



THE  
**BEGONIAN**

March/April 2014



# 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.



### B. 'Purple Haze'

Charles Meyer, of Long Beach, CA, has been busy hybridizing some new begonias. He hopes to register several of them in the next year. Above is his photo one he wants to call B. 'Purple Haze' which has the parentage of B. 'Jumbo Jet' X 'Peach Parfait'.

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#### Editor, Art Direction and Design:

**Linda Tamblyn**, 5635 Woodward St.,  
Merriam, KS 66202, 913-231-1020.  
begoniaskc@yahoo.com

**Consulting Editor: Jan Brown**,  
begoniabrown@yahoo.com

#### Nomenclature Editor:

**Kingsley Langenberg**, 3293 Country Lane,  
Waukegan, IL 847-336-9104,  
kingsley.langenberg@gmail.com

**Quick Tips: Dianna Wilkerson**, 15356 Pheasant Run,  
Choctaw, OK 73020 b2writer@cox.net

**Editorial and Identification Assistance:**  
**Charles Jaros, Tom Keepin, Jem Wiseman**

#### Advertising Staff:

##### Display Ads:

**Linda Tamblyn**, 5635 Woodward, Merriam, KS 66202,  
913-231-1020, begoniaskc@yahoo.com

##### Plant Society Ads; Holiday Greetings:

**Frances Drescher**, 11529 Riverchase Run  
West Palm Beach, FL 33412; (561)625-5404;  
fkddrescher1@comcast.net



*B luxurians* pg.51



Wicking a pot pg.59



*Begonia 'Red Fred'* p.75

## Contents

- 44 President's Message
- 46 Letter to the Editor
- 47 Corrections
- 48 Stem attachment: Peltate  
or basifixed?
- 49 Book Review
- 51 Begonia luxurians
- 52 Searching for Begonias  
in Myanmar
- 56 A Word with You: Stipule/s
- 59 Growing Begonias Indoors,  
the Violet Grower's Way
- 64 Water Quality
- 65 Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund
- 66 Fun Challenges of  
Begonias in Indiana
- 69 Dr. Ruth Kiew Stalking the Jungles  
of Malaysia, With a Magnifying  
Glass and a Begonia Net
- 72 Traveling with Benny
- 75 Begonia 'Red Fred' Propagation
- 76 ABS Bookstore
- 78 Hardware Store Treasure

**Front cover:** B. 'Curly Fireflush'  
grown on a "wick" system by  
Andrew Norris. Read more on  
page 59. Photo by Andrew Norris

**Back cover:** Can you spot the  
stipules in this photo? Find out if  
you are correct in A Word With You  
pg. 56. Photo by Craig Boyajian



I hope that I will be meeting many of you at the ABS convention in Tampa.

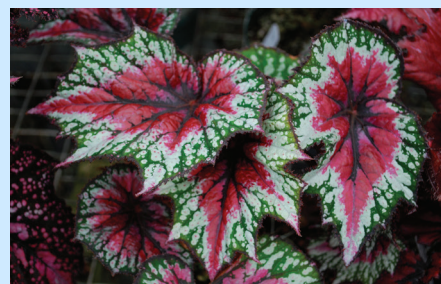
There's always late registration if you haven't already sent your registration in. The Tampa branch has worked very hard and are presenting great speakers and trips. What a great way to get out of the frozen north!

Unfortunately, John Boggan has stepped down as Nomenclature Chair due to a family emergency. Priscilla Purinton stepped in as a transition chair. I am pleased to announce Dr. Kathleen Burt-Utley has volunteered to take over as Nomenclature Chair. John will remain a committee member, and Priscilla will remain as Hybrid Registration Chair. You can meet Kathy and her husband, Dr. John Utley, at the convention in Tampa- they are speakers.

This winter has brought challenges in all areas of the country and for many of us, in all areas of our lives. Remember to share your solutions to begonia challenges with other members. Our horticultural columnist, Greg Sytch, would love to hear from you. All I can offer is prayers and encouragement – we've been fortunate here in West Palm Beach to stay above freezing, although I think I heard some gurgling coming from the begonias on the patio when we got 8" of rain one day.

Virginia Jens, President, ABS

## President's Message



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## SWR Get-Together/ABS Board Meeting

**May 22, 23, and 24, 2014**

**(Arrive on Wednesday, May 21 for Tour on Thursday)**

**Shreveport - Holiday Inn Airport West,**

**5555 Financial Plaza 71129 318-688-3000**

Indeed there will be a show this year. Plants will come from far and wide so diversity should be achieved for the show as well as the plant sale!

Remember to come on Wednesday, May 21st as tour bus will load from 8:15-8:30 a.m., Thursday, May 22 to head out for the first stop at Greenwood Nursery, before going on to the American Rose Garden and later a box lunch in their pavilion, then on to the Norton Gallery and Gardens, and concluding with the Libby Glass Factory Outlet Store. There will probably be a gathering on Wednesday night so check for postings as you arrive.

Book your room at the Holiday Inn Airport West to take advantage of rates of \$79 plus taxes and fees for rooms and \$109 plus taxes and fees for a one bedroom suite. If you are coming on Wednesday be sure you make a reservation for the evening of May 21. Rates are good for two days before and two days after our meeting. The hotel has a shuttle from the airport.

Packets will be mailed in March to members of SWR, ABS officers, and speakers. If you would like a packet and are not on this list, please call Freda Holley at 318-251-2296 or email her at [gehrtii@icloud.com](mailto:gehrtii@icloud.com) (Be sure there are no caps in the address.)



**ARE YOU LOOKING  
FOR YOUR CONVENTION  
PACKET IN THE MAIL?**

**Not this year! Packets were  
emailed to Branch contacts  
for distribution. If you don't have it  
yet, you can download the information from  
the ABS website, or you may request it at:**

**[Begoniaconvention2014@aol.com](mailto:Begoniaconvention2014@aol.com)**



## Letter to the Editor

I am responding to the last *The Begonian* where you were “calling all indoor growers”. I am new to begonias and at this point I doubt I would have much knowledge to impart to others. Consequently, I am hoping that more experienced growers can help me!

We have no greenhouse so any begonias I grow have to be able to tolerate low humidity in the winter. We are near the shore so summer is fine with lots of humidity. Manchester is a coastal town about 30 miles northeast of Boston. It is located on a cape, Cape Ann, and so despite the fact that we are about a mile from the water in the summer it is very humid, which the begonias love. Unfortunately, the summer humidity doesn't do much for us in the winter.

I have had to find out the hard way which begonias are good for low humidity and which aren't. I have Dr. Tebbitt's book but as far as I can tell he assumes that you are going to be growing them in a greenhouse. I have found that the rhizomatous begonias - 'Madame Queen', 'Palomar Prince', 'Marmaduke' and 'Cowardly Lion' - all do well indoors. 'Phoe's Cleo' does not do well. It grew very well in the summer but went sharply downhill this winter. I have read several accounts that they frequently lose all their leaves in the winter but I don't know if mine will make it.

Another that did not do well was *Begonia sizemoreae*. It went downhill and died inside of 3 months. In cane begonias I have 'Sophie Cecile', 'Pink Parade' and 'Osota', all of which do well over winter. After the summer I cut

back the 'Pink Parade' and 'Osota' and now have a number of rooted cuttings doing very well under lights in the basement. You have to be careful with watering these canes but if you do, they do fine. I had the cane, *Begonia maculata* var *wrightii* but that proved nearly impossible. I kept it alive for 5 months last winter but its future, or lack thereof, was never in question. No matter how careful I was with water it dropped leaves. It eventually dropped all its leaves and expired. Anyway, some help on plants for indoors rather than a greenhouse would be most helpful. Begonias that drop all their leaves aren't much to look at in the winter and certainly don't provide that uplift needed to get through our New England weather, so I would rule those out. In any event I am hoping *The Begonian* contributors might help identify those plants and hybrids that do well with indoor room culture.

Thank you for any assistance you might be able to provide.

Best regards,  
Mike Mack  
Manchester, Massachusetts

**Editors Note:** A big *thank you* to those who have responded to the call for how you grow begonias indoors. We will be including your articles in the upcoming issues. If you haven't yet sent in your experiences with growing begonias indoors in the colder climes, or outdoors - we welcome you to send tips, articles and/or photos.



*Begonia* U503  
Photo by Craig Boyajian

## Corrections

### Conservation Grants

In the January/February 2014 (Vol. 81) edition of *The Begonian* under the heading of “Conservation and Research Grants Awards and Contributions” (pg. 8), as the ABS Grants Committee Chair I incorrectly stated that the ABS Grants Committee had awarded two grants for research expeditions in 2014. In fact, three grants were awarded for the 2014 grant cycle to support trips conducted by researchers Mark Tebbitt, Jacky Duruisseau, and Rekha Morris.

I regret any inconvenience that the inadvertent omission may have caused, and count on the understanding and support of our membership.

Martin E. Delgado, Chairman  
ABS Grants Committee

### Thanks to Akira Tanaka!

Our apologies! In Jacky Duruisseau's article, *Madagascar: Our Second Trip Part 3* (*The Begonian* 2014 January/February) Akira Tanaka was inadvertently omitted in the acknowledgements.





*B. goegoensis*  
photo by Tony Pinto

Watch for the answer in your next *The Begonian* brought to you by A Word With You!

#### Last month's answer to Picture Quiz

January 2014 issue, page 11 – *B. masoniana*

**Venation: Palmate, Pinnate, Palmately Pinnate**

*And the answer is... PALMATE*

There are three types of venation – vein layouts. Palmate, radiating from one point near the stem; think “hand.” Pinnate, branching off a central rib that runs the length of the leaf; think “feather.” And palmately pinnate, basically palmate, but each main vein has pinnate branches. Also see *The Begonian*, March/April 2010, p. 73.

## Book Review

### *Down to Earth with Begonias*

By Peter Sharp

Publisher:

40 South Publishing

2013

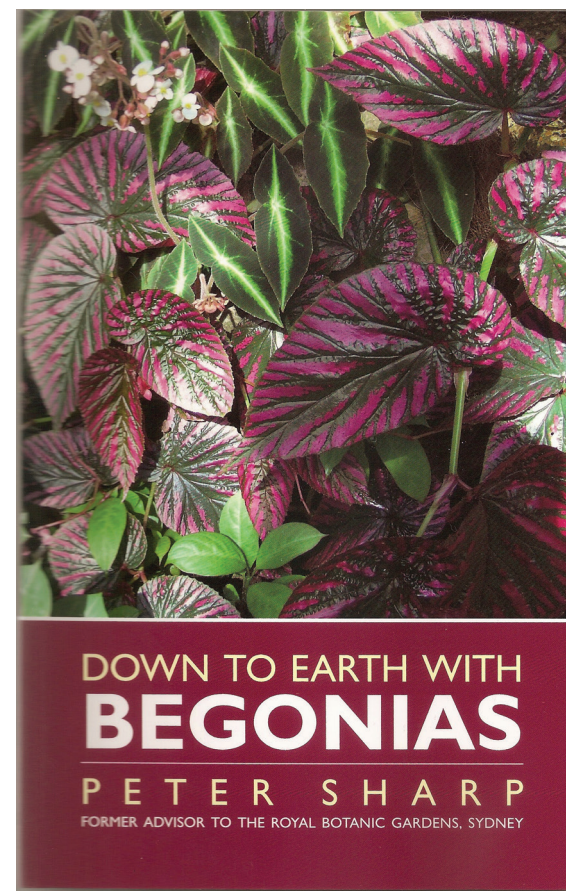
A regular contributor to *The Begonian*, Peter Sharp, has published another volume on begonias. *Growing Begonias* was Peter's first book which is now out of print.

This book, *Down to Earth With Begonias*, is based mostly on Peter's experiences working with begonias at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. While it is written for growing begonias in the climatic conditions of Australia, a wealth of information fills the pages for anyone, anywhere, interested in growing begonias.

Where begonias are found in the world; a bit about discoverer, Charles Plumier; how begonias fit into the modern world, are a few of the topics covered in the first section of the book, which is followed by an overview on types of begonias. Planting and Problem Solving offers excellent information for growing outdoors but is useful also to growing in containers, also. A section on propagation features clear illustrations and excellent tips for growing from seed or vegetative propagation. Especially useful are the Appendices. These start off with a catalog of recommended landscape begonias, listed by type, and include beautiful color photos. In my favorite Appendix, titled “The Things I Have Learnt: Useful facts and tips worth remembering,” Peter shares some of what 35 years of growing begonias has taught him, with his encouraging advice to experiment!

*Down to Earth with Begonias* is offered to anyone interested for \$31 USD, which includes shipping and handling. Email Peter for information on how to get your very own copy at [pgsharp26@gmail.com](mailto:pgsharp26@gmail.com).

Reviewed by Linda Tamblyn







*Begonia luxurians* (above) growing in the Begonia House at the Montreal Botanical Garden.

Photo by Craig Boyajian

Authors Bob and Dee Stewart (right) pose with *B. luxurians* at their greenhouse in Massachusetts.

Photo by Sally Savelle

## *Begonia luxurians*

Bob and Dee Stewart, Stow, MA

I got *Begonia luxurians* as a modest pot plant at Buxton's fall show a couple years ago when Taylor Greenhouses was selling. I knew nothing about it, but the marijuana-like leaf looked interesting, so I did my usual "acquire first, ask questions later" thing.

A quick look in the book from Tebbitt disclosed that it comes from the Atlantic Coastal Rain Forest region of Brazil. Plants from this area almost always do well in our conditions. It was also clear that the plant could eventually become rather large.

"Eventually" has turned out to be rather sooner than I expected. Two years after acquisition, I brought it in to the show; it was over five feet tall, including the pot. This will probably be its last show, because it is now over six feet tall with no signs of slowing down and I have no vehicle that I could carry it in.

It first bloomed at about five feet of height. The inflorescence is a cluster of small white ball-shaped flowers, eventually opening by folding the petals well back like a shooting star. The flowers are not especially interesting individually, but the cluster gives a nice effect from a distance. Up close you can smell a fragrance from the flowers.

The plant lives in our greenhouse with no special care; this puts it leagues ahead of some other species that suffer crisped leaves from lack of humidity, or mildew from some cause (perhaps cooler-than-desired conditions).

About the Authors: We've been plant enthusiast's since the early 70's. Our first loves were gesneriads and orchids, but we were also active in the Begonia Society. We retired in 1999 so we had more time, built a 24' x 30' greenhouse, and now we have about 100 species of begonias in the greenhouse and terrariums all over the house.







## *Searching for Begonias in Myanmar*

*Article and photos by Chen-Hao Hsu, San Jose, CA*

It has been said that people fall into two categories: those who collect things and those who collect experiences. My most recent trip to Myanmar in December 2013 is testament to my being guilty of being both.

Formerly known as Burma, Myanmar stretches to the far north reaching the Chinese Tibetan border and in the south to the Tannier Peninsula which Myanmar shares with Thailand. Its diverse geography affords a multitude of habitats despite the

dominant monsoonal summer rain winter dry weather pattern characteristic of much of SE Asia. Its rich biodiversity was explored over a century ago by Frank Kingdon-Ward, after whom many a native species has been named, and who is remembered as one who travelled with a porter-carried Western toilet in his far-ranging botanical expeditions

Thinking that I would be retracing some of Kingdon-Ward's steps in my trip to the Shan State, I was surprised to learn that Mt. Ashay-myin Anau-myin (translation: you



Buddhist pagodas are an ever present feature of Myanmar and its culture (pictured opposite page);  
View of unidentified begonia in situ with flowers dangling naturally (above left);  
Frontal view of flowers (above right); One habitat observed was above small mountain streams where  
rhizomes were loosely rooted in mud (below)





can see to the east and to the west), which we ascended, was not one of the areas that he had explored. Given that an online Smithsonian botanical inventory had listed only a handful of Begonia species and furthermore given that Myanmar had been closed off to the West in recent decades with vast regions of this country still off limits, it was with great anticipation that we commenced our climb, starting in a highland village area north of Pindaya around 4,000ft. From afar, it was apparent that much land had been cleared for planting, but near the peaks, it was evident that higher elevation areas were richly forested. As we passed the 5,000ft mark, Impatiens began to appear, followed by cool-growing Hoyas and other epiphytes, more Impatiens, and finally near the peak, Rhododendron arboreum and other ericaceous plants. Despite the rich plant biodiversity encountered in the montane rainforests, nowhere was to be found any Begonia, either terrestrial or epiphytic. We did not

lose hope, however, since the Impatiens, Hoyas, and even orchids we encountered did not all appear to be familiar species.

After camping high up at 7,000ft for two nights, on day three we descended the slopes gradually reaching populated areas by following a trail that ultimately hugged a mountain stream. It was here that we finally encountered a Begonia species at 5964ft. The apple-green teardrop leaves were about 3 to 4 inches wide attached to a rhizome superficially rooted in heavy clay soil found above riverine areas. Some plants carried seed pods while most were in flower. As with many temperate and subtropical Begonias of continental Asia, this pink flowered species had pleasantly fragrant flowers. Given our elevation and proximity to the Tropic of Cancer, this Begonia sports cold-tolerance and may be a worthy introduction in mild climate areas.

A preliminary inspection by Dr. Ching-I



Montane cloud forests set against breathtaking vistas



Above: *Dendrobium* sp aff *infundibulum*



## And, the Impatiens...

A mong the impatiens we discovered, there was a large yellow one, *Impatiens drepanophora* (identification provided by Derick Pitman of Sacramento, CA), which sported a columbine shaped flower (above) and, which furthermore could be found growing with the begonia on flatter land. Like the other impatiens (right) found on this trip, this pink one is a new one to me. I am trying to get it identified and it could very well also turn out to be a new species.



Peng of Academia Sinica has determined this to be in the Section *Platycentrum*. If further examination indicates we have a new species discovery, plans are to name it after noted Burmese botanist Dr. Saw Lwin, who painstakingly arranged our group logistics and permits, all the time enriching our travels with his stories and anecdotes.

In my travels to other parts of the world, Begonias generally tend to be locally abundant where found but not always widespread in distribution. The fact that my two-week trip to Myanmar yielded only one species seems to bear this pattern out. Despite this, further exploration of the Myanmar wilds is certain to yield more new species discoveries.

Chen-Hao Hsu resides in San Jose, California where he tends to a mixed collection of species orchids and begonias and anything else worth collecting. When not working as an interpreter, he is probably off exploring the wilds. He can be reached at [chinterpreter@hotmail.com](mailto:chinterpreter@hotmail.com)





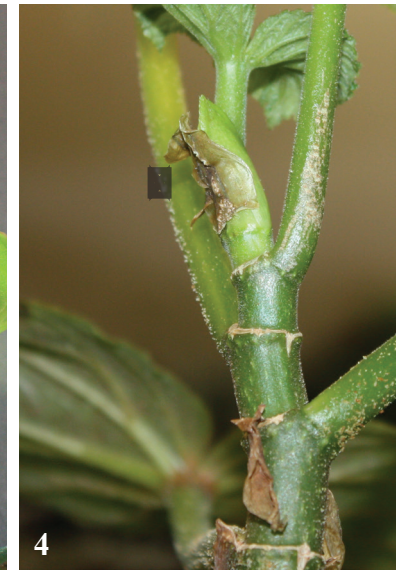
## A Word with You: Stipule/s

By Claudia Goodridge, New Haven, CT

the *stipules* remain at the junction of the leaf stem (*petiole*) and main stem. Sometimes they stay briefly and sometimes for a longer time. Describing their life cycle involves some more vocabulary.

The *stipules* that fall off early are *caducous*; those that hang on for awhile are *persistent*; the ones that dry up but stay in place are *marcescent*. (Golding). My dictionary says *marcescent* is “withering without falling off.” I had been removing these withered ones, thinking they would provide hiding places for marauding insects; I’ll leave them alone now. Mark Tebbitt uses four distinctions for *stipules* - *soon falling*, *persistent*, *deciduous*, and *tardily deciduous* – and further separates the types by shape descriptions.

Is there a survival strategy here? Some biology literature suggests there is a protective strategy; the stipules work rather like a blanket or tent to keep the tightly furled leaf from drying out from wind or sun exposure. Some (but not begonias, thank goodness) *stipules* develop into spines, which keep those voracious herbivores at bay in the wild. Some literature suggests stipules are vestigial; meaning they had some purpose in the evolutionary past, but not now. I prefer to think of them as useful begonia parts. Which types do you have?



Tightly closed, new stipules (marked in all photos by yellow arrows) covering new growth - **Fig 1**. Persistent stipules - **Fig 2**. Another example of stipules open but still green - **Fig 3**. The stipules on this *B. griffithiana* might be considered caducous - **Fig 4**. Marcescent stipules wither without falling like the ones on this *B. grisea* - **Fig 5**. Photos by Jem Wiseman





**Fig 1:** *Begonia* 'Fireworks' **Fig 2:** This image shows the begonias under a 4 tube, T8 fixture, over the lighting grid, that the wicks dangle through and into the trays of fertilizer. Back row, left to right, there is *Begonia miniperba*, *Begonia hemsleyana*, *Begonia* 'Pink Diamond', and *Begonia* 'Curly Fireflush'. In the front row, there is *Begonia* 'Thelma O'Reilly', *Begonia* 'Benitochiba', *Begonia* 'Pink Minx', *Begonia* 'Fireworks', and *Begonia* 'Looking Glass'.

## *Growing Begonias Indoors, the Violet Grower's Way*

Article and photos by Andrew Norris, Marriottsville, MD

As you may have guessed, by the title, I am first and foremost an African Violet and Gesneriad grower. I have been active in my local chapters and the national organizations for both Gesneriads and Violets for the past several years. I enjoy growing a large number of plants - indoors and exhibiting them, judging, giving lectures, and contributing to our local and national publications.

Begonias caught my eye as another varied group of plants with show potential and I have met several begonia enthusiasts who are also gesneriad enthusiasts. It was only a matter of time before my wandering eyes set my acquiring impulses into motion and once it was decided I'd grow begonias I amassed a collection of 83 varieties and species in a mere 3 months time! I joined the Begonia society and the Buxton branch with plans to join and attend the meetings of the Potomac Branch. Having been invited to judge the Gesneriad show, I was treated to the beautiful display of begonias exhibited by the Buxton branch members who were also holding their show and sale. Of course, I came away with several begonia and gesneriad treasures from my time there and that was the real start of what promises to be a new and rewarding addiction.

Typical of my modus operandi, I turned to the internet and began reading all that







3



4



5



6



7



8



9

My wick watered plants! Fig. 3 B. 'Little Darling' Fig. 4 B. 'Chocolate Cream' Fig. 5 B. 'Cook's Swirl' Fig. 6 B. 'Harmony's Dark Heart' Fig. 7 The upper shelf on the stand, in Fig. 2. There are some hanging begonias, represented in this photo. Shown are *Begonia* 'Good n Plenty' (just the leaves poking into the left of the frame), *Begonia venosa*, *Begonia carolineifolia*, *Begonia dregei* 'Tweedle Dee', *Begonia* 'Flamingo Queen', *Begonia* 'Kismet', *Begonia maculata* var. *wrightii*, some Hoyas, and hanging in full view, *Begonia polygonoides*. These are growing under a 3 tube T8 fixture, with a reflector (the 4 tube fixture in Fig. 2 has no reflector). Fig. 8 B. 'Pink Diamond' Fig. 9 B. *hemsleyana*





was available regarding indoor growing. My fellow grower and partner also happened to have a stash of back issue of *The Begonian* as well as Millie and Ed Thompson's *Begonias The Complete Reference Guide*. I was immediately struck by the omission of common gesneriad growing practices, such as wicking, and also by the very contradictory information regarding lighting. I decided to just roll up my sleeves and apply what I already knew from growing gesneriads and see how I did. I started potting up plants knowing I intended to wick the plants. For those not so inclined, wicking is a method of watering where an adsorbent wick (I use cheap, 4-ply, acrylic yarn) is inserted into the pot bottom and left to dangle in a water and fertilizer solution. The plants are placed on grids, set over trays, which are kept constantly full. This has many benefits including raising humidity, providing constant

feeding, and allowing the grower to take time away for travel. This method does however require the right growing mix to avoid overwatering and rot. I tailor my mix to what I am growing. For my rhizomatous and rex begonias I favor a mix of medium leca stones, coarse perlite (grade 3 or 4), long-fibered sphagnum moss, and whatever orchid mix or bark I have on hand added to a base of Promix. I use the same mix for canes and hanging plant but I use more Promix since they prefer a bit more moisture. For tuberous and semi-tuberous varieties I use very little Promix and add Turface, which is a kitty litter-like clay aggregate, used to aerate clay soils. I grow species that like a lot of humidity and require enclosures in long fibered sphagnum moss and coarse perlite at about a 50/50 ration. I grow very few plants enclosed since my ambient humidity stays between 60-80% year round, due to the hoard of plants and the evaporation from so many open trays of water. With this method of watering I use mostly shallow, pan-type plastic pots except for canes and hanging plants. It also important to note I do not place the wicks in the reservoirs until the plants have a root system that nearly fills the pots. I top water young plants and newly repotted or semi-dormant plants to prevent rot. I use a water soluble fertilizer, at 1/8 tsp per gallon and I use a fertilizer that lowers the pH since our water tests at about 7.2 pH and begonias prefer slightly acid conditions of around 6.5, though probably don't complain about neutral conditions.

I have grown rexes under various lighting schemes and find that all begonias will grow well under a 3 tube, T8 set-up, with a

reflector about 10" above the plants. Plants also will not burn under 6 tube fixtures and I am growing most under 3 or 4 tube fixtures on for 16 hours, per day. I use 6500k bulbs and I am sure 5000k bulbs or a cool/warm white combination would serve adequately. I find many of the species will do fine under 2 tubes though I grow them closer to the tubes. I try to place plants that like it warmer on higher shelves and plants that like it cooler in lower shelves.

Temperatures are fairly constant, with about 65F night-time lows and 74-78F day-time highs. We utilize portable air conditioners and several fans to circulate the air and keep heat from building up with the many fixtures in use. I have not seen any powdery mildew and if that were a problem I would reverse my light cycle to run my lights at night thereby eliminating the temperature drops at night that powdery mildew favors.

So far I have been very successful in my approach and hope others can utilize the wicking technique, to their advantage. I look forward to the upcoming year and hope to have my first begonias to enter, in some of the affiliate shows.



**Fig. 10** Begonias grown in a sealed terrarium, under a 2-tube T8 fixture, with very little space between the top of the terrarium and the bulbs. Begonias shown are *Begonia bipinnatifida*, *Begonia* 'Silver Queen', *Begonia versicolor*, *Begonia chlorosticta* (green and red forms), and *Begonia sizemoreae*. **Fig. 11** B. 'Beau Rouge' **Fig. 12** The diagonal installation of a wick, with the wick placed from one side of the pot, through the bottom and held in place, by a small notch, in the top of the opposite side of the pot. This promotes even moisture, throughout the pot. For begonias prone to rot, a coiled wick, in the pot bottom, may reduce wetness near the rhizome, but allow the roots to gain access to needed water. I use acrylic yarn, usually 4 ply. Natural fibers will rot and are not desirable, for this purpose.





## Water Quality

By Sharon Rosenzweig,  
Framingham, MA

pH and the electrical conductivity of the soil, thereby diminishing your begonias' ability to absorb water and nutrients.

**Bottled Water** – Also contains sodium. It is important to leach plants on a regular basis (every 2 months) to prevent salt buildup in

the potting mix.

**Distilled Water** – Contains no minerals or trace elements. You must use a fertilizer with trace minerals. Check pH as distilled water can be quite acidic.

**Rain Water** – Can greatly vary in pH due to air pollution. So if you use it, you need to measure and monitor the pH closely.

**Dehumidifier Water** – Generally no solid particles, but pH can vary. Also, depending upon the material of the coils, the water can have some leached metal content. May add bacteria and fungus to the water due to lack of sterility of the collection container and inner workings of the unit.

**Reverse Osmosis Water** – Reverse osmosis water has gone through several layers of filters and membranes so it is lacking minerals and dissolved solids. Adding fertilizer with trace minerals to the water or soil can help counter this. Unfortunately, installing a system in your home is costly. Some saltwater aquarium shops will sell reverse osmosis water. Bring your own containers.

**Conclusions** – If your plants look fine, don't change anything. If your plants don't look fine, check your water! **Remember** – if

continued

## Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund

The Margaret Lee Branch  
San Diego County, CA

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

pollinate your species begonias, collect the seeds and send them to the seed fund. We depend on your contributions of seeds to make a wider variety of species available to the members. The Seed Fund now offers a PayPal option. This option is available through the ABS Website. Go to the Seed Fund Page and select the link "Current Seed Listing pay with PayPal". There is a small "PayPal" fee plus the "shipping and handling" fee to cover the cost of using PayPal. Choose the fee amount in the drop down menu at the bottom of the page as with the shipping and handling drop down menus. By policy, new seed additions are made after they are first published in *The Begonian* and updated as supplies vary while filling orders. This is the best source for the current available seed list. By policy, new seed additions are made after they are first published in *The Begonian* and updated as supplies vary while filling orders. This is the best source for the current available seed list. Packets of seeds are \$2.00. Very rare seeds and newly collected seeds will be \$3.00 or more per packet when noted. California residents please add 8.75% sales tax. All orders must be accompanied by check or money order, payable in US funds ONLY to the Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund.

### American Begonia Society

Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund  
Dean Turney, 467 Fulvia Street  
Encinitas, CA 92024

E-address: dean@deansmail.us

**Cost 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.

## Water Quality - continued

you make any changes to your watering, do it on just a few plants first and check results after several weeks before applying to your whole collection.

**About the Author** - Sharon's passion for flowering plants has caused her to become a member of several plant societies. She is currently Vice President of the Buxton Branch of the American Begonia Society and the First Vice President of the New England Gesneriad Society (NETGS). She has been growing African violets for over 30 years and is a past president of the Bay State African Violet Society. She loves plants so much that she decided to start her own business selling Oyama Self-watering Planters and growing supplies.

New Seeds from Bobby West (\$2.00)  
*B. boliviensis* 'Bonfire'

An important factor in growing beautiful begonias is the quality of the water you use. There are many sources of water for your plants – some good, some not so good. Water should not be too **hard** (too many dissolved particles and minerals) or too **soft** (too much salt) and should have a pH range of 6.0 to 6.5. If the pH of your water + fertilizer + soil is too out of range, a plant may suffer from nutrient toxicity. The plant cannot take up the fertilizer it needs to grow well. It will look pale, fail to increase in size and not look robust.

**City Water** – Many municipalities add chlorine, chloramine and fluoride to the water supply to make it drinkable. It can cause leaf burn and diminished flowering. Chlorine will dissipate over time, but chloramine and fluoride will not. Your local aquarium store will carry products designed to remove these additives instantly. It is safe for plants.

**Well Water** – Most well water contains lots of dissolved minerals and has a high pH. Using it with a fertilizer containing trace elements can lead to mineral toxicity, which causes nutrient lockup. Have your well water tested before using on begonias.

**Softened Water** – Increases the sodium content of the water. This will alter both the



# Fun Challenges of Begonias in Indiana

Thomas Pirtle, Bloomington, IN

Indiana winters are nothing short of dreary and cold, yet the past six winters that I have grown begonias have gotten better and better with each passing year. It has become a time for me to take part in my passion of indoor growing. The joy of growing begonias indoors somehow makes the winter months fly by. Even when the days outdoors are dark, my lights and begonias keep me from noticing too much. There are challenges for me that can be a bit frustrating, yet the answer is usually found through simple cultural adjustments.

When I first started growing begonias, I was living at a place that had a lot of natural light. My current situation is in an apartment that has one south facing

window and one large window that faces north and is deeply shaded by trees. There are a few of my 'easier' to grow plants by the south window but I keep most of my plants under lights. My lights are full spectrum T-5 HO fluorescents and the plants seem to respond really well to them.

The main problem I have faced has been maintaining adequate humidity since levels during the winter can be very arid. Some of the plants don't seem to mind at first, but over a course of chronic exposure to dry air the leaves get brown crispy edges. I've overcorrected this problem by running humidifiers in a room where I kept a lot of plants during the winter. The result was damp carpeting, condensation on the window, and fungal issues. Although I had



Some rex begonias (**opposite page**) that lived in my first light shelf made of a bookshelf with some Mylar. Enjoying the summer weather - a group shot (**above**) of a portion of the collection of my various begonias here in Indiana.



provided a source of air movement through a fan, adjustments in cultural practices were still needed. I got a larger fan, backed off with the humidifier, and things improved.

Glass aquariums and plastic storage containers have become allies in the quest to provide a good home for my begonias. The challenges of fungal issues increase so I have to increase my effort in providing sanitary conditions. There seems to always be a challenge to overcome but once you attain the correct conditions, the reward of seeing a happily growing begonia makes it worth the time. Nothing is nicer than knowing that the begonias are comfortable enough inside until it comes time when I can put them outside.

continued



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B. 'Torch' and B. 'My Special Angel' (**top**) looking well indoors as the temperature outdoors isn't so nice. B. 'Erythrophylla' and B. 'Persian Brocade' (**center**) taking advantage of the nice weather summering outdoors. My current collection of cane begonias (**bottom**) under the T-5 fluorescent lights. B. 'Looking Glass', B. 'My Special Angel', B. 'Corallina de Lucerna', B. 'Sophie Cecille', B. 'Snowcapped', B. 'Persian Brocade'

I set my begonias out when the night temperature averages 55-60 and day temperature is 65-70. This is usually mid-May in my area but from mid-April on I can finally open my windows on nice days. This is the time period that I use to harden my plants off. By the time the plants can be set out, they've been introduced to conditions that are a little closer to that experienced outdoors. The plants seem to grow themselves from then on but the extreme summer heat and humidity that we experience in Indiana can put a damper on things. As long as the watering and fertilizing are increased and more shade is provided they don't sulk too much.

When the glory days of summer come to an end, the realization of coming back inside starts to set in. From mid-August to early September, I replace any old bulbs and get the growing area cleaned and ready for the plants. The plants that need pruning I give a little trimming but for the most part I try to leave as much foliage as I can to help the plants through the winter. Indiana gets its first light frost around the first week of October so the plants are all brought inside by mid-September.

This is also the time I notice that I've got a lot more plants coming in than I put out in the spring! I get most of my plants during the spring and summer and I am always propagating my plants during the summer months. It always seems like I know of a spot that I could work in another plant even when the windowsill and light shelves are already stuffed full. This has been possibly the biggest challenge myself, and I'm sure all the readers who are indoor growers in a northern climate, face: there are sometimes that you have to admit that you cannot grow as many plants as you would like and you must choose plants that do well for the conditions that you are able to provide. Having a few very well grown plants is nicer than a huge collection that, when not properly cared for, gets out of hand.

## Begonia's Legends

# Dr. Ruth Kiew Stalking the Jungles of Malaysia, With a Magnifying Glass and a Begonia Net

by Lee Sinoff, Miami, FL, Rainbow-Foliage@att.net

Some people visit nature by going into their gardens, taking in all the beauty and wonderment surrounding them. Other people work at cultivating plants, often going far beyond anything which can simply be called *gardening*. (*Does that sound familiar to any of us?*)

And, some people — ok, I plead guilty — actually set up *backyard home nurseries*, where the word *gardening* has been thoroughly replaced by *horticulture* and *floriculture*.

Still other people may hike or bicycle over a picturesque mountain trail to visit nature. And, then there are other people who are even more adventurous. They go on collecting safaris in a wild and untamed region, which hasn't been bulldozed over yet, somewhere in the world, to see nature still in its purest, most undisturbed best.

They may go on a collecting safari on their own or with a few friends, or they may join an escorted trip encouraged and supported by, say, the American Begonia Society.

## It's a Jungle Out There

When Dr. Ruth Kiew wants to visit nature, in its purest form, she simply goes to her office. But, for people who may not know, Dr. Kiew's *office* is the jungle itself. It could be in Borneo, somewhere else in Indonesia, or in Malaysia. Or... or... well, it could be anywhere in the world but,

most likely, it's somewhere damp, humid, crested with a halo of sun and filled with native flora and fauna. Lots of flora, especially begonias.

Of course, we know Dr. Kiew as the author of *Begonias of Peninsular Malaysia*, a 300-page scientific account of begonias in their truly native habitat, accented with outstanding photographs, watercolor painting and botanical drawings.

Published by Natural History Publications (Borneo) in 2005, in association with Singapore Botanic Gardens and National Parks Board of Singapore, the book identifies 52 native species and two garden escapes. Thirteen of those species and one variety were identified by Dr. Kiew in her book for the very first time.

Though the book was intended to be a scientific study of begonias in peninsular Malaysia, a great effort was made by Dr. Kiew to keep the technical jargon to a minimum when describing the wild begonias growing in the rain forests of Malaysia. That way, the knowledge conveyed in the book would be available for naturalists, gardeners and begonia lovers everywhere, as well as for hard-core botanists.

The book is available through the ABS and, according to the January / February issue of *The Begonian*, there are just a few copies remaining. In that issue of *The Begonian*, there is a note to 'Check with Charles Jaros before ordering'. The



price quoted is \$55. If you *do check* with Charles, and *there still are* copies available through ABS, it will be well worth your while, on several fronts.

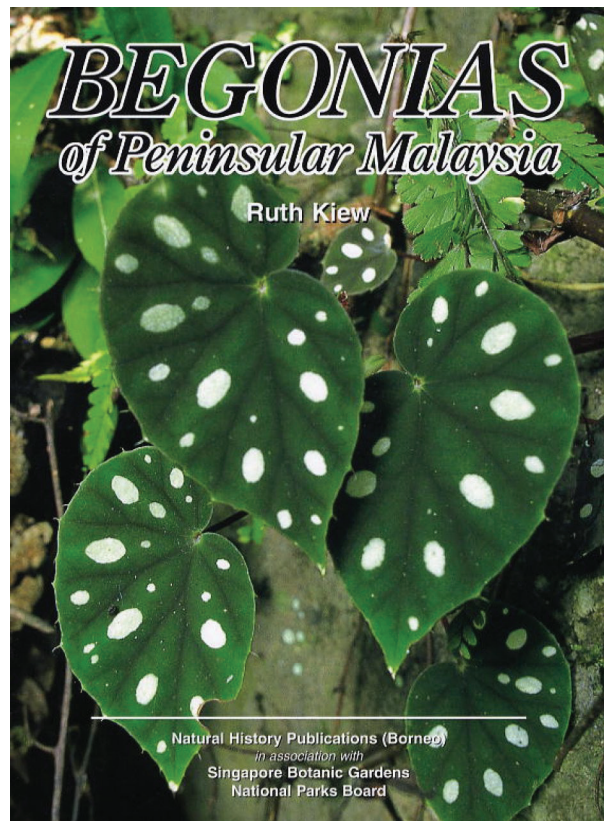
The first is, of course, the visual and verbal trip you can take, from the comfort of an easy chair in your living room, through the Malaysian forest and the beautiful begonias you'll see with every step.

Another front to enjoy, while the supply lasts, involves money. The publisher lists the book at \$106 — that's £63.99 or, approximately € 78, for those who are interested. The publisher also includes a note that the book is "*usually dispatched within 2–4 months*". Yes, months!

### A Genuine Scientist

Dr. Kiew was born in Cambridge, UK, in 1946. She earned a BA in Botany, Part II, from the University of Cambridge, and went on to receive a PhD from Cambridge as well, studying with E. J. H. Corner, who was Professor of Tropical Botany at the University.

Aside from teaching, Dr. Corner was also a leading expert on the genus *Ficus* and the Palm family. He was also a world-renowned mycologist — someone who studies fungi, of course. In 1972, Dr. Corner published '*Boletus in Malaysia*', a book which dealt with a genus of mushroom with more than 100 species.



Based on his studies of seed morphology, Dr. Corner formulated the *Durian Theory* of the origin of flowering plants.

Before he began teaching at Cambridge, Dr. Corner was Assistant Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. As one of the conditions for allowing Dr. Kiew to work on her PhD with him, Dr. Corner told *student* Ruth Kiew that she had to spend a year in the tropics, conducting field research. Dr. Corner suggested Malaysia, saying it was a safe location for a woman traveling alone.

Following that mandate and suggestion, Dr. Kiew began an adventure in 1969, with

the support of a Royal Society / Leverhulme Scholarship, which would last a lifetime. She traveled to study the forests of Malaysia.

It's no wonder that, in 1998 — seven years before her work on *Begonias in Peninsular Malaysia* was published — Dr. Kiew wrote *The Seed Plant Flora of Fraser's Hill, Peninsular Malaysia: With Special Reference to its Conservation Status*. That earlier work was published by the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM).

### Academic with Muddy Boots

After coming out of the jungle and settling in Malaysia, Dr. Kiew lectured at the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia for 25 years. She eventually became a Professor of Botany there. In 1997, Dr. Kiew joined the Singapore Botanic Garden and, at the time *Begonias of Peninsular Malaysia* was published in 2005, she was the Keeper of the Herbarium & Library, and Assistant Director of Botanical Research for the Garden.

In 2002, Dr. Kiew was awarded the prestigious *David Fairchild Medal for Plant Exploration*, presented by the National Tropical Botanic Garden (NTBG), at a ceremony held at The Kampong, an 11-acre tropical garden in the Coconut Grove neighborhood of Miami, FL.

The NTBG is a not-for-profit based in Hawaii dedicated to tropical plant research, conservation and education. The organization operates five botanic gardens and preserves in Hawaii and Florida. It also operates the Breadfruit Institute, established to focus on breadfruit as a nutritious answer to global food shortages and

to promote the conservation and use of breadfruit for both food and reforestation.

Several years ago, Dr Kiew left the Singapore Botanic Garden to join the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM). In 2010, she was involved in a new work being developed through FIRM: *Flora of Peninsular Malaysia, Series I: Ferns and Lycophytes, Volume 1*. The book provides revisions for nine families, 21 genera and 100 species of fern and lycophytes.

Like the *Everyready Bunny*, Dr. Kiew just keeps going. In June of last year, FRIM botanists conducted scientific expeditions to explore the Merapoh Limestone Hills in Pahang — under the direction of Dr. Kiew. The expedition discovered, among other things, a previously undescribed orchid species and several rare plant species. One hill is home to more than 200 plant species, documented in just two days.

With at least 85 limestone hills, the area is considered a cavers' paradise, and that is actually a source of fear and concern.

"None of those limestone hills had been botanically explored before this effort," explained Dr. Kiew in mid-2013, a FRIM Consultant Botanist overseeing the project. "*Since the limestone hills are situated outside the Taman Negara, it means that they're not protected — and at constant risk of being developed.*"

"Detailed surveys to document the plants on as many limestone hills in the Merapoh area as possible, are literally crucial for the protection of the hills and the plants, animals, caves and geological features they contain."

continued





## Traveling with Benny

By Cindy Moran  
Baton Rouge, LA

The May national convention in Austin was an easy drive for us from Baton Rouge, LA., so my husband Harry and I set out with a show-worthy cane (pictured above) belted in the rear seat. Its name tag ID'd it as 'Benigo' - a cultivar we have grown for years. A tough guy indeed, it is successful in Louisiana heat and humidity.

Arriving at our hotel in

continued

### Dr. Ruth Kiew continued

In 2002, Dr. Kiew visited Tim Anderson at Palm Hammock Orchid Estate on the day immediately after she received the David Fairchild Medal. She told Tim that she saw more *B. rajah* growing in his nursery than she saw the last time she was in the wild in Borneo and Malaysia. She pointed directly at encroaching development as the culprit. And, *that* was 12 years ago!

It goes without saying that Dr. Kiew has done much more than simply identify and write about begonias found in the jungles of Southeast Asia and that part of the world, even as important and valuable as that is.

From our perspective, her raising a red flag about declining habitat and the ever-present threat of encroaching development is right up there with finding new species. One goes hand-in-hand with the other and, without that symmetry, they both will be in jeopardy.

Preventing that is something we should all stand up and fight for. And thank Dr. Kiew in the process!

Lee Sinoff ([professional\\_resources@att.net](mailto:professional_resources@att.net); [strategic-branding@att.net](mailto:strategic-branding@att.net)) is a Past President of the Miami Begonia Society, and a Marketing & Communications, Operations, Sourcing and Project Management generalist and consultant, operating out of Miami, FL.



The author (opposite page) with "Benny" and a standard *Begonia coccinea* (left). *B. 'Benigo'* (above).

Austin, we found a spot in the attached parking garage and headed for the elevator with our suitcases. Harry inquired "What do you want to do with Benny for the night?" and I replied "Oh I think he can stay in the car." Catching startled looks from other guests, we hastened to add "He's a begonia."

The next day Benny visits our room for final grooming and then on to enter the show. OOPS, he's a shrub, not a cane. Why didn't he tell me? Not only that, he is actually 'Benigo' - he has been living under an assumed name! Nevertheless, he wins a blue ribbon and Best in Class.

After a delightful convention, we drive on to Kerrville and Benny decides to stay in Texas with the friends we are visiting there. They are master gardeners and you can be sure Benny will soon have many offspring in Kerrville.

Back in Baton Rouge I correspond with Charles Jaros who gives me the happy news that Benny has actually returned to his home state. He is a Southwest hybrid with *B. U062* as a parent. I was also fascinated to learn that 'Maurice Amy', 'Don Miller', and 'Sinbad' (all cultivars I can grow well) have the same origins. I immediately joined the Southwest Region Begonia Society. I am sure that is the reason they are having their convention next May in Shreveport!

We are looking forward to next May. Hopefully, we can bring some show plants and maybe Son Of 'Benigo' will attend.





*B. heterochroma* blossom Photo by Jacky Duruisseau

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## Begonia 'Red Fred' Propagation

By Mike Flaherty, Santa Barbara, CA



A beautiful specimen of *B. 'Red Fred'* grown by Santa Barbara ABS member Richard Mason and pictured with the author.(top).

This 'Red Fred' leaf (bottom) has many plants growing on its 4" petiole. The mother leaf is still on the plant though you can't see it in this picture.

Most hobby growers plant the petiole vertically. I plant a long petiole horizontally and - look at all the babies ya get!

I once asked a very famous begonia man why he planted his leaves with such a short petiole and why straight down in the soil. He said when planting leaf cuttings he had not considered planting the leaf horizontally with a long petiole. He changed to my method after 60 years of growing.

This may seem elementary to some however, I know most growers propagate with little short petioles planted straight down. My experience is that you have more

success with longer horizontally planted petioles. Commercial growers favor wedges and my method is not as practical for them. By the way, I will not be breaking up these plants because I will grow this begonia as a show plant and will put all of these in one low 10" pot. A tip - plant a long petiole horizontally one inch below the soil level leaving the leaf above.



## NEW: *Begonia Hybridizing:*

**By The Hybridizers**, Edited by Freda Holley, published through the Millie Thompson Publication Fund, March 2013. This great new book by Freda Holley is filled with articles written by some of our most famous, prolific and successful hybridizers. It is a philosophy of hybridizing divided into three parts and includes articles by Ross Bolwell, Walter Dworkin, Freda Holley, Gregory Sytch, Chuck Ades, Brad Thompson, Patrick Worley and Rudolf Ziesenhenn. There are many stunning pictures.

Domestic: \$21.00

International \$26.00. Includes postage.

## NEW: *Unidentified Species Listing, Update, August 2012*

by Mary Bucholtz & Charles Jaros, Co-Directors

Second Edition includes U Numbers 001 through 621. Looseleaf format for easy addition of new material. Notebook not included.

Domestic: \$33.00

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## NEW: B. U 604-621 to add to the August, 2010 Unidentified Species Listing

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## NEW: 2013 Calendar

by Dr. Rekha Morris (limited number)

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## *Raising Cane: Experiences in Growing the Species Cane Begonias*

by Freda M. Holley

A wonderful work on the cane species with color photographs.

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## Note Cards from the Jack Golding Collection

Eight cards with envelopes, each card a different begonia species. This collection of botanical illustrations is part of a series of renderings by Jack's daughter, Marilyn Golding White. The cards were used as Jack's Season's Greetings cards to his friends and associates.

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# ABS Bookstore

## *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

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## *Seeing Begonia*

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2003, Revised 2005. Jack Golding's last work.

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by Freda M. Holley, 2007

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## *Begonia Notes*

by Rudolf Ziesenhenn

Reissued by the Thelma O'Reilly Reprint Fund.

Originally printed in the Santa Barbara Branch, La Begonia Barbareña.

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## *Begonias – 1984 Update*

by 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.

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## *Begonias of Peninsular Malaysia*

by Ruth Kiew

A magnificent work with glorious pictures. pictures. **NOTE:** Just a few copies left & then, no more. Check with Charles Jaros before you order.

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Continued on next page

## ABS Book Store ...continued

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## Hardware Store Treasure

This semp cross is a basket I picked up at Lowe's, unnamed of course. But I cut it way back last fall (2012), hung in my sun porch, it never stopped blooming and it came on again like gangbusters the next spring. I'm just glad to see the big commercial greenhouses offering such fare! From Kit Jeans Mounger

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## Appointed Chairmen & Directors

**Audit...** Paul Tsamtsis, 1630 F St., Sacramento, CA 95814-1611

**Awards...** Cheryl Lenert, 21744 FM 2920, Hockley, TX 77447; 281-255-9004; [lenert@flash.net](mailto:lenert@flash.net)

**Ballot Counting...** Ingeborg Foo, 1050 Melrose Way, Vista, CA 92083; 760-724-4871

**Book Store...** Jan Brown, 310-670-4471, [begoniabrown@yahoo.com](mailto:begoniabrown@yahoo.com).

**Branch Relations...** Tom Keepin, 4513 Randwick Drive Houston, TX 77092-8343; 713-686-8539; [thomas.keepin@gmail.com](mailto:thomas.keepin@gmail.com)

**Business Manager...** vacant

**Conservation...** Johanna Zinn, 4407 Jensen Place, Fairfax, VA 22032, 703-323-7513, [jazinn@cox.net](mailto:jazinn@cox.net)

**Convention Advisor...** Mary Sakamoto, 13362 Mount Hood Dr., Santa Ana, CA 92705; 714-852-3695; [m.sakamoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:m.sakamoto@sbcglobal.net)

**Convention Chairs...** Margaret Sporer, 10049 Glenmore Ave. Bradenton, FL 34202, 941-351-8486, [pspor2@verizon.net](mailto:pspor2@verizon.net); Dale Sena, 816 W. Braddock St, Tampa, FL 33603, 813-221-0567. Convention email [begoniaconvention2014@aol.com](mailto:begoniaconvention2014@aol.com)

**Entries/Classification...** Vacant

**Facebook Manager...** John Boggan, [dcbegonias@gmail.com](mailto:dcbegonias@gmail.com)

**Grants Committee...** Martin E. Delgado, P.O. Box 39685, Downey, CA 90239; 562-310-8380; [mdlbrarian@consultant.com](mailto:mdlbrarian@consultant.com)

**Historian...** Millie Santandreu, [milliestop10@gmail.com](mailto:milliestop10@gmail.com)

**Horticultural Correspondent...** Gregory Sytch, 6329 Alaska Avenue, New Port Richey, FL 34653-4301; 727-841-9618; [gsytch@cs.com](mailto:gsytch@cs.com)

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Send your photos, growing tips, or articles to:  
[begoniaskc@yahoo.com](mailto:begoniaskc@yahoo.com)

**Internet Editor...** Julie Vanderwilt, 720 Mission Park Drive, Santa Barbara, CA 93105; Phone 805-687-8033 [vanderwilt@cox.net](mailto:vanderwilt@cox.net)

**Judging...** Maxine Zinman, 2770 Kimble Rd., Berryville, VA 22611; 540-955-4555; [begonia@visuallink.com](mailto:begonia@visuallink.com)

**Members-at-Large...** Sandy Boyd, 5 Walnut Circle, Chico, CA 95973; 530-891-5760; [smacboyd@gmail.com](mailto:smacboyd@gmail.com)

**Membership...** Paul Rothstein, 2 Flock Lane, Bella Vista, AR 72714; 479-855-1665; [paroan2001@yahoo.com](mailto:paroan2001@yahoo.com)

**Nomenclature...** Dr. Kathleen Burt-Urley, 6150 36th Ter N, Saint Petersburg, FL 33710-1716; [kburtutl@uno.edu](mailto:kburtutl@uno.edu)

**Registrar of Hybrids...** Priscilla Purinton, 129 Queens River Drive, West Kingston, RI 02892; 401-782-8154 or 401-688-0678, [ppurinton@gmail.com](mailto:ppurinton@gmail.com).

**Parliamentarian...** Linda Lawson, 525 Terrace Place, Norman, OK 73069-5034; 405-364-2425

**Public Relations...** vacant

**Save Our Species Coordinator...** Johanna Zinn, 4407 Jensen Place, Fairfax, VA 22032, 703-323-7513, [jazinn@cox.net](mailto:jazinn@cox.net)

**Seed Fund...** Dean Turney, 467 Fulvia Street, Encinitas, CA 92024; [dean@deansmail.us](mailto:dean@deansmail.us)

**Slide Library...** Charles Jaros, 106 Pine Valley Ct. DeBary, FL 32713; 407-687-5621; [cjbegonia@yahoo.com](mailto:cjbegonia@yahoo.com)

**Unidentified Species (U Numbers)...** Co-Chairs: Charles Jaros, 106 Pine Valley Ct., DeBary, FL 32713 407-687-5621; [cjbegonia@yahoo.com](mailto:cjbegonia@yahoo.com)

Mary Bucholtz, 1560 Lancaster Terr., #1008, Jacksonville, FL 32204; 904-353-9111



