 1970. *Begonia daedalea* Lem. and *Begonia strigillosa* A.Dietr. Not Synonymous. *The Begonian* 37:5-10.

Our special thanks go to Kingsley Langenberg, Nomenclature Editor for The American Begonia Society, for his sensitive and painstaking editorial support in the completion of this article.

Latin translation courtesy of Malcolm Taylor, University of the South, Sewanee, TN.

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Attention Branch Officers

In order to make sure ABS mailings are sent to the correct person, please send me a current list of all your branch officers. I would also appreciate updates if there are any changes. You can email or mail a list. Thank you!

Paul Rothstein,
ABS Membership
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Supplement for *Begonia morrisiorum*

R. Morris & P. D. McMillan

by *Rekha Morris, Pendleton, NC*

This supplement is to validate the new name published for *Begonia morrisiorum* R. Morris & P. D. McMillan in *The Begonian* 77:51-54, 2010 by adding to the description the designation of the holotype specimen.

Holotype: P.D. McMillan, s.n., 8 May 2006 (CLEMS), specimen made from plant cultivated at Clemson University greenhouses, originally from Mexico, collected by Rekha Morris in the highlands of Mixe in the environs of Totontepec & Zacatepec in semi-deciduous or evergreen broadleaf forests at higher elevations at

approximately 5000-6000' in Oct. 2005.

Additional specimens examined were made from cultivated plants originally collected at two locations in the sierras of Mixe and Ixtlan:

RM 05-223 (CLEMS); RM 05-183 (CLEMS); RM 05-217(CLEMS); RM 05-224 (CLEMS); Mixe

RM 08-334 (CLEMS); RM 08-342 (CLEMS); Ixtlan



Capsules and male flowers of *Begonia morrisiorum* R. Morris & P. D. McMillan



A group of *B. 'China Doll'* on a small windowsill.

Photo by Jessica Chevalier

Our Little Friends

by Jessica Chevalier, Crown Point, NY

When I think of miniatures, I think of the plant that started my lust for all things begonia. When I first spotted *B. 'Small Change'* it seemed like the world stopped. Its tiny spiraled leaves, all shiny silver with deep red underneath seemed to reach into my soul and say “You will soon be obsessed!” I bought it and officially became a Begoniac!

Miniature or “dwarf” begonias are not just small-leaved they are small in stature too. Their leaves are 3” or less and height is 8” or less. In general they prefer temperatures above 60°, however, the rhizomatous ones seem unaffected by a drop in nighttime temperature. In most cases rhizomatous and cane-like prefer their soil to dry somewhat between watering. Rex begonias require more humidity than other begonias, so they are a good candidate for terrarium use. You can increase humidity by placing them on a tray filled with small pebbles if you prefer growing them in pots. Rex require evenly moist soil, but will rot quickly if overwatered.

Many mini rhizomatous begonias are called “miniature eyelash begonias”. Each leaf is edged with tiny hairs that seem like they really could wink at you! Good examples of this are *B. bowerae*, *B. 'China Doll'*, and *B. 'Bethlehem Star'*. I have a particular

B. prismatocarpa 'Variegation' (left), one of the tiniest begonias, cheerily blooms off and on all year in this 4” glass ornament. This little creeper grows in just a few tablespoons of potting mix and craves the high humidity provided by the diminutive container. (The miniature terrarium’s cap was removed for the picture.)

Photo by Linda Tamblin





The ever-interesting *B. 'Fiji Island'*. Photo by Jessica Chevalier

fondness for *B. 'China Doll'*. The leaves are bright green with varying degrees of dark reddish-brown splotches along its margins. All of the above are wonderful and have pink or white flowers in the spring!

I absolutely adore *B. 'Fiji Island'*, the little brother to *B. 'Cathedral'*, for its texture. Its small crinkled red and green leaves are so interesting and pinky-white flowers are a bonus! Another great textured one is *B. 'Lime Swirl'*, with sharp looking bright apple green spiraled leaves and delightful pink flowers.

A fun one to grow is *B. prismatocarpa*. It loves the extra humidity of a terrarium environment, so I planted it in an old fish bowl and stuck it in an east facing window. It was never fussy and, as long as I kept it moderately moist, it rewarded me with an endless display of beautiful yellow flowers!

We mustn't forget all the lovely mini Rex Begonias. *B. 'Beau Rouge'*, *B. 'Mini Merry'*, *B. 'Tiny Bright'*, just to name a few, are extremely colorful. *B. 'Beau Rouge'* has a maroon center, a mottled silver band, and a maroon edge. *B. 'Mini Merry'* has dark veins and margins and a blushed red center with splotchy silver band. *B. 'Tiny Bright'* is very striking with a dark center surrounded by a band of deep rose that fades to a light pink, then a vibrant green, and finally ends nicely with a dark band at the margin.

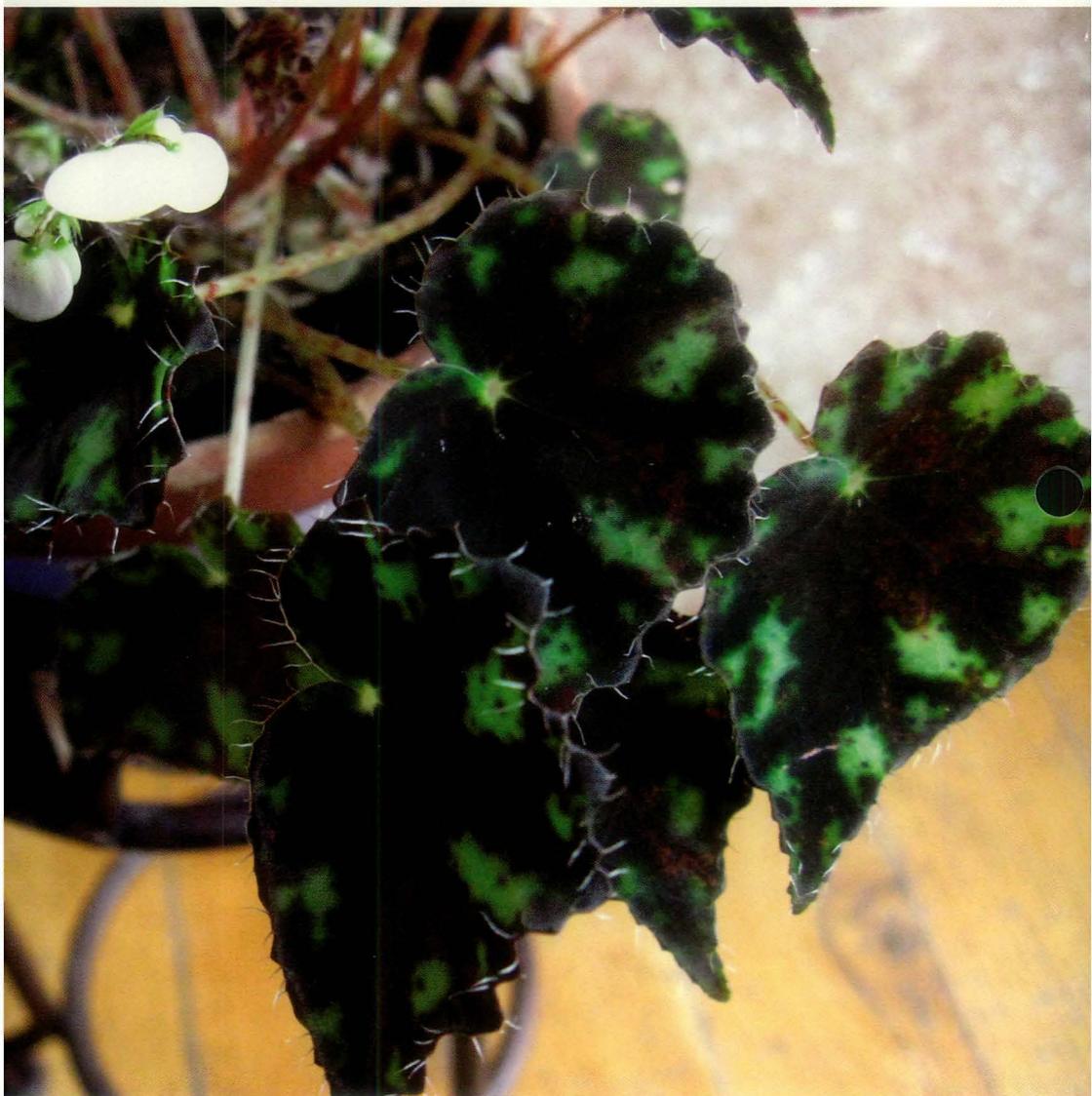
A great little cane-like variety is *B. 'Kismet'*, with silvery-pink leaves streaked with olive green veining. It stays compact unlike the deceiving *B. 'Medora'*. Our friend 'Medora' sure does have neat little spotted leaves, but it loves to grow tall and sprawl out! It doesn't seem to mind being pot bound nor does it mind being trimmed, so I suppose if you fuss

continued

over it you can keep it a manageable size.

Just think of the possibilities for your small room! One little windowsill can fit 3 or 4 miniatures opposed to 1 large plant or 2 medium plants. If you're anything like me,

you'll agree that more is merrier! So I hope you enjoyed this sampler of mini begonias and that it inspires you to seek them out and welcome them to your diminutive space.



Begonia bowerae var. *nigramarga*, one of the Mexican eyelash begonias. A delightful miniature which blooms in late winter or early spring. This little rhizomatous begonia does well in a terrarium when planted in an open medium that doesn't stay soggy or potted out in the open with good humidity.

Photo by Linda Tamblin

Mauro Peixoto: Plantsman Extraordinaire

by Claudia Goodridge, New Haven, CT



An excursion in the Espírito Santo state in 2008 in a place named Alto Misterioso with Mauro (far right) and two Brazilian colleagues Photo by Dr. Alain Chautems

“I’m just a guy who loves plants,” he says modestly. So begins an email conversation with Mauro Peixoto, founder and owner of Brazil Plants. Passion. It’s at the root of most dynamic people. Add commitment and self-taught expertise and you have only the start of a definition of this amazing man and his collection of Brazilian plants. Loves plants? He must indeed because he maintains a collection of 4,000 of them. They come from 1,250 species in 30 Brazilian plant families and, until recently, he maintained them himself. Mauro has what is considered the best documented collection of 8 Brazilian plant families. And he has 128 begonias, among which 40 have been positively identified.

Mauro spent part of his life in the corporate

jungle, but left that to become the plantsman extraordinaire he is today, a passion he had been nurturing since the age of 12. Mauro moved out of Sao Paulo to a more rural location where he built his home and lathe house. While his interest started with orchids, he moved on to *Gesneriaceae*, *Passifloraceae*, *Aristolochiaceae*, *Cactaceae*, *Bromeliaceae*, many others, and of course *Begoniaceae*. His botanical life now focuses on his 4,000 plants, guided botanical tours, and a club that disseminates seeds from his plant collection.

The botanical tours accommodate groups or individuals who want to see their favorite Brazilian plants in their own habitats “before they go extinct.” One can get a taste of the incredible variety of Brazilian plant



B. caparoensis Photo by Mauro Peixoto

life by visiting Mauro's website, [www. Brazilplants.com](http://www.Brazilplants.com). The fact that Mauro is also a photographer certainly enhances his website. It is easy to navigate, truly informative, and features pictures and information on many families, including begonias.

Seed for hundreds of plants, including many begonias, are available through membership in his Brazil Plants Support Club, founded in 2005 partly to raise money for full time help with his enormous lathe house – 10m x 30m. For

a modest membership fee one can join the club, thus helping maintain and improve his collection, and have access to seeds of Brazilian plants that Mauro nurtures – indeed some that may not be seen in the wild much longer. Since starting the club, Mauro's list



View from Mauro's house looking toward the greenhouse Photo by Dr. Alain Chautems

of plants has doubled.

But reading the web text one cannot ignore the disturbing rumblings of habitat destruction and species extinction in this enormous country. Mauro is working hard to identify and document the plants of Brazil's Atlantic rainforest and to safeguard seed of the dynamic as well as the vulnerable before it's too late. His botanical tours, of course, heighten awareness of the perils these plants are in. Along the way he even discovered several previously unknown species including *B. caparoensis*, which he photographed for his website – he says it's easy to grow.

Journey with plant lovers themselves, led by Mauro, as they view Brazil's plants in situ and search for their own favorite plant family. It's all on his website. One reads

about general botanical tours, as well as plant specific tours. Visiting Brazil through the eyes of some of these plant devotees is a definite treat; the travelogues are illustrated with inviting photos of diverse parts of the Brazilian landscape, close-ups of target species, along with accounts of adventure and great camaraderie.

Through the wonders of the internet we can reach out to this remarkable man, Mauro Peixoto, and his amazing collection of Brazilian plants. Thus our begonia world has become larger, richer, more diverse, and accessible.

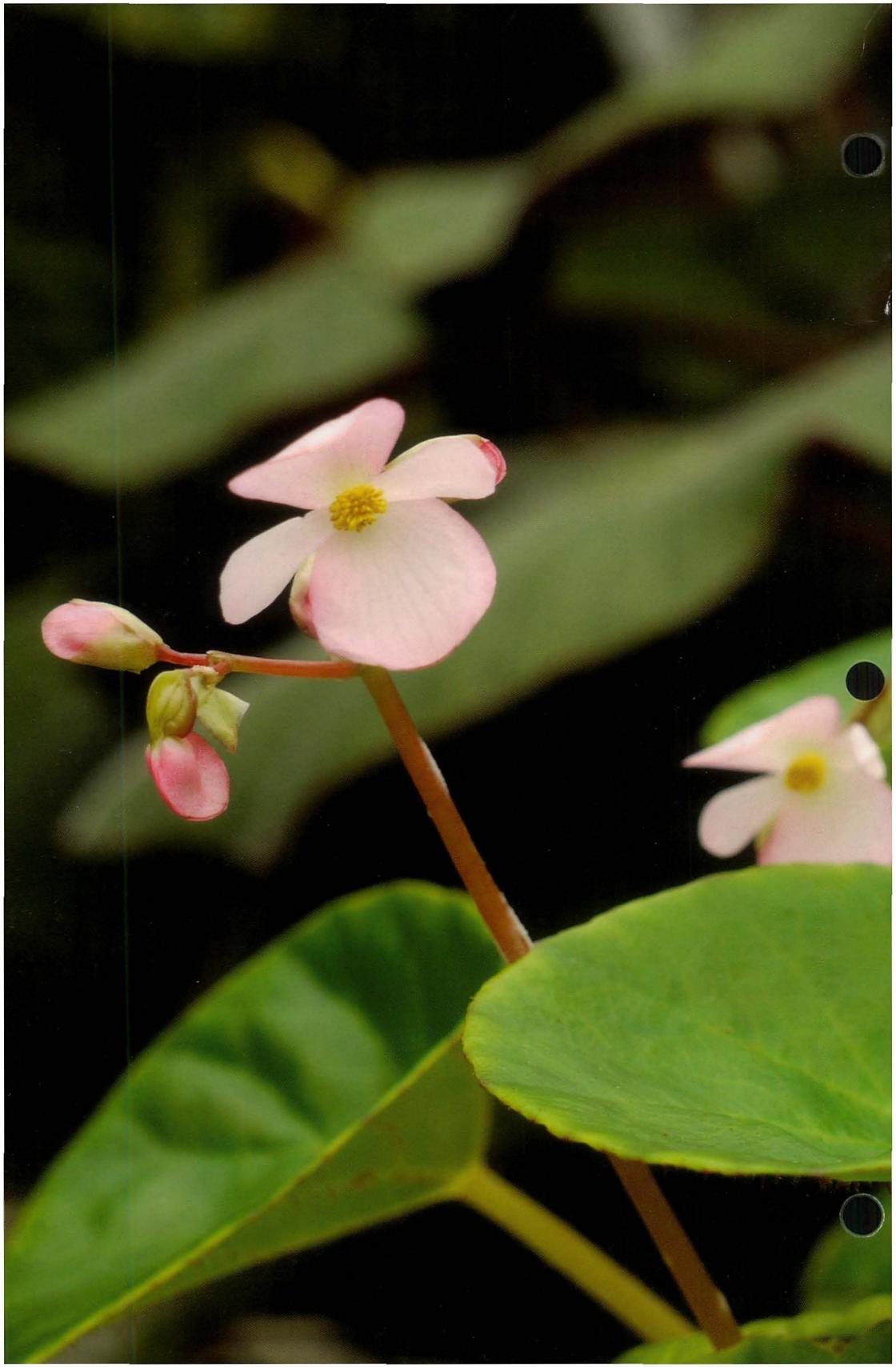
A special thanks to Lee Stradley, moderator of the brazilplants.com group and to Dr. Alain Chautems, Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de la Ville de Genève for their help with this article.



A closer view of the greenhouse
Photo by Dr. Alain Chautems

Centerspread: The dainty looking *Begonia hermandioides* (next page) is a commonly cultivated species but, according to Mark Tebbitts in his book, "Begonias", it is often mistakenly identified as *B. tayabensis*. Both have peltate leaves but *B. hermandioides* has an almost circular leaf as well as a ring of red hairs on underleaf veins. To further confuse things both plants come from Luzon, Philippines and grow in similar habitats.

Photo by William McLaughlin, Curator US Botanic Gardens, Washington DC







Begonia cubensis Hasskarl

Cuba, 1858

Photos and article by Peter Sharp, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, Australia

Where else would a begonia called *cubensis* come from but the Island Nation of Cuba? This particular shrub-like will flower all year in the right location, producing many small white, pink-tinted blooms nestling into the top of the foliage, and it surely deserves a place in any garden or indoor display. It has a delightful dense growth habit with small mid-green leaves, and makes a really good pot subject but is also ideal in the garden when several are planted together. A low grower, it rarely

exceeds 40 cms (approx. 16 in.) high and wide, so plant them nice and close. Think of using them as a border plant – so much more interesting than the usual bedding begonias.

Best when grown in full or part sun but will tolerate a more shaded position so long as it gets plenty of light. A lack of light will result in leggy growth and a poor showing of flowers and the plant should be relocated. Tip pruning, especially during the early stages of growth, will ensure a pleasing shape. A heavy pruning may be in

order for older plants as, after two to three years growth, it will become leggy. This begonia will take heavy pruning without ill effects – be sure to fertilise after pruning to encourage a quick recovery. I have had a tub full of *cubensis* for the past six years receiving full sun from mid morning till mid afternoon and it is always a delight. It has been heavily pruned every three years but has never ceased to flower. My location is Sydney, Australia, where we enjoy a mild

winter, a hot summer and no frosts.

Propagation is by tip cuttings or seed - you will find that it will seed readily with a little bee-like help from you. This is another easy care begonia and I have not encountered any trouble from pests or diseases.

I have used *B. cubensis* as the male parent for my sun loving *B. 'Island Gem'*, with input from the *semperflorens* group, which reinforces this quality.



Growing Tall-Growing Canes for Show

By Joyce Pridgen; photos by Doug Pridgen Miami, Florida

Some of the tall canes Doug and I grow for show are *B.* 'Lana', *B.* 'Smarty Pants', *B. salicifolia*, *B. maculata* var. *wightii*, and *B. albo-picta* 'Rosea'. We have grown these to heights taller than us. They do grow large in Miami! Most importantly, if you want blue ribbon show plants, you must grow them like show plants year round.

We'll start with propagation. Take three 4-6-inch cuttings from a healthy cane begonia. Place them close together in a

light potting mix with the growing tip facing outward for symmetry and with 1 or 2 nodes with leaf buds inserted into the mix. Place them in the shade and keep them moist, not wet. Purists will propagate only 1 cutting per pot but it takes much longer to get a nice plant.

Do not use potting soil. It is not light enough for begonias. They will rot. We use Fafard 2 but any professional potting mix will work. If it is not light enough, you can add more perlite.

After your cuttings have rooted, in 2-3 weeks, you may start fertilizing them. The only fertilizer we use is time-released Nutricote, which we buy wholesale in large bags. A similar product is Dynamite which is available in small containers at Home Depot. Now that your plant has rooted, it needs to be moved into more light. Our canes grow in all-day 50% shade in the pool screen area. Outdoors in morning or



B. maculata var. *wightii*



B. salicifolia



B. albo-picta 'Rosea' growing in pool area



B. 'Lana' growing in pool area



B. albo-picta 'Rosea', taller than Doug, growing in pool area

afternoon sun would be ideal also.

As your plant grows, you will need to pinch the growing tip to encourage branching, prune as necessary to keep a nicely shaped plant and to encourage basal shoots, and stake any wayward branches. If you wait until show time to stake, you risk damaging your nice full plant. Pinching, pruning, and staking all should be done as needed. Stakes should be as inconspicuous as possible. At show time, cut them off just below the top of the plant so they won't be protruding above it. When your begonia gets pot bound, move it up to the next size pot.

Doug prunes the tall canes like *B. 'Lana'* similar to the shape of a Christmas tree, leaving the tallest branches in the center of the plant, graduating them down in layers on the outside. It is very important to keep the superba canes pruned to encourage basal shoots as they tend to get sparse along the bottom if you do not.

Turn your plant $\frac{1}{4}$ turn weekly for symmetry, remove old and damaged leaves regularly, and keep it well watered. It is important that it not dry out as it will drop its leaves. You're well on your way to having a begonia that is a nice show specimen.

Three to four months before the show (this depends on the weather, where you live, and how fast your begonias grow), you will need to do any major pruning. Light pruning, such as cutting back a wayward limb, and pinching can be done up to a few weeks before the show. Repot your plant now if it needs it. Continue to groom and turn your plants regularly.

A few days before the show, scrub any dirty clay pots, clean the plastic ones, or transfer to new ones the same size. Do not repot to a larger size now. Remove any debris from top of soil and top dress with fresh soil. Remove old flowers and old or damaged leaves and rinse off your plants so they will be clean and shiny. We actually trim brown leaf edges, keeping the shape of the leaf correct. The day before the show, do any final grooming and remove the label.



B. juliana in West Palm Beach show 2009
photo by Johanna Zinn

Now you have a large beautiful cane begonia. The last thing you need is someone strong to load it up in the U-Haul truck, along with all your other beautiful begonias, and position them in the truck so they will not turn over or get damaged on the way to the show. That's Doug!



Companion Plants: *Miniature Sinningias*

Article and photos by Dale Martens, Sherrard, IL

Those of us drawn to collect and care for plants are hesitant to purchase another one as we wonder where we're going to put it! In the 1980's I was growing *Sinningia speciosa*, also known as the Florist Gloxinia. They're easily a foot in diameter, but rewarding with a display of velvety leaves accompanied by large, showy flowers. Then I discovered the miniature sinningias! Michael Kartuz showed me his collection of miniature species as well as some miniature hybrids he and others created. The miniature leaves range in size from an inch to 3 inches.

Sinningia is a genus that contains more than 75 species in the Gesneriad family. More commonly known Gesneriads are: *Saintpaulia* (African violet), *Streptocarpus* (Cape Primrose), *Nematanthus* (Goldfish plant), *Episcia* (Flame violet), and

Aeschynanthus (Lipstick plant). *Sinningia* was named for Wilhelm Sinning (1792-1874) who was an instructor in Botany and Horticulture at the University of Bonn. *Sinningias* are tuber-forming plants found in Central and South America. The tuber allows the plant to go dormant for one to three or more months.

I've never experienced dormancy with any of the tiniest species, which includes *S. concinna*, *S. pusilla*, and the unpublished *S. sp.* "Rio das Pedras". They are from Brazil and *S. pusilla* has been in cultivation since the 1800s. The leaf blade is about 1/2 inch long and the shape of the plant is rosette. The lilac flowers arise from the crown in succession and are about 3/4 inch long. In 1966 *S. pusilla* had a spontaneous white-flowering sport that was named *S. 'White*

Sprite'. The seedpods are very small and seeds are ripe within 30 days of pollination. Seed sowing to first flowers takes around four to five months.

Pictured are *S. pusilla* and *S. 'White Sprite'*



growing together in a shallow bonsai dish. The light, soilless mix I use is a commercial African violet soil, which is peat, based with perlite and vermiculite. I put seven tiny tubers in a three-inch pot so the tops of the tubers are even with the soil line, and soon each produced multiple plants. I fertilize at the rate of ¼ teaspoon of balanced fertilizer per gallon of water. Sinningias are very happy on plant stands, but would also do well in an East-facing window or in a bright window that does not get direct sun after about 10:00 a.m. While some grow in bowls or terrariums, I prefer to grow mine out on the shelf because they get more regular feeding and for me, bloom better than when enclosed in glass. It takes about two and a half months from tuber placement to a blooming show-quality plant. It will continue to bloom for at least six months until the plants get a bit too rangy looking.

Then take a pair of scissors and trim across the top of the pot to within one half inch of the tuber tops. Leach the soil with two cups of distilled water to get rid of fertilizer salts. The tubers will re-sprout quickly. After

more months of flowering, remove the tubers and plant tips to clean them in order to start all over again. Those plant tips can be rooted in soil and they'll make little tubers. You could easily grow six to nine miniature sinningias in a square foot area, so now to find some! There's a list of gesneriad suppliers at <http://www.gesneriadsociety.org> and some of them also have begonias, proving they are wonderful companion plants!



Opposite page: A colorful variety of miniature sinningias that I entered at the 2008 Gesneriad Society convention.

Above: This photo, taken on February 6, 2010, shows a bonsai pot with *Sinningia pusilla* and its sport *S. 'White Sprite'* starting to grow from the tubers. **Below:** The same bonsai pot six weeks later on March 18, 2010. This shows how easily one can get these little sinningias to grow and bloom in a short amount of time! I mostly grow on wick reservoirs, whereas many grow these little plants in bubble bowls or containers. Plants grown and photographed by Dale Martens

A Begoniac Winter in North Louisiana

by Freda Holley, Choudrant, LA



December and January in northern Louisiana this year were miserable as they were in much of the country. Deep freezes followed days of rain deluges.

Temperatures were the lowest we've experienced in our five years here. Notice I say North Louisiana; that's because

North and South Louisiana are not just like two different states; they are almost like two different universes. Not only do they differ in unexpected ways of weather, politics, food, and attitudes, but you cannot hop on a plane and get from here to New Orleans or Baton Rouge; when we recently wanted to it would have cost us over \$1,000 each after trips through Houston or Dallas! Needless to say, we drove, but that too is not easy. We had to go into Mississippi then follow the freeway down to New Orleans. Honestly, it is easier to get to Houston from here. One thing unites the state though: love of the Saints and their Superbowl win! But back to my subject.

Cabin fever would beset me in winter, were it not for one thing – the greenhouse. Although I was presented with quite a gas bill and the two wondrous Southern Burner heaters were sorely taxed on the coldest night, each morning I could go into the tropics and get my daily plant fix. As soon as the shortest day arrived in December the buds on the rhizomatous began to emerge and by late January the first blooms had opened. Now the bloom spires are everywhere. Although I am not partial to growing rhizomatous – I think they require more care than the canes, shrubs, and thick stems, many of my hybrids are rhizomatous because in the South the best seed sets come

in winter on the rhizomatous and a few thick stems. Sweltering summers mean no seed on many other begonias.

I usually plant seed in November to get them up and sizeable by spring, but this year I lagged into January and I could just see the first little green carpets in my tiny pots by the end of the month. Now I'll be stuck with transplanting just at the busiest time of the year. I have planted seed from my *B. rex* which has now summered and wintered over. I think the plant may have originated from Rekha Morris's travels since I've never had much luck with survival in the past. Germination was good. Last year's seed from this plant came from crosses with Tim Anderson's *B. 'Comet Hale Bopp'* and a Rex cultivar from the Houston convention named *B. 'Seattle Twist'*. These have yielded about twenty interesting and beautiful seedlings, which have just now reached size and color. Many have leaves that almost seem quilted. Rexes for me are at their very best in winter in the greenhouse. In fact, I think the beauty of these seedlings were what finally inspired me to plant seed.

I also took a *B. 'Torsa'* given me by Carol Notaras through this last summer and got seed in late fall in the greenhouse. I backcrossed this one with *B. grandis* ssp. *evansiana* and the seed have germinated, but at a low level. It will be interesting to see what these produce. Another rhizomatous that I've found beautiful for its dark leaves is *B. 'Lauderdale Lakes'* and its seed have produced a sea of babies. *B. dregei* (syn. *partita*) also produced very high germination although this is one I can rarely grow for more than a year or so, probably because I overwater and overpot it, but I do love them.

Now in February, the cold goes and the hunger to move outside to begin the pruning and planting grows.



Top, left: *B. acida*'s bright leaves always brighten things up.

Middle, left: 2010 Seedlings - Little carpets of green grow daily.

Middle, right & bottom, right: Clivias and ranunculus - Not only begonias brighten the winter greenhouse

Bottom, left: *B. sericoneura* has a bloom form I love.

Opposite page: A Freda Holley Rex



IN THE MAILBOX

by Greg Sytch, Horticultural Correspondent

Begonias and Arctic Air

Winter has finally eased its grip on the Deep South after setting many historical records. Many Florida cities had their coldest or 2nd coldest winters ever. As in a hundred years of record keeping, The effect has been devastating on our plants, and our begonias. A 13-day stretch at the beginning of January saw no 60F afternoons, six nights here below freezing including a raw 27F one morning, and SLEET fell at my house for a few hours. Yes, it did lightly accumulate on patio furniture. February saw few days near 70F and many nights in the 35-45F range. Many! March has been no picnic, either, but it has warmed up.

This prolonged cold was not kind to vegetation. What were formerly huge canes are now stubs breaking growth barely two feet above the soil level. Winds knocked over what tried to make it intact, and it was just easier to prune heavily. Since I do not do cold, it was frustrating not to get in the yard and play with the plants.

Taking into account the prolonged chill, my rhizomatous fared the best. Landscape specimens actually survived, and in not bad shape, in my protected front and sides. Being lower to the ground, they took advantage of the warmer ground. Canes in the landscape all froze down to nubs, and I am still awaiting their return. A lesson learned has also been those begonias that were potted and drying out have returned quicker, while potted plants that remained wet have struggled. It has also been a rather wet winter, which actually hindered their growth. Averaging about 2.5" of rain per month from December through March, totals were easily doubled every month at my house, including March, which has seen well over half of a foot of rainfall. Now, spring is here and a busy season it will be.

Chores for the After-Cold

- 1) Watch out for powdery mildew. Dying or decaying leaves will rot and mold, so their removal is essential. I have sprayed twice using my preferred brand. I have also tried, in vain, to remove dead leaves from the landscape.
- 2) Fertilizer - yes, plants still need food, but how do you feed under these conditions? I have been using a foliar spray so there is some light nutrition, adding Superthrive to encourage stronger growth. Ensure the soil is sprayed, too.
- 3) Division into smaller pots. Some plants just were staying too wet, or were damaged so severely, they have been sitting in wet soil. I have been removing them, shaking off old, wet soil, and repotting into tighter quarters so they become potbound, dry out, and have healthier growth.
- 4) Shifting those plants needing more light (the more damaged pots) so they receive stronger light levels. This will help them respond better.
- 5) Order more frost cloth! It worked, even with the prolonged cold, but having tall canes made 13 days under cover difficult. Perhaps one of the reasons why rhizomatous fared better is because they were covered low to the ground, and disturbed less. Plants also were not watered during that stretch, which resulted in far too dry soil. Next time, I will water more vigilantly prior to covering.

There are always silver linings to every cloud, and I am waiting to discover mine. Until then, take heart that time heals all wounds, and the plants that survived will be back. Yesterday was a balmy, sunny 82F, perfect weather for man and plants! Even up north, you can use some of these observations to make your winter growing more successful. Until next time, let us hope for a better spring and summer season.



A Sumatran species blossoms (above). Photo from Charles Henthorne

B. 'Looking Glass' (below) makes a bright foil for the all green B. 'Holleymoon.' I also found a giant B. 'Looking Glass (not this one) at a garage sale! From Freda Holley





B. leathermaniae (above) The unique new leaves of this species play off *B. 'Lulu Leonard'* and *B. 'Selph's Mahogany'* Photo by Freda Hlolley
Blooms of *B. 'Kit-Kat'* (below). Photo by Tony Pinto





B. 'Millie Thompson', (above) a cross of *B. versicolor* and *B. 'John Blais'*, prefers high light, warm temperatures, and high humidity to retain its beautiful metallic colors. Another metallic leaved plant, *B. 'Sea Grape'* (below), needs high light and warm temperatures as well. Culture notes and photos by Charles Henthorne



American Begonia Society Book Store

The Book Store has a long tradition in the American Begonia Society, and has always been a valuable source and aid for begonia research and general interest. A list of the current inventory follows.

Begoniaceae, Edition 2, Part I: Annotated Species List, Part II: Illustrated Key, Abridgement & Supplement

Jack Golding & Dieter C. Wasshausen, 2002, Smithsonian Institution, Volume 43: 1-289 \$55.00

ABS's Unidentified Species Listing

Freda Holley, 2007 \$15.00

Begonia U001 to Begonia U520 (A new update/revision will be ready later this year.)

Seeing Begonia

Jack Golding 2003, Revised 2005, Jack Golding's last work. "...dedicated to the many who look at their Begonia but do not

see the details." \$15.00

Begonia Hybridizing: A Primer

Freda Holly, 2007. An invaluable source book for the beginning or advanced begonia hybridizer. \$15.00

Begonia Notes Rudolf Ziesenhenn, Reissued by the Thelma O'Reilly Reprint Fund

Originally printed in the Santa Barbara Branch, La Begonia Barbareña \$15.00

Begonias – 1984 Update

Mildred L. Thompson, reissued 2009, "An addendum for particular portions of *Begonias: The Complete Reference Guide* (Times Books, 1981). Includes species and hybrids and many pictures. \$18.00

Begonias of Peninsular Malaysia

Ruth Kiew. A magnificent work with glorious pictures. \$55.00

continued on next page



I hybridized this cane and call it *B. 'Gianni Versace'* (unreg), after my talented and flamboyant countryman. I was born in the same region. Plant hybridized and photo by Joe Romeo

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Errata: The caption for this picture on p.74 of the previous issue should have read:

B. barsalouxiae. This plant was identified at one of the Houston ABS Conventions by Dr. Kathleen Burt-Utley (= *B. plebeja*, according to Jack Golding's book.)

KFL

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Propagation from seed will always be one of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of the begonia hobby. Pictured above: *B. hemsleyana* seedling - a rhizomatous begonia native to cool, upland regions from Burma to China.

Grown and photographed by Jem Wiseman

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B. 'Tiger Kitten' grown on wooden mount. Photo by William McLaughlin, Curator US Botanic Gardens

