

THE

# BEGONIAN

September/October 2016



# 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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*Begonia lymansmithii*, grown and shown by Leora Fuentes at the recent SWR-Get-Together. This plant was the winner of the Rekha Morris Award for Best Species. Photo by Sally Savelle

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Begonia Therapy pg 165



B. 'Hallow's Eve' - or is it? pg 172



Begonia reginula pg 180



Begonias in Sydney pg 192

## Contents

- 164 2016 Holiday Greetings  
Reminder
- 164 President's Message
- 165 Begonia Therapy in  
the Phillipines
- 168 A Word With You: umbo
- 169 Begonia peltata, or is  
it kellermanii?
- 172 Hey, My Begonia 'Insert Name'  
Doesn't Look Like That!
- 179 Propagating Cane Begonias
- 180 Begonia reginula  
The Queen Begonia
- 184 Begonias of Colombia: Part 2
- 189 A Visit to Glasgow  
Botanic Gardens
- 190 Some New Australian Hybrids
- 192 Begonias in Sydney, Australia
- 194 In Memoriam: Lulu Leonard
- 194 In Memoriam: Peter Sharp
- 195 Alae or Arachnose?
- 196 ABS Bookstore

**Cover photo:** Unknown Begonia found growing in the Tower Hill (MA) Botanic garden greenhouses.  
Photo by Tony Pinto

**Back cover:** Maybe this is *Begonia fagopyroides* Kunth & Bouché, one of the Begonias of Colombia seen by Jacky Duruisseau and company.  
Page 184

## President's Message

As the summer winds down and the fall season begins, some of us naturally begin to slowdown our growing season tasks. But not so with our "begonia" business. For the moment we might need to fertilize less, or not worry about preparing a plant for an upcoming show, but there are still plenty of things for all of us to do.

We all know those special members who take an active role in the nuts and bolts of putting together upcoming activities and events that keep the wider membership interested and happy. Why do they work so hard year-in and year-out? The likely answer is a strong sense of responsibility. Many of us aren't necessarily blessed/cursed with the above virtue to such a degree, but most of us will likely benefit—directly and indirectly—from those that do. Either way, we all have some responsibilities to meet.

In just a few weeks semi-annual political elections will be held throughout the country, with the media experts reminding American citizens about the importance and responsibility in exercising the right to vote. We can't be forced to vote, but our Nation is stronger when we make the time to participate. Actions will always speak louder than words. Flag-waving, fireworks and opinions are not enough.

On a smaller scale, the same might be said about participation in our American Begonia Society (ABS). As members of the ABS, we all have the right to participate in the varied and often fascinating activities and events that take place throughout the year on the local and national level. A few members will naturally take a lead role, but if each of our members contribute more—perhaps plan a program, share an extra plant or two with their group, or encourage a friend or neighbor to partake in a monthly meeting—then our Society will continue to flourish, perhaps flourish more than ever. The more members that assume the responsibility to contribute, the stronger and more viable we'll be. Your ongoing support is encouraged and counted on.

Martin E. Delgado, President

## 2016 Holiday Greetings Reminder

There is still time to send in your 2016 Holiday Greetings donation, but the September 15th deadline is quickly approaching. Don't get left out! The money raised helps with the expense of printing *The Begonian* and in turn helps to keep the cost of dues down. Donation categories are: Bronze, \$1-\$50; Silver, \$51-100; Gold, \$101-\$150; and Platinum, \$151, plus. A page with a list of donors by category will appear in the November/December issue. The contributions, which are tax-deductible, should be made out to ABS Holiday Greetings. Please send to Frances Drescher, 11529 Riverchase Run, West Palm Beach, FL 33412. If you have any questions, or need to let Frances know that the "check is in the mail", you may contact her by email at [fkdrescher1@comcast.net](mailto:fkdrescher1@comcast.net). Thank you.

## Begonia Therapy in the Phillipines

Article and photos by Leonilyn P. Fernandez

Nurse II, Dept. of Education, Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City, Leyte, Phillipines

My fascination with begonias started around 1985, when I was in my elementary years. I was so amazed by the fact that this ornamental can be replanted using only their leaves. This fact was taught to us by our teacher in Horticulture, Mr. Dela Torre. But I never got to try planting one during those times. My godmother owned around five pots of Iron Cross begonias. I begged her to give me one or just a leaf for that matter, but to no avail. I guess she never trusted a very young girl to take care of her prized possession.

Fast forward to February 2014, now I am 42 years old and married with three wonderful children. I forgot about my interest with begonia over the years. We were so busy rebuilding (literally) our lives and our home after Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines on November 8, 2013. My mother-in-law was diagnosed with spindle cell carcinoma in December 2013 and succumbed to the disease on February 21, 2014. It was her five varieties of begonias that I took care of, which brought me back to my childhood fascination.

For more than two years now, my begonias have flourished from five varieties to a total of 38 now. I am so thankful for my collection because it became my therapy during our trying times after the disaster we experienced.

*"Go go go....Begonia lovers around the world!!!"*

More photos on next page...



An unnamed species in an interesting, recycled hanging container.





A few of the plants that are part of the author's "begonia therapy." Fig 1 is probably a *B. heracleifolia* hybrid. Figure 2 may be *B. U633*, a plant that was brought back to the U.S. by Mary Sizemore. The other two lovely begonias (Figs 3 and 4) are unnamed varieties.



This *B. 'Red Umbo'* was the 2015 SWR-Get-Together winner in Division E, Rhizomatous, exhibited by Charles Jaros. As the name implies, that red dot where the petiole connects to the leaf is the *umbo*. Photo by Tom Anderson

## A Word With You: *umbo*

By Claudia Goodridge, New Haven, CT

**U***umbo*, Linda Tamblyn suggested this one. She had seen it before, but found it recently in the Queensland Begonia Society Journal's discussion of *B. dregei*. I confess to not having seen it, so off to my resources. For a little amusement I asked my resident comedian what he thought. "Mumbo jumbo, gumbo all come to mind," was the answer.

The online Webster says it comes from Latin, and is akin to *L. umbilicus*, or navel. My hardcover Webster says it comes from *L. umbo*, a knob or boss.

Which brings us to boss, which I thought I knew, but Webster says is a stud or knob, the boss or protuberant part of a shield. Their first citation lists 9 different definitions to be exact, but all relate to protuberance. Cassell's also says it's "the boss in the centre of a shield." The boss I thought I knew is the second citation for boss in my Webster. It means "master."

Tebbutt and Thompson don't have *umbo* in their glossaries. So what is an *umbo* in begonias? Golding says it's "the place where the petiole is attached to the leaf blade." The Queensland article concurs. So the mumbo jumbo of Botanispeak brings us another vocabulary word, more easily remembered with the help of Mnemosyne.

## *Begonia peltata*, or is it *kellermanii*?

Article and photos by Randy Montes Kerr, West Hollywood, CA

**I** received my plant as *Begonia peltata*. And I love the nice bloom it's putting on as day length has increased. But, I think that species name needs verification, especially as I am setting seed for sharing.

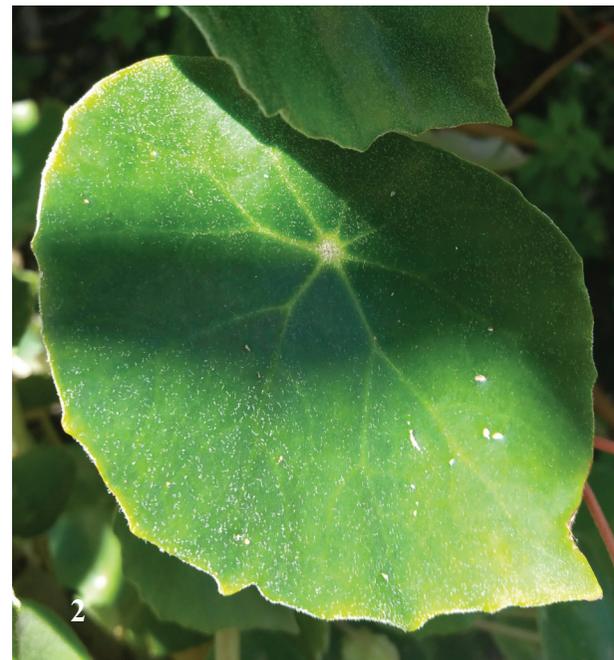
*B. peltata* and *B. kellermanii*, both section *Gireoudia*, have slightly furry, hirsute, leaves and a similar habit, the former of Mexican origin and the latter Central American. I find *peltata* very similar to *kellermanii*.

Fortunately, Mark Tebbitt's *Begonias* book, that invaluable resource, explains how to tell them apart. Tebbitt provide a road map, and by following its directions, I hope to end up at the correct species identification for my plant. This kind of road map is often called a species key. And here it is:

"Key to *Begonia kellermanii* and similar species

- 1a. Leaves non-peltate . . . . . 2
  - Leaves peltate . . . . . 3
- 2a. Hairs toward apex of stem silvery gray; outer pair of tepals hairless on their outer surfaces . . . . . *B. peltata* var. *auriformis*
- b. Hairs toward apex of stem orangey brown; outer pair of tepals hairy on their outer surfaces . . . . . *B. kuhlmannii*
- 3a. Leaves usually ovate; outer surfaces of tepals hairless . . . . . *B. kellermanii*
- b. Leaves blade usually circular-ovate; outer surfaces of tepals hairy. . . . . *B.*

Trust. But verify. (Fig 1).  
Connections matter, especially for petioles. (Fig 2).





No hairy backsides here! (Fig 3)

*peltata* var. *peltata*”

I need to begin (1a.) by checking to see if the leaves are peltate. When I see peltate, I immediately replace that word, in my mind, with shield. The *pelta* was a small shield in Roman times, and the arm holds a pelta/shield-like petiole that attaches to a peltate leaf, from the back of the shield, as opposed to at its edge. If one held a pelta by its edge, one would not last long in battle.

Inspecting a leaf: Peltate, petiole attaches from below. Not at the edge of the leaf (sometimes referred to as the leaf margin). So, following Tebbitt’s Species

Key, I move to part 3, skipping over part 2. With a Species Key, knowing what questions to skip is as important as getting the answers right.

3a. Leaves “usually” ovate (*kellermanii*) vs. 3b. “...usually circular-ovate” (*peltata*).

When I see ovate, I think ova or egg, which if placed upright, is wider at the base, and narrower above. Obovate is the opposite of ovate, having the narrow part at the base, growing wider toward to tip. But, that is not presently relevant.

Sadly, I fear that leaf shape is not going to allow me to apply a species name to my plant with certainty. In part, because the line between circular-ovate versus ovate can be a fine one. But more importantly, both these shapes are “usually” and therefore not always present.

So, following Tebbitt, 3a and 3b, above, I need to check out those tepals. For begonias, tepal refers to what, in another genus, might be referred to as flower petals and sepals. Let’s just say flowers. And let’s see if they have hairy backsides, like *peltata* (3a.), or are smooth, like *kellermanii* (3b.).

I don’t see any hairs on the back of the flowers.

And thus I arrive at the end of my quest: Tebbitt’s Species Key has provided a name for my plant. Now, I need to make a new label. I am growing *Begonia kellermanii*, it seems.

Mark Tebbitt’s Species Key was included with his gracious permission.



B. ‘Chameleon’s Way’ shown and grown by Don Miller. This plant was the winner of the Rhizomatous Division in the 2016 SWR Get-Together show. Photo by Sally Savelle [name per hybridizer’s spelling –Nomenclature Ed.]

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# Hey, My *Begonia* 'Insert Name' Doesn't Look Like That!

Article and photos by Brad Thompson, Vista, Ca

Remember fondly many heated debates with Ruth Pease over *Begonia* identification, classification, etc., but the best one was always over her hybrid *B.* 'Raindrops'. Every time she visited she swore that the plants I was growing couldn't possibly be her hybrid. The leaves were too long, the flowers too dark, the leaves not bronze enough, etc. Finally, she brought me cuttings off her original plant for me to grow. On a later visit, she was looking at one of my large *B.* 'Raindrops' and asked what it was. I told her and she insisted that it couldn't possibly be right, and for whichever or all of the reasons given from previous visits. I said "But Ruth, this plant is from the cuttings that you gave me and it even has your handwritten label in the pot". No amount of 'discussion' could ever convince her that it was *B.* 'Raindrops' or that it came from her cuttings. "The label must have gotten switched or something, she swore, because

See if you can identify the begonia in this picture by the picture alone (Fig 1). If you were able to, then you would be incorrect, since this is actually several similar plants grouped together that have no names. This is an example of how easy it is to misidentify begonias from pictures, and how many begonias can be confused for another.

This is *Begonia* 'Earthtones' (Fig 2) showing all the various color shades it can go through with changing light conditions.

*Begonia* 'Brad's Big Boy' in strong light (Fig 3). In this lighting it doesn't show the unusual two-toned flowers very well. *Begonia* 'Brad's Big Boy' (Fig 4) in medium light conditions. Grown in this lighting you can see a hint of the white edging to the flowers which is my favorite feature so consider this the optimum lighting for this variety.



that just can't be the right plant."

I related that story to illustrate how different begonias can look when grown under changes in light, temperature, humidity, or even any number of microclimate conditions. The first time I went to visit a commercial greenhouse where some of my hybrids were being grown, to help identify some begonias for them, I was stymied at first. One plant in particular looked so familiar but I just couldn't quite place it. It was a fairly tall cane with large dark bronze leaves and had large clusters of lovely orange flowers. It finally dawned on me that it looked like *B.* 'Madame Coulat', that had always remained a small leaved, compact cane with bronze leaves and red/orange flowers for me. Although I was fairly certain of what it was and they were certain it came from me, it was so remarkably different, that I couldn't be absolutely sure I was correct. I got one of these giant orange-flowered canes from them and took it home to my growing conditions so I could try to verify the name. After about a year in my conditions, it became a small leaved, compact cane, with bronze leaves and red/orange flowers and there was no doubt that it was *B.* 'Madame Coulat'. Just with the change in humidity of being in a greenhouse and heavier fertilizing had transformed her into a giant. I got plants of her several times, since a large orange-flowered cane was something I was trying to achieve but of course they always turned back into them-

Continued on next page

The three phases of *Begonia* 'Red Charm'. This is *Begonia* 'Red Charm' (Fig 5) when grown in lower light, it is nearly identical to regular *Begonia* 'Charm' in this lighting situation though a little more upright in habit. Would be very hard not to get them mixed up.

*Begonia* 'Red Charm' (Fig 6) grown in average light conditions. You can see the flowers and leaves are already darker than the example grown in lower light. *Begonia* 'Red Charm' (Fig 7) grown in strong light or with some sun, showing why it is named *Begonia* 'Red Charm'. It is in its full glory, red flowers with red markings on the leaves. This begonia is to illustrate the drastic change to flowers and leaves a begonia can go through with just changes in light intensity. The low light picture would be hard to not confuse with *Begonia* 'Charm' while the strong light picture there would be no doubt.





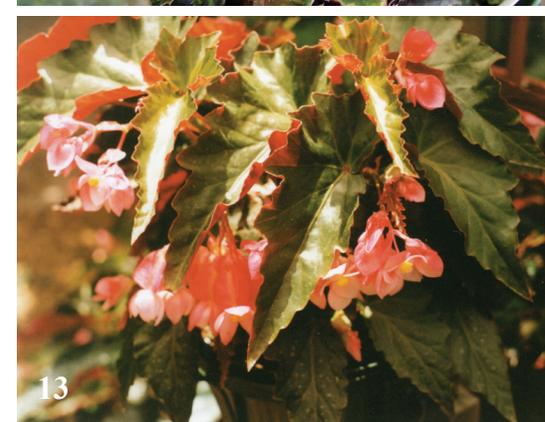
selves. I did enjoy the orange flowers while they lasted, even though I knew it was temporary.

Many growers have trouble grasping how much different most begonias can appear when grown under conditions unlike theirs. Even a simple trait like flower color can be extremely variable in differing light conditions. *B. albopicta* with its lovely white flowers will have light pink flowers if grown in strong enough light. I consider that more like sunburn, enough to put a blush on the flowers but just short of burning the leaves. I would still consider the plant to have white flowers and if yours has pink flowers, give a little more shade if you want it to be true to form. *B. 'Charm'* and *B. 'Red Charm'* are nearly identical when grown in lower lighting such as in a shaded greenhouse but put them where they get strong light and *B. 'Charm'* stays practically the same while *B. 'Red Charm'* transforms to have red flowers and even red in the leaves. One of my first cane hybrids *B. 'Don Weaver'*, I always described as having two-toned pink and white flowers. It was a shock the first time I grew it where it got some actual sun and the flowers were lovely dark orange.

A more dramatic change happens to many if not all rhizomatous begonias when grown in differences in light, even the length of day. The most dramatic are many of the 'black' leaved begonias, many of which turn to some shade of green during part of the year. Sometimes it is more light, sometimes less, depending on the variety grown which causes the change. I was growing a second plant of another grower's unnamed test plant as a backup. Theirs was growing in average greenhouse lighting conditions and mine was growing on a shelf under the edge of a bench outside in a shade house. When they saw my plant with its lovely dark black cleft leaves, they inquired what it was. I told them it was a start of one of their test plants. They decided that it

certainly needed a name. I told them that in any conditions other than under my bench, it was mostly green with dark markings, and that the black was probably just from being in the darker conditions. Even showing them the plant that it was a clone of didn't convince them they were the same plant so they gave it a 'dark' name to go with its black leaves. After it was named, of course, I propagated several dozen, and they were grown on in a greenhouse where they were mostly green with darker markings. I was never able to convince them they were cuttings from the black leaved begonia outside so I finally had to give up propagating it because the name didn't fit and its identity was always in question. It no longer grows under the bench and I've never seen it have totally black leaves again.

While *B. 'Stormy Night'* stays black even in winter, *B. 'Black Mamba'* nearly always changes to a dark green color during the winter. I have seen growing conditions or light conditions make changes in nearly every color on begonias; browns become blacks, browns become greens, greens become other shades of green, silvers can be more, less, or tinged pink or some other color, etc. Not only the coloring can change but the amount of a color and the markings themselves can change. Spotted begonias can range from almost no spots to so many spots they are nearly



*Begonia 'Bryan Jones'* (Fig 8) starting to get a pattern back in its coloring in spring or early summer. *B. 'Bryan Jones'* in summer or stronger light (Fig 9) showing its nicest color by season. The same plant starting to lose its markings (Fig 10) as it starts reverting back to winter colors towards the end of the year. A change in lighting conditions can have the same affect regardless of the seasons for any of the *B. 'Bryan Jones'* examples. *Begonia 'Bryan Jones'* showing most plain green leaves during winter light (Fig 11).

This example shows *Begonia 'Black Fancy'* (Fig 12) as it has gradually changed from winter colors of mostly green to leaves with more and more black.

*Begonia 'Black Gold'* (Fig 13) grown in medium light conditions which is the optimum lighting for this variety to get the best leaf and flower coloring. *Begonia 'Black Gold'* (Fig 14) grown in strong light or with some direct sunlight. Although still nice when grown in this lighting, you can see by comparison, how different the flower color becomes.



*Begonia* 'Little Miss Mary' grown in strong light (Fig 15) which brings out the best qualities of this variety, making the flowers a nice red with good coloring to the leaves.

*B.* 'Little Miss Mary' grown in medium lighting conditions (Fig 16). While still lovely, the leaves and flower color are less intense than the example grown in stronger light. You can see that in medium light it has pink flowers or washed out red, but in strong light bright red flowers. I consider the true or optimum color for this variety to be red.

Although not a perfectly shaped example of *Begonia* 'Thelma O'Reilly' (Fig 17), this particular plant shows all the seasons in one picture. The green leaves at the left are winter leaves also faded by age. At the top center you can see the first leaves that started to get coloring back. To the right is her nearly normal most of the year coloring, and new leaves in the center with the most intense markings. If you were only shown the left third of this picture you would probably not know what *Begonia* it is or misidentify it. Another example of why you can't usually identify from photos.

a solid color. In flowers, pinks become dark pink or red, or fade to white, whites can be pink and reds can be less red. This is true for all types of begonias.

The point of this article is that begonias change with their conditions and climate. Not understanding this, or why they change often leads to misidentification. These factors can make putting a name on a begonia that has lost its tag or that never had one a challenge under the best of conditions. People often post pictures for identification and are either given absolute names or multiple names. I rarely ever give a positive identification of a begonia picture unless there is no question such as *B. masoniana* which is always itself no matter where it's grown. There is no mistaking the black on green marked leaf. If they have a picture with an incorrect name, that I will correct if possible, even suggesting they put the name as unknown with an explanation or where it came from. As I've tried to illustrate by telling the stories, even in person it is often hard to know the correct name on plants you would normally know. With pictures, you have even less visual information to work with besides not actually being in the growing area where the plant is. I find fault with anyone proposing an ID from a picture when they can't possibly know for sure. You do not come across as knowledgeable or an expert if you are later proven wrong. I have discovered from experience that even when you do really know, you can still be wrong, especially with species. I can see a plant and say oh, that's *B. solananthera* only to find out that may have been what it was, but it is now *B. integerrima*. I have given up trying to keep track of name changes. Identification of begonias should never be offered casually for ego, or even the sincere desire to help, if that iden-



tification can't be positive. That is how many plants got mixed up in the first place.

I have seen so many plants labeled *B.* 'Metosa' and *B. scharffiana* that I have given up trying to figure them out if I have ever seen the actual one to begin with. Better to leave it labeled as unknown and where you got it, if you know, than to label it incorrectly and give it to others with that name. With all the begonias there are, it's better to concentrate on propagating the ones that are correctly labeled. I'm not afraid to dump even my own hybrid if I'm unsure of what it is, so it doesn't get mixed up with the ones I am sure of. Keep the unknowns if you like, but don't share them, and don't trust an identification you got by posting a picture. If you got more than one possible suggestion, then obviously it is going to be hard to ever find its true identity.

Someone recently posted a picture of one of my hybrids on Planet Begonia. While I did know for sure that it was probably my hybrid, I also knew for sure there was no way I could determine which one from a picture. I could tell them what it was not with some

certainty. There are so many cane hybrids, old and new, with spotted leaves almost none of them can or should be given ID's even if someone brings you the plant. They should never be identified by a photo even if it is one as distinctive as *B. maculata*. You can say it might be but that but would need to be seen in person by someone knowledgeable enough to know for sure. That list of people unfortunately is a short one in actuality but seems to be longer by how many add themselves to the list. No, I am not on that list. I know a lot of begonias, but only claim to know most of the ones I personally own, and for sure only know my own hybrids that have the correct label in them. Do I know most of my begonias by sight? Of course. Do I know yours? Absolutely not, nor do I pretend to know. In my opinion, anyone who is knowledgeable enough to know most begonias is also wise enough to know how easy it is to be wrong and so uses restraint in offering positive id's. Anyone who claims to be an expert in identification is usually already mistaken.



## Propagating Cane Begonias

By Patty Daniels, Winfield, KS; photos by John Daniels

I think that most begonia growers agree that pinching or cutting off the tops of a cane begonia will make it grow bushier and make it an overall more attractive plant. An added bonus to cutting the tops off your cane/angel wing begonia is you can start new plants from the cuttings.

I grow my cuttings in trays with capillary matting. I place one cutting in each 2 ½" pot, put them in a tray, cover the tray with a clear plastic dome and set them under fluorescent lights. Some begonia hybrids are more vigorous than others, some have bigger leaves and so on, so to prevent the larger-leaved or more vigorous growers from crowding or shading out the others I first trim the leaves. I also try not to crowd the cuttings too much so that each can get the light. It takes a few weeks for the plants to root, new leaves to grow and for the plant to be ready to sell or pot up into a larger pot.

You can also start begonia cuttings in water, of course, but I like this way because each pot has the name of the plant on it, and they are ready to go as soon as they are rooted and firm in their pot.



Fresh cuttings (Fig 1). I put them in plastic bags with the names as I cut them, just to be sure I have the right names with them. *B. maculata* var. *wightii* (Fig 2) showing how long the leaves are before trimming. *B. maculata* var. *wightii* showing how I trim the leaves (Fig 3). *B. maculata* var. *wightii* trimming complete (Fig 4). A tray filled with trimmed cuttings (Fig 5). I try to leave some room around them so they all get light. After just a few weeks the cuttings are rooted and new leaves have grown (Fig 6). A rooted cutting of *B.* 'Orange Rubra', 2 ½ inch pot (Fig 7)



## *Begonia reginula* The Queen Begonia

Article and photos by Joanne Tan Pei Chih, Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), 52109 Kepong, Selangor, Malaysia

**B***egonia rajah* has been admired in cultivation for over a century. However, first discovered in 1892 details of its original locality are minimal, just the name of the state, Terengganu, on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

In 1986, Dr. Ruth Kiew launched a search for *Begonia rajah*. From the herbarium in the Singapore Botanic Gardens, she gathered some relevant information from two unidentified herbarium specimens similar to the Rajah begonia that gave a more precise

locality: Mount Lawit, which is in Terengganu.

With the help of Mr Yong Ghong-Chong, who had been on the British Museum Expedition to Mount Lawit, Kiew searched shaded potential habitats, streams and water-

continued on pg 182

*Begonia reginula* individuals with more attractive reddish brown leaves (Figs 1&2) are in the minority in the Negeri Sembilan population.

Apparently a potential habitat (Fig 3) for the Queen Begonia, but none were found here.



4

falls, at the base of the mountain. She found wildings with very similar characters to *B. rajah* at a waterfall and thought it had been refound. But from further comparison of the wildings to herbarium specimens, a watercolour painting made from original *B. rajah*, and cultivated plants, it transpired that it was a distinct new, yet closely related species. The crucial character to distinguish the two is the number of tepals in male flowers. *Begonia rajah* flowers have four tepals, while the collected wildings had only two tepals. Kiew named the newly discovered begonia as ‘*reginula*’, which means little queen in Latin.

*Begonia reginula* is endemic in Peninsular Malaysia and is currently recorded in two states. Accompanied by Dr. Ruth Kiew, I visited the second population in Negeri Sembilan, a state on the west coast. Compared to the type population from Terengganu, individuals of the Queen Begonia in Negeri Sembilan are smaller in the size of male tepals and have paler bronzy-green leaves.

We found only two boulders in streams inhabited by the Queen Begonia where wildings cling only on the downstream side of vertical or slanting but not horizontal surfaces. The wildings are also limited to areas near to water flow and surfaces covered in a thin layer of



5

The Queen Begonia is very particular when it comes to where to anchor its roots even on the same boulder. It sticks strictly to vertical and slanting rock faces on the downstream side covered by moss (Fig 5).  
The largest *Begonia reginula* plant (Fig 4) we found during our visit in May 2016. The biggest leaf is 6 cm long.

moss or in cracks receiving constant spray from waterfalls.

I noticed only one *B. reginula* growing on a pile of wet sediment. Out of curiosity I tried to dig the plant up and realised it was growing on a small piece of fallen rock, so it was not in fact rooted in sediment. This indicates the species is very selective for its rooting surface. In the locality where the Queen Begonia was first discovered, wildings were growing beside a waterfall, but since then the waterfall and entire stream system has been bulldozed out of existence.

We are not very optimistic that the only remaining population in Negeri Sembilan will survive.

About a month before our visit, Malaysia experienced a severe drought period for more than a month caused by the *El Nino* phenomenon for more than a month. The weather was scorchingly dry and hardly rained, which is very unusual for our equatorial climate. Water levels in rivers and streams were low or dried up. In addition, upstream disturbance has caused the stream to become grossly silted reducing the habitat of this begonia.

This combination of human disturbance and extreme weather has pushed the Queen Begonia to critical level, where its population is getting smaller. One hopeful sign was the population we visited appeared to be regenerating after the long drought as seen by most plants being small and immature. Local experts warn that Malaysia can expect more severe of *El Nino* events and drought periods, due to worsening global warming.

# Begonias of Colombia: Part 2

January 25th - February 17th

By Jacky Duruisseau

Photos by Colette Bridon, Chantal and Jean-Louis Béreau and Jacky Duruisseau

We arrive on the evening of February 2nd at the Rio Blanco Reserve where we'll stay two days.

## The Rio Blanco Reserve in the Cordillera Central:

This is an ornithological reserve visited by many bird lovers and scientists. We can especially observe several members of Jicotoco family, genus *Grellaria*, and also those we had seen at Tapichalaca in Ecuador: Crested Quetzal (*Pharomachrus antisianus*), Crimson-mantled Woodpecker (*Colaptes rivolii*) and Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*). The reserve is totally forested and we hope we'll find many begonias. We are in a mountainous area at an altitude of about 8,000 feet.

We start looking first thing in the morning

and it is not long coming. We find *Begonia maurandiae* (Figs 1–3). This one is a creeper and it is everywhere! Slopes and rocks are covered with it, and on trees where it where it climbs up 10 feet in many places. This plant is very luxuriant. The leaves are almost symmetrical, often cordate, and rarely peltate, with a more or less dentate ciliate margin. Unfortunately, it is too early in the season for observing flowers. We see only one inflorescence on a branch 10 feet up from the ground; and, of course, no fruit or seeds.

Throughout the reserve, this begonia grows along with red flowered *Begonia urticae* and some *Begonia magdalenae*.

## Ucumari Park:

After two days at Rio Blanco, we drive

westward and then northward via the cities Manizales and Pereira. We take a track that must lead us to Otún Quimbaya. We have gone down and it is warmer.

The track snakes along a river bordered by a damp and high slope, with rocks and vegetation where we find *Begonia holtonis* (Figs 4–5). I grew this one for a long time and to see it in its natural environment is amazing! It holds the slope and bushes and can be 15 or 20 feet high! Very different than growing it in a pot. Moreover, it is in blossom and the fruits of the last season are still present, with seeds! Very nice place! We'll see it many times in this area. We encounter *Begonia magdalenae* again, but less frequently.

We arrive in the evening at the Otún Quimbaya lodge; a very nice one and we start to do reconnaissance on the track in the well-preserved forest. But a big storm forces us to return to the lodge without new discoveries.

We start early in morning on the track

towards Ucumari Park. We leave the 4x4 and continue on a path. At the forest edge we can see *Begonia magdalenae*, *Begonia urticae* with white flowers, and in many places with *Begonia holtonis* - always exuberant. It really seems we are at the ends of the earth when we meet a rider who is going into the town to sell cheeses (Fig 6). We had planned to reach a GPS waypoint (WP) for *Begonia maurandiae*, but when we must return, the GPS shows we are at 1,500 mile as the crow flies! It is too late to continue, especially since it is raining.

Back at the lodge in the evening, we have a Golden-plumed parakeet (*Leptosittaca branickii*) concert and the next morning a Venezuelan Red Howler (*Alouatta seniculus*) awakens us...

continued on next page

*Begonia maurandiae* A. de Candolle (Figs 1–3); *Begonia holtonis* A. de Candolle (Figs 4–5); Coming back in old times... (Fig 6)



**Towards Antioquia Province:**

We go back northwards to Antioquia Province and stop at Salento, a very touristy town. What a change of scene! The town is so busy, especially around the Plaza: many noisy restaurants, old Willys jeeps (Fig 7) carrying tourists, many, many pedestrians in the streets, and musicians, singers, and strollers. Tourists go (in those Jeeps) to the Cocora Valley. That area was deforested a long time ago, but they kept the Quindio Wax Palm (*Ceroxylon quindiuense*) (Fig 8) and the place now has an artificial but amazing air. In the remnant forest along the river, no begonias, but a *Fuchsia* (Fig 9) with flowers of extraordinary colors. It proves to be a very rare species!

We continue to go down and reach a very dry and warm area. On the track towards Jardin, our next stop, we see again *Begonia holtonis* and *Begonia urticae*. We meet the

Andean Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*), an amazing black and red bird: the males indulge in a strange concert of cries for attracting females.

The next exploration leads us to an interesting place: the Hacienda Agualinda, where we meet a kind man who lends us one of his workers for visiting a little-known forested area. We cross the river on a very impressive and very wobbly suspension bridge (Fig 10). When we reach the forest we find a begonia (Fig 11), but don't know it. Mark Tebbitt thinks it could be a form of *Begonia foliosa*: it is 50cm high (~20"), with large leaves, and grows on a shady slope; flowers are white and, actually, recall those of *Begonia foliosa*. We will find it only in this place.

**Around Urrao:**

We head for the more northern area of our

Colombia trip. On a slope on edge of the road is a begonia! It is *Begonia sericoneura* (Fig 12) just coming out of dormancy. No flowers, but many fruits and seeds. This species is more from Central America and here we are at the southern limit of its distribution area.

We arrive in Urrao, at the Los Araucarias lodge. We start immediately eastwards: I have a GPS point for *Begonia maurandiae*. After crossing the torrent with difficulty, we have access to the edge of the forest atop of a small mountain: the WP is at only 900 feet. But without a machete, it is impossible to get to this place: the forest is too thick and too steep! We abandon this attempt, but find *Begonia foliosa* a little farther along.

We try another place on the next day and we find an unknown begonia. About ten plants in a similar biotope to the yesterdays – a forest at the top of a mountain. This begonia, as with

*Begonia sericoneura*, is just starting to grow again: erect stems grow from woody, old ones with some young inflorescences [Figs 13 (see back cover)–14]. According to Mark Tebbitt, it could be *Begonia fagopyroides*, but without flowers, it is difficult to be sure.

From Urrao we have planned to go to Las Orquideas Reserve...but only after 5 hours by mule and 7 walking hours...

We leave this area by a track towards Medellin and we discover a very nice place with *Begonia sodiroi*. Near a waterfall there are many growing with wonderful inflorescences

continued on next page

The Willys to Salento (Fig 7); The Cocora valley near Salento (Fig 8); Raspberry and pistachio... (Fig 9); An impressive bridge! (Fig 10); A new species...for us... (Fig 11); *Begonia sericoneura* Liebmann (Fig 12); Maybe *Begonia fagopyroides* Kunth & Bouché (Fig 14)



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- completely unusual ones - that grow on a bridge parapet (Figs 15–16). But it is too early for fruits. We are at an altitude of 8,000 feet where all the species of the *Gobenia* section grow. Very nice species!

When we leave, we are lucky enough to visit an artisanal brown sugar factory. People welcome us very kindly and we can see the method for extracting the cane sugar juice and making molasses. We leave with two brown sugar bears!

**Last discoveries in the Medellin area:**

We arrive at our last lodge north of Medellin, in the Chesnut Reserve. Like the Rio Blanco one, it is an ornithological reserve. The track is very dusty and all the plants at the edges are ... white! Today we find only one species in this reserve, which is in the “Cloud Forest”, at an altitude of 8,000 feet: *Begonia buddleiifolia* near a stream. But after the rain in the night, the vegetation is clean now and we can see the plants better! So we find an interesting species that went unnoticed yesterday. Another begonia with leaves like those of *Begonia consobrina*. The thing that is different are the flowers, especially the male ones, with very strange and long stamens (Figs 17–18), hence its name *Begonia extensa*, identified by Mark Tebbitt.

It will be our last begonia. Twenty species and the seeds of about ten of them. We must come back here!

**Acknowledgements:**

Many, many thanks to the American Begonia Society for your financial grants to me for each of my begonia trips. Thank you to individual ABS members for their generous contributions: Carol Notaras, Eric Hirsch, Bob Hamm, Johanna Zinn, Joan Campbell, Norman Dufresne and the Buxton Branch. Thank you, too, to Antoon Hoffnagels from Netherland. How could I do this trip without you? The harvested seeds are now shared and I hope you'll have success sowing them so that you too can discover these very nice species I found on this first trip to Colombia. Lastly, thanks so much to Mark Tebbitt for his help in identifying the species from the pictures I sent to him.

*Begonia sodiroi* C. de Candolle (Figs 15–16);  
*Begonia extensa* L.B. Smith & B.G. Schubert  
(Figs 17–18)

## A Visit to Glasgow Botanic Gardens

Article and photos by Priscilla Purinton,  
West Kingston, RI

When I mentioned to Dr. Mark Tebbitt, famed author and explorer, that my husband and I were planning a trip to Scotland, his face lit up. “You must visit the Glasgow Botanic Gardens,” he insisted. “They have a wonderful begonia collection!” That was how we found ourselves at a bed and breakfast that overlooked the beautiful Kibble Palace, the iconic symbol of the gardens. We walked immediately to the main gate -no admission charge- and thought we had arrived just in time for an event as the park was full of people of all ages. Rows of benches lined the walkways to offer a place to chat or relax. The sound of bagpipes drew us deeper into the gardens...was it a musical event that had drawn such a crowd? We finally realized that the bagpiper was simply someone practicing in their home on a nearby street and that the residents of Glasgow flock to the Botanic Gardens to enjoy this green oasis in the bustling West End of the city.

Stevie Jackucz, a 22 year veteran of the garden, was to be our guide that morning. The morning stretched into the late afternoon as he showed us not only the public areas but also the greenhouses where he grew all sorts of odd and rare plants. One palm we saw had been only recently discovered in Madagascar. Growing to 60 feet, the massive *Tahina spectabilis* produces an enormous inflorescence when it is about 50 years old and then the entire plant collapses and dies. There are less than 100 of these palms left on Madagascar and with such infrequent flowering the future of this remarkable palm is not assured in the wild.

Of course, we were eager to see the NCCPG begonia collection with over 1200 plants. Soon my head was spinning with names of species I'd never seen before as well as old friends, exquisitely

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A few views of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens - with an emphasis on the Begonia collection.



## *Some New Australian Hybrids*

*Article and photos by Bernard Yorke, Brisbane Australia*

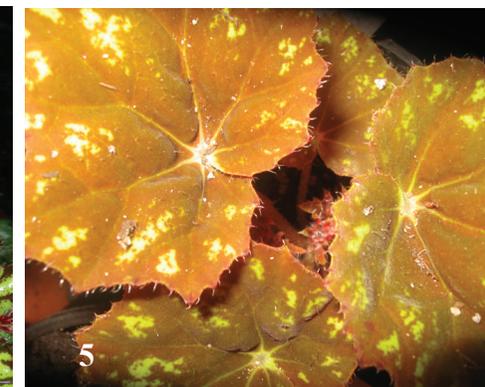
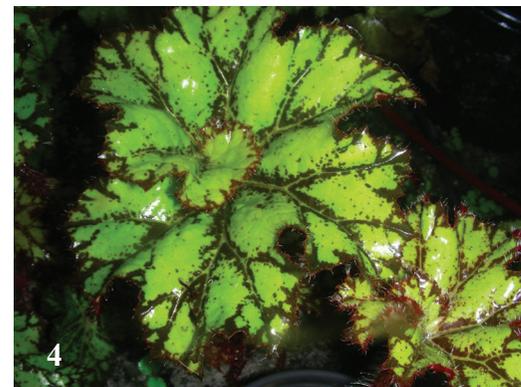
I thought I would submit a few photos of some of my latest hybrids. A hybridizer in Australia did a lot of hybridizing with *B. 'Cowardly Lion'* and that generated quite a few of the burnt brick and tan coloring. I have used these and gone on from there.

To achieve the effect seen in *B. 'National Velvet'* (Fig 1), I hybridized *B. 'Adobe'* (Fig 2) with a green spiral. A descendant of *B. 'Cowardly Lion'*, *B. 'Sunset Surprise'* (Fig 3) is extremely vibrant in its coloring. *B. 'A Touch of Class'* (Fig 4), a relatively recent Australian hybrid. A hybrid of *B. 'Cowardly Lion'* and a *B. bowerae nigramarga* hybrid, *B. 'Logan'* (Fig 5) is not a large grower, but has lots of foliage. This one (Fig 6) is a hybrid of *B. 'Cowardly Lion'* and appears to be sturdier. This plant, aptly named *B. 'Handsome Devil'* (Fig 7), sports lovely round-shaped leaves with each culminating in a beautiful spiral. The leaves are finely edged in black. *B. 'Jedfire'* (Fig 8) is one of my recent hybrids with a touch of green. This *B. 'Polanais'* (Fig 9) is a recent hybrid of mine. It's a hybrid of a *B. sizemoreae* hybrid and an unidentified Chinese species. At the moment it appears to be quite a vigorous grower.

### *Glasgow Botanic Gardens continued*

grown. Stevie was so generous with his time and his knowledge that of course I had to present him with an ABS logo shirt! Other days we explored the arboretum and the display gardens.

Interestingly, one challenge the GBG faces is that the amount of peat they are allowed to use is restricted, so they are switching to 'greener' substitutes such as coir. Plant material is exchanged among botanic gardens in the UK and abroad; it was inspirational to see the evidence of plant lovers from around the world united in a common goal of protecting, growing and displaying plants. For anyone who is contemplating a trip to Scotland, let me echo Dr. Tebbitt. You must visit the Glasgow Botanic Gardens!





## *Begonias in Sydney, Australia*

*Article and photos by  
Mary Ann Leer, Santa Cruz, CA*

The Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney Australia is celebrating its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. It is right in the middle of the city next to the Sydney Opera House and has great views of Sydney harbor. The garden covers many acres with large lawns, huge trees and many different themed gardens like the one for begonias.

The begonia garden is all outside under huge old trees that provide plenty of shade and protection from the hot Australian sun. Surprisingly the climate is quite humid in summer. Conditions that the begonias seem to really like. Almost all of the plants in these photos are begonias. The garden provides a wonderful show of begonias and how large they can grow. It reminded me of gardens in Florida. Don't miss this garden if you are in Sydney!!



The Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney, est. 1816, is the oldest botanic garden and scientific institution in Australia. It is home to an outstanding collection of plants from around the world with a focus on Australia and the South Pacific. The photos on these two pages focus especially on the many begonias growing in the gardens.

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Peter Sharp holding his Eva Kenworthy Gray Award

## In Memoriam: Peter Sharp

June 18, 1926–July 14, 2016

Peter Sharp's service to his country as a full-time army officer included a tour of duty in the Vietnam War. He retired at the age of 56 with the rank of Major and embarked on the life of a gardener.

Peter and his late wife, Shirley, became enamored with begonias when, at her insistence, they bought a packet of seed labeled *Begonia Tuberhybrida*. 'What are *Begonia Tuberhybrida*?' Peter asked Shirley, and

she replied: 'Just the most beautiful flowers in all the world'. Those seeds grew and prospered and were the start of a love affair that became stronger as the years progressed and they discovered the incredible variety in this plant family.

Peter spent 22 years as a volunteer with The Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney. During that time he and Shirley developed and enlarged the begonia collection and took responsibility for the planning and production of two large gardens featuring begonias as ideal landscape plants.

After moving to Hobart, Tasmania, in 2013, to live with his youngest daughter and her husband, Peter continued his involvement with begonias at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

In Peter's words: "Why is it that so many members of the armed services opt for life as farmers or gardeners when they retire? The answer in my case is that I much prefer to create life rather than take it - to sow those tiny seeds and nurture the growing plants is to me one of the greatest pleasures of life."

## In Memoriam: Lulu Leonard

The American Begonia Society has lost a dear friend.

Lulu was an active and very generous member of the ABS and Southwest Region. She was a member of Houston Astros, San Jacinto and Satellite Branches. She was also a member of the Gulf Coast Fern Society. Lulu never met an interesting plant that she didn't want to own, but her first love was always begonias. She was a fabulous grower and a friend to all.

She will be missed!



## Alae or Arachnose?



Categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened species list, *B. heterochroma*, has been found in Gabon and Cameroon in East Africa. Lowland forests being cleared for farming, tourism, mining and timber are taking a toll on this beautiful plant. The plant can be found with white or yellow flowers.

**Does the arrow point to alae or arachnose?**

Photo by Jacky Duruisseau

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

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

July/August 2016 issue, page 155

**Corm v. Tuber?**

**ANSWER:** - *tuber*, fleshy, rounded part of a subterranean stem. Begonias don't have corms! File dated 9/26/13 so it must have been for the Nov. Dec. 2013 issue

See *The Begonian*, Vol. 80, November/December 2013, p. 224.

## ABS Bookstore

### NEW: *Begonias Of The Month*

Written by ABS members. Compiled by Wendy Corby, 2015, 116 color pages sponsored by the Sacramento Branch and published through the ABS's Thelma O'Reilly Reprint Fund.

This booklet is a compilation of monthly write-ups by ABS members from 2000 through 2010. *Begonias Of The Month* includes a variety of begonias with information on the plant's origin and growing tips from that grower's experiences and locale.

**Domestic: \$20.00 International: \$30.00**

### The first new ABS pin in many years

is now available just in time for your holiday giving. It was designed and produced by Cheryl Lenert. Surprise and delight begonia lovers on your list with this beautiful pin .

**\$10.00**

### NEW: *Brad's Begonia World*

by Brad Thompson. Edited & Compiled by Wendy Corby, 2015.

A compendium of Brad Thompson's web page with 189 color pages of photographs, published through the ABS's Thelma O'Reilly Reprint Fund. The first section is on the different types of begonias. The second section is on the growing and care of begonias. The book is a wonderful set of articles to provide begonia enthusiasts with information and delight them with incredible full color photographs of your favorite begonias.

**Domestic: \$35; International: \$45**

### NEW: *Understanding Begonia*

by Samuel Kennedy, Photographs & Art Work by Elizabeth Kennedy

Published in the United Kingdom, 2015, ISBN #978-0-9932897, 95 pages, full color photographs. First half of the book covers begonia history, types, sections, growing, fertilizing. Second half is devoted to growing tuberous begonias. A glorious book containing valuable information from the Jack Golding archives.

**Domestic: \$20.00; International: \$30.00**

### NEW: *Begonia Note Cards*

featuring Begonias of Borneo found in the new Ruth Kiew book. **\$15.00**

### *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. The pictures are many and stunning.

**Domestic: \$21.00;**

**International \$26.00 (Includes postage)**

### *Tuberous Begonias and How to Grow Them*

by the late Howard Siebold, 1998, published with the support of the ABS Millie Thompson Publication Fund. Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 98-74824 ISBN: 0-9628251-2-3  
**\$15.00**

### *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; International: \$42.00**

### **B. U604-621 to add to the August, 2010 Unidentified Species Listing**

**\$7.00**

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

by Freda M. Holley

A wonderful work on the cane species with color photographs.

**\$15.00**

continued next page

### *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**

### *Seeing Begonia*

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

**\$15.00**

### *Begonia Hybridizing: A Primer*

by Freda M. Holley, 2007

An invaluable source book for the beginning or advanced begonia hybridizer.

**\$15.00**

### *Begonia Notes*

by 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*

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.

**\$18.00**

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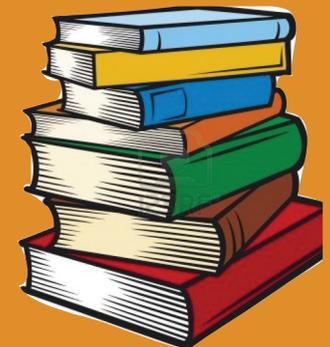
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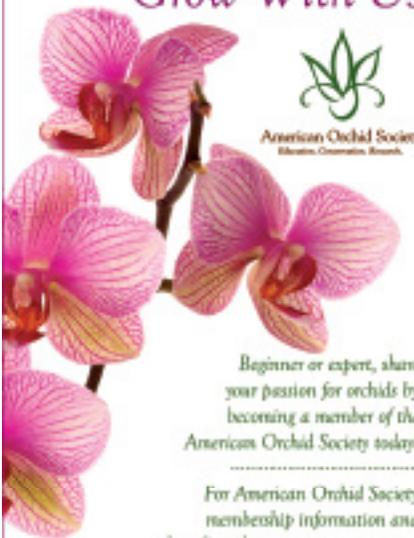
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