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The BEGONIAN



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The Board of Directors will meet at South Gate Auditorium, November 22nd at 7:30 p.m.

Deadline for the January issue is November 29.

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editors, the Society or its officers.

AIMS AND PURPOSES OF THE AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY

The purpose of this Society shall be:

- TO stimulate and promote interest in *Begonia* and other shade-loving plants;
- TO encourage the introduction and development of new types of these plants;
- TO standardize the nomenclature of *Begonia*;

- TO gather and publish information in regard to kinds, propagation and culture of *Begonia* and companion plants;
- TO issue a bulletin which will be mailed to all members of the Society; and
- TO bring into friendly contact all who love and grow *Begonia*.

THE BEGONIAN	
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BEGONIA 'MEDORA'

Cover photo taken at the Begonia Heritage Show by Ed Bates

The Best in Show trophy was awarded to *Begonia* 'Medora' grown by A. N. Harrison. I stood around the trophy table and eavesdropped. I heard a number of visitors say, "How did *Begonia* 'Medora' get Best in Show? This is a great plant, but 'Medora' is as common as salt."

It is true . . . a trip through the local nurseries will reveal that 'Medora' is available more readily than many. A look around the gardens will reveal that 'Medora' is included in the collection of many growers. There is even a 'Medora' growing in a planter box in front of the local Chinese restaurant.

There is plenty of reason for its popularity. It is not really very difficult to grow; it is rather tolerant of a range of weather conditions; it propagates without much difficulty; and it certainly is attractive. Almost everyone is pleased by its rosy pink blossoms, the graceful pendant branches, the multitude of lance-shaped, deeply toothed leaves, deep green with silver spots, and the bright pink stipules that add a touch of color even when there is no bloom.

I began to work my way through old copies of the *Begonian*. I couldn't find *B.* 'Medora' listed as a Best in Show winner before, though it had been awarded division trophies a number of times — once in the Novice Division, too. Joe Ogden had won a trophy for best fibrous begonia in 1955 with 'Medora' and almost got Best in Show, according to reports.

What is there to say about the background of 'Medora'? It was in-

troduced in 1926 to the begonia world by Eva Kenworthy Gray and was a seedling she had obtained in Medora, Illinois. Members of the Philobegonia Branch traced its ancestry to *albo-picta* and possibly *B.* 'Guinea Wing' to the *B. coccinea* or angel wing types, though there was no direct evidence. Various growers over the years have said they had the plant in a sunny kitchen window, or on a protected patio, or an unheated enclosed porch. The common thread seems to be that it requires good drainage and a lot of water, especially at high temperatures. Several hobbyists reported difficulties with dry winds.

I remembered in Placentia how I had lost my first small *B.* 'Medora' to the dry winds of a winter Santa Ana condition when the leaves fell and cracked. I had chalked that up to a beginner's lack of experience and understanding. A second one defoliated also but because of overwatering in an attempt to prevent the very condition that had done in the first. And I knew that the Harrisons lived in an area that could be every bit as severe to begonias as Placentia was to mine.

What had Pinky Harrison done that made this "common" begonia win the Best in Show? He entered *B.* 'Medora' in the class for hybrids that have been in cultivation for 25 years or longer and hoped for a division trophy. He was mindful of the fact that a begonia does not have to be exotic or rare to win and he grew an exceptionally fine specimen. He

(Continued on page 311)

GORDON LEPISTO Herbert P. Dyckman Honoree



Gordon Lepisto was recognized at the Convention with the Herbert P. Dyckman Award for service to the association. His efforts were cut short by his untimely death, but he left a series of accomplishments that were noteworthy.

He was among the founders of the Twin Cities Branch, now named for him. He was a staunch supporter of the branch and a source of ideas for their activities.

He developed a system of controlling the plant environment to maintain begonias which would have been impossible to grow in his climate. Rex begonias were a special group to which he devoted his atten-

tion. He produced 39 named hybrids and registered several of them.

The Begonian and other magazines carried articles of his about begonias and photography of plants. His branch newsletter always contained something he wanted to share with branch members. Round Robin members enjoyed his personal contact with them. As slide librarian he had begun to develop new programs and to work on the existing sets of slides.

Above all, his friends have written of his sincere warm feelings towards them. The ABS award committee's choice was a popular one because Gordon was much in tune with the ABS purpose to stimulate growth and promote interest in begonias.

ALVA GRAHAM

Eva Kenworthy Gray Honoree



What I did NOT say when it was announced that I had won the Eva Kenworthy Gray award:

Why me?

Was it my length of service? It has been a long time, since I started by driving our Charlotte Hoak to her meetings. I became more involved, president of a branch, three years as vice-president of the national ABS Board and then I followed Dr. Butterfield as Nomenclature Director.

About this time our famous Bessie Raymond Buxton finished the index of begonias she had been working on with the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for ten years. It was in longhand and we couldn't afford to publish it so I typed the whole thing with my two fingers so it could be

printed off-set much cheaper. And it happened that the man in charge at a big Los Angeles publisher was a member of ABS.

The International Horticulture Society then made the ABS the international authority on the nomenclature of begonias—which Germany had been trying to become. Dr. Lawrence said that publishing our check list was the most important thing we had done, or could do.

After our Rudy took over the nomenclature post I have done very little—just borrowed Alice Clark's *Les Begonias* by Charles Chevalier
(Continued on page 292)

CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

(Editor's Note: Karen Bartholomew reflects on the ABS 1976 convention by writing a letter to those who were unable to attend.)

Dear Friends,

How I wish you had been at the convention! The theme was "Begonia Heritage" — a heritage based on individuals who love *Begonia* and enjoy sharing their talents.

Many of the important contributors to the begonia legacy were there.

The vivacious Elda Haring was accompanied by photographer-husband, Walter. People loved meeting the diminutive woman who has contributed so much to the literature on begonias. It's obvious people appreciate the encouragement and just plain good information she provided them when they were first learning about begonias. Everyone was disappointed that her new book, *Begonias for Beginners*, was not printed in time for distribution at the convention.

The lovely, energetic, 85-year-old Alice Clark was there with a proof copy of her soon-to-be published *Begonia Portraits*. How honored I felt to meet her! Her contribution to the begonia world combines writing and painting. I'm sure you've seen some of her paintings, which I think are spectacular. Some of the originals were hanging above the trophy winners' table at the show. Her book will contain 40 color plates of her paintings and only a thousand copies will be printed. Can you imagine what a classic work that will be. Alice seemed always to be surrounded by people ordering her book (of course I ordered it too). The audience showed its love for her by giving her

a standing ovation when she was introduced at the banquet.

Alva Graham was there too and received the Eva Kenworthy Gray award for her past writings. She worked on the Buxton Check List and translated the 1938 French classic, *Les Begonia*, by Charles Chevalier.

Another author and researcher ended up as a speaker at the last minute. A close friend of the scheduled speaker had died the previous day and Seminar Coordinator Thelma O'Reilly called on her friend, Jack Golding, to help out. I got a kick out of Thelma's introduction of Jack — she said they were good friends because they were both "volatile." Jack is an intense and gregarious man — he loves begonias and loves to share his interest and knowledge with other people. With approximately two hours' notice, he put together a slide show, only to have the bulb in the projector burn out one second after he put on the first slide. He's quite a pro — he continued without benefit of slides and still held everyone's interest. Luckily for us, he gave a rerun of his lecture with the slide projector working after lunch. His lecture was very well received. You would have loved talking to him, considering your common interests in begonias, photography and growing under lights.

Evelyn Cronin, in her talk, "Eastern Heritage," pointed out the many contributions to begonia heritage

from the Eastern part of the U.S., beginning with Bessie Buxton and continuing to the present work of Ed and Millie Thompson and Carrie Karegeannes. She rattled off so many names of important begonia people and their contributions, my head was spinning. Frankly, I wasn't sure I wanted to attend her talk, but I really enjoyed it and I think she gave the Westerners a lot to think about. ABS may be headquartered in California, but a major portion of the contributions to begonia heritage come from the rest of the country. An awful lot of the research, writing, and hybridizing is being done in the East, Midwest, and South.

However, I reminded myself that a major fund-raising project was being done by Gene Daniels and his corps of busy workers at the show's plant sale. That crazy Gene Daniels, tireless organizer, was wearing a hat that said, "Ask Me — I Know Everything." Believe me, he was thriving on the chaos, putting out plants on the sale table and giving mini-lectures on the care of begonias. As he set out a plant, in his booming voice he announced, "'Mrs. Fred Scripps' — a good beginner's plant." It was snatched up by an eager novice as Gene continued, "'Los Angeles' — a ball-like rhizomatous." It stayed on the table about half a second.

Back at another seminar, the West Coast's major contributor to our legacy, Mr. Begonia (also sometimes fondly referred to as Rudy Z.), showed some new introductions and then talked on one of his favorite subjects: registration of begonias. One very interesting tidbit I learned:

young plants that are growing fast often have air spaces in the leaves that appear to be silver spots. As the plants get older and grow more slowly, the "spots" disappear because the air spaces don't occur when growth is slow. Crazy!

Speaking of Rudy reminds me of his wife, Margaret, who is the grandmotherly type. I admire her poise when she speaks and, you know, I think she gave public recognition to just anybody who did anything for the ABS during her term as president.

The banquet Saturday night was fun (well, I was at a table full of nutty people). Everyone was so dressed up — do these people ever really put on their grubby clothes and work in the garden? And our master of ceremonies, the comical Tim O'Reilly, was even wearing a tuxedo! Come to think of it, he did have quite a lot to say about the fact that he doesn't work in the garden. My husband said if someone were making a movie of Tim O'Reilly's life, Jack Nicholson would play the lead. They are lookalikes. Poor Tim — to the audience he was Mr. Thelma O'Reilly, but really, you could tell he is terribly proud of his beautiful, spunky wife.

Alva Graham was astonished and speechless when her name was called to receive the Eva Kenworthy Gray Award. I was so pleased when Walter Pease announced Gordon Lepisto had won the Herbert P. Dyckman award for outstanding service to ABS. There was a sudden moment of stillness, then applause, as many people brushed away tears.

You would have enjoyed the show. It was such a treat to see so many of

Belva Kusler's hybrids win ribbons. Her begonias are so appreciated — her contribution to our begonia heritage certainly has been tremendous. Irony of ironies, Mable Corwin's *B. 'Mabel Corwin'* won a blue ribbon and trophy! I wish Belva had been there to see it and all her other beautiful "children."

Imagine my surprise and pleasure when I came across a new trophy — honoring Gordon and given to the best photographic entry. Knowing of his close friendship with the Thompsons, I especially was moved when I saw that one of Ed and Millie's entries won the memorial trophy. It was a spectacular black-and-white photograph of one of my favorite begonias, *B. masoniana*.

I am truly sorry you were not at the convention to share in our begonia heritage.

Fondly,
Karen

Donors of merchandise and prizes to Begonia Heritage

In addition to those named last month, the following companies enhanced the Show proceedings with their generous gifts:

- Consan Pacific, Inc.
- Paramount Perlite Co.
- Stewart Orchids
- Heubler Orchids
- Farrand Enterprises
- Cook Laboratory Products, Inc.
- Brown Plants, Inc.
- Weidner Nurseries

The show committee wishes to thank all donors for their contributions.

What I Did NOT Say . . .

(Continued from page 289) and translated it from French so more of us can read it. You have seen it on our Librarian's table. It shows up with the bright picture taken by Jack Golding of *B. 'Alva Graham'*, which Belva Kusler named for me. Are you giving yourself one for Christmas?

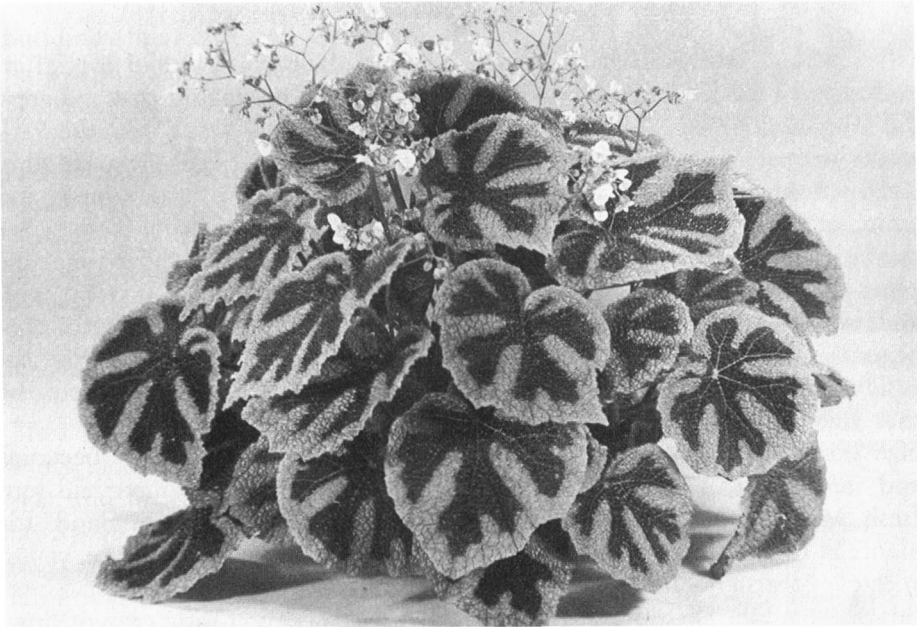
You all look so young and happy and I wish you all have the joy of winning the Eva Kenworthy Gray Award for your unselfish service to begonias.

I just waved my hand to the polite applause and gave Walter Pease a kiss!

Ed note: Alva was a former editor of the *Begonian* and still submits articles and ideas occasionally. Congratulations!



"These people don't know what they're doing — that's a marijuana plant!"



BEGONIA MASONIANA

Winner of the Gordon Lepisto Trophy for best photographic entry. Black and white print by Ed and Millie Thompson. Appears in *The Thompson Begonia Guide*, Volume III.

Begonia masoniana was brought to England from Singapore in 1952, though its country of origin may be either China or India. L. Maurice Mason, who imported it, called it "Iron Cross" because of the distinctive shape of the markings on the apple green leaves. He was not certain if it were species or hybrid at the time. That determination was left to Edgar Irmscher who published the official description in 1959 and named the species for Mason.

The surface texture of the leaves is puckered and coarse. It is made up of pustules with a red hair growing from the tip of each minute pimple. The leaf margins are serrated and hairy. The chocolate brown markings develop around the veins of the young leaves and darken with age.

This is a plant best left to the more experienced growers. In most localities it prefers to be grown indoors. Fluorescent lighting is excellent since it can be maintained at a high level consistently. If placed in a terrarium sufficient space must be allowed for spread and height, which may well be half a yard. Though it does not require as high humidity as most of the pustulated begonias, it seems to be finicky in this respect. Outdoors it should have protection from wind, direct sun, drying conditions and of course, frost.

It is usually propagated from leaf cuttings, since it sets seed with difficulty. It is not a heavy bloomer, but it is seldom grown for the flower display — it is the distinctive color pattern of the leaves which attracts.

SWEEPSTAKES TROPHY WINNER

To win a Sweepstakes trophy is nothing new for Mabel Corwin who did it again this year. She was Sweepstakes winner in 1973 and 1961 and has numerous trophies and ribbons from various shows. She added to this collection four more division trophies in addition to the Sweepstakes and several other ribbons in the begonia classes.

The judges exclaimed afterwards that they thought they could recognize her plants just from the color and appearance which was very fresh. Mabel had entered about thirty plants in the Show this year. She advocates consistent observation and care as required by the plant as the means for attaining fine specimens. Her plants are growing under a variety of conditions — outdoors in the ground, on a protected patio, under a lath structure, in the house both open and in bubbles and a few very tender ones in the greenhouse.

One plant which was of special interest was a rex hybrid that she grew from a packet of seeds from the Park Seed Company. The little seedling looked promising as it developed and the color became richer and richer day by day until, at show time, the leaves were deep rosy maroon with markings of black in beautiful contrast. She named the seedling *Begonia* 'Vista' for the city where the Corwins live.

Mabel enjoys growing begonias from seeds and last winter had sent to David Turner in England for tuberous begonia seeds. The young plants from these sowings had produced a very promising crop of flowers this summer. Tiers of the tuberous seedlings were on display in the lath house. There was one especially luscious strawberry pink bloom in rose form that visitors admired. These tubers will develop and should give much larger flowers next year.



Mabel Corwin with *Begonia* 'Mabel Corwin'

For several years while they were building their present home and landscaping the grounds, Mabel did not enter all of the shows. "Sometimes it was all we could manage to just keep the collection of potted plants fed and watered!" she reported. Ralph Corwin constructed the lath house and the greenhouse himself. Many of the trees and shrubs which are part of the permanent landscaping are ones that the Corwins have started from seeds. They have chosen semitropical trees which blossom at various times of the year and provide a show of flowers nearly year round. The hummingbirds think it is paradise and call in large numbers.

Mabel Corwin has been active in the ABS for many years and is the Advertising Manager of the *Begonian*. She and Ralph were instrumental in forming the Palomar Branch and both are serving in branch offices, she being the charter president. She is a past president of the San Gabriel branch and served as national ABS president in 1964-65. Ralph is the newly elected third vice president of the Society.

Ralph is equally interested in their plants and garden but he confesses a bias for growing on a larger scale. As he hauls giant watermelons from his garden he admits that he likes raising "food for the stomach" and prefers to leave the growing of begonias, "food for the soul," to Mabel. Mabel, who has often demonstrated that she knows well what to do with the garden produce in the kitchen, says that although she likes to cook, she'd really rather grow begonias.

P.B.

A HAPPY NOTE FROM A HAPPY CONVENTIONEER

This 1976 Begonia Heritage Convention was my first convention and I was at first a little apprehensive about it. However, upon arriving, my worries disappeared. I was met at the airport by Round Robin friends, Walt and Elda Haring, and after a big hug, was taken to the hotel. I soon met other friends whom I knew through correspondence also: Hazel Snodgrass and Lori and Walt Hansen.



Walter Haring and Yvonne Wells
at luncheon

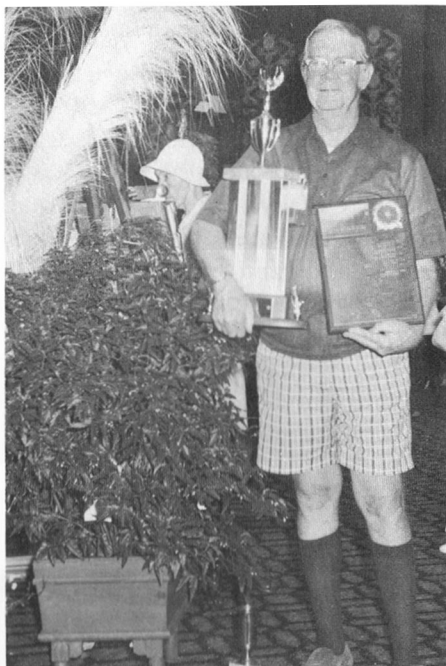
The Royal Inn at the Wharf was a lovely place to hold a great convention. I must say the next four days were among the happiest I've ever spent. Such beautiful people I have never met before! The plants were the most gorgeous I've ever seen! And the speakers and the programs were super! Such hospitality! I thought I was in Texas! Everyone I met was my friend. This convention was a thing to remember all my life because of the people who made it so special. Thank you all for being NICE. You shall surely be rewarded.

Yvonne Wells. Mesquite, Texas

BEST IN SHOW TROPHY WINNER

A. N. "Pinky" Harrison had won blue ribbons before, but he had never won a trophy. His goal was to bring home a trophy, which he did. The judges agreed that he did indeed have some mighty fine plants in the Show at San Diego. In fact, he may need a new shelf to hold his trophies. The shelf will display the Edna Korts Perpetual Trophy, the San Miguel Branch Perpetual Award and the Bessie Raymond Buxton Branch Award for the Best Collection of Five Begonias. The place of honor will go to the Best of Show trophies which he won. For Harrison won not only the Best in Show at the ABS competition, but also the Best in Show at the Los Angeles Fern Society Show in August.

Pinky Harrison has been growing ferns and begonias for fifteen years. He began the hobby at his home in Arcadia with a few ferns. He then progressed to begonias and other tropical plants. He liked to spend time with the plants as a means of relaxing from the pressures of his job. He enjoyed adding new varieties and learning to grow them. He experimented to find a soil mix that had just the right moisture holding properties. He gives credit for the vigorous growth of his plants to this mix. He has had many friends come to him for plant mix so very recently, he has licensed large scale production of his mix formula to Pure-ganics, Inc. which now markets Pinky's Soil Mix in nurseries such as Amlings in Newport Beach and Walter Anderson's in San Diego. Much wider distribution is planned.



A. N. Harrison and *B. 'Medora'*

Three years ago, health problems brought the Harrisons to their present home in Pauma Valley. An accident at work had caused Pinky persistent back problems. His wife, Mary, had had pneumonia and needed to escape the smoggy atmosphere. They settled on a small avocado rancho to recuperate and indulge their enthusiasm for growing plants. Here Pinky planned for a greenhouse to contain his ever expanding plant collection. It turned out to be 20 x 95 feet and, when Mary saw the bill, she decided they had outgrown the *hobby* classification and obtained a license to sell plants.

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THE MAGNIFICENT BEGONIA

By Elda and Walter Haring

When doors of the Pacific Room at the Royal Inn at the Wharf in San Diego opened visitors were awed at such magnificence. Picture if you will a room, carpeted in red and gold, warm paneled walls and crystal chandeliers casting a warm glow over the most beguiling begonias these eyes have ever seen. Gorgeous plants over which hung clusters of pristine blossoms shimmering like rare jewels. That was the 1976 Show at the Annual Convention of the American Begonia Society, hosted by the A. D. Robinson and San Miguel Branches.

The Court of Honor displaying the Trophy winners also provided a display of Alice M. Clark's original water color portraits of the *Begonia* which are reproduced in her new book BEGONIA PORTRAITS soon to be released. Here in the Court of Honor we found in Division A, the Edna Korts Perpetual Trophy for the best cane awarded to *B. 'Sophie Cecile'* a five-foot flowering specimen, beautifully grown by A. N. Harrison of Pauma Valley. Winner of the Helen Bailey Memorial Perpetual Trophy for Division B, Shrub-like, was Mabel Corwin for a near-perfect specimen of *B. 'Mabel Corwin'*. Division C, Thick stemmed, always a difficult class to enter was won by Jean Pasko for her large specimen of *B. 'Rudy'*. In Division E, the John R. Williams Memorial Trophy went to Mabel Corwin for her lovely little plant of *B. bowerae nigramarga*. In Division F, Rex Cultorum, the Gonda Hartwell Challenge Trophy was awarded to *B. 'Vista'* a luscious

black and rose begonia with beautiful overlapping foliage entered by Mabel Corwin. Margaret and Paul Lee walked away with the Palos Verdes Begonia Farm Challenge Perpetual Trophy in Division G, Tuberous and Semi-tuberous, with their perfectly grown specimen of *B. richardsiana*. The best species begonia, Dennis Torzeski's *B. olsonae* entered in Division H, took the Inglewood Branch Memorial Perpetual Trophy. In Division I, Ethel Talley was awarded the San Gabriel Perpetual Trophy for a begonia grown in a Contained Atmosphere with her entry of a rare symbegonia. In Division J, Begonia Hybrid in Cultivation 25 years or longer, the San Miguel Branch Perpetual Trophy went to A. N. Harrison for a gorgeous four foot specimen of *B. 'Medora'* displayed in a redwood tub and ingeniously trained in an upright manner. Congratulations to "Pinky" (as he is known by his friends) for also having won BEST IN SHOW with this perfect specimen. The Trophy for Division K, San Diego Hybrids was awarded to Mabel Corwin for the ever beautiful little Rex *B. 'Purple Petticoats'*. Florence Richetta received Best of Division L, Novel Grown Begonia, for her *B. 'Ann Meyers'* displayed in a lovely piece of driftwood. In Division M, New Begonia Introductions, Mona Kosmatka's plant of *B. 'Delia Marleau'* won the American Begonia Society Perpetual Trophy.

The William Bower Memorial Perpetual Trophy for Division N,

New Begonia Introductions by a Commercial Nurseryman, went to the Woodriffs for their beautiful *B. conchifolia* x *B. 'Bokit'*, another one of the many wonderful hybrids the Woodriffs have perfected. In Division O, A. N. Harrison won the Bessie Raymond Buxton Branch Perpetual award for best collection of five begonias with *B. suffruticosa*, *B. 'Cathedral'*, *B. 'Paul Bee'*, *B. 'Encanto'* and *B. 'Rudy'*, truly an outstanding collection. A hanging basket of the ever lovely *B. 'Al Clark'* grown and displayed by Dennis Torzesky took the Theodosia Burr Shepherd Perpetual Trophy in Division P, Novice Grower. The trophy for Division R, Educational Begonia Displays, was awarded to the Theodosia Burr Shepherd Branch. Planned, executed and presided over by Louise Bower and her sister, Hattie Lee Keller of Oxnard, this display proved to be very popular with the thousands of people who viewed the show. Division S, Photos of Begonias, was won handily by Ed and Millie Thompson, authors of the invaluable *Thompson Begonia Guide*. Al Clark won best of Division T, Planters, with his beautifully planted terrarium featuring begonias and other shade loving plants. The Arthur Strandberg Perpetual Trophy for Division U, Fern, was awarded to a perfect specimen of the rare *lemmaphyllum macrophyllum*, entered by The Plant Shop at Reseda. In Division V, Other Shade Plants, the Plant Shop also won best of division with an attractive pitcher plant, *nepenthes raffelsiana*. A handsome container, 4' x 3' x 3' fashioned from picture frames and plate glass complimented

with a lovely table lamp against a background vase of tall plumed grasses, by Dennis Torzeski won best of Division X, Begonias in an Indoor Setting. Sweepstakes for the greatest number of blue ribbons went to Mabel Corwin of the Palomar Branch. The plaque donated by the Bromeliad Society was won by Mary Birchell for her rare bromeliad.

Words cannot describe the many lovely plants displayed. Enormous ferns of all kinds in hanging baskets, beautiful orchids and gesneriads, terrariums and bubbles filled with fascinating well grown plants; the Bonsai exhibit, always of great interest to the public and of course our beloved *Begonia*. Hundreds of plants, each one seemingly more beautiful than the other. We are indeed envious of those members of ABS who are able to grow to such perfection members of the family *BEGONIACEAE*.

The special exhibits were the subject of much interest. The corner occupied by the San Diego Gesneriad Society was fascinating. The cultural perfection of the gesneriads displayed was the subject of frequent comments. The plants were numbered and keyed to a chart to enable visitors to identify them and jot down the names of those particularly admired. Louise Bower's educational exhibit showed various methods of propagation, a genealogy chart using living plants to indicate the background of some *Begonia*, along with a display of rare species, and a lighted map of the world showing the countries where begonias may be found growing in their native habitats was

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Begonia Heritage Scenes

San Diego, California

Photos by Ralph Corwin and Ed Bates





Jacky Basye Frieda Basye
Registration Desk



Mabel Corwin Chuck Richardson
A Past President Incoming President



Mabel Corwin Margaret Ziesenhenné
A Past President Outgoing President



Edgar Bates Phyllis Bates
Co-editors of the *Begonian*



Yvonne Wells Ruth Pease



Dennis Torzeski and Nancy Dube
Painting and large terrarium by Torzeski



Evelyn Cronin
Incoming second vice president



Alice M. Clark



William Walton
Past president and
Incoming Business Manager



Tour group at entrance to
Brown's greenhouses



Rieger begonias at
Brown's greenhouses



Fuchsia hanging gardens at
Weidner's greenhouses



Sales area at
Weidner's greenhouses



Entrance patio at
Murray's Shade Gardens



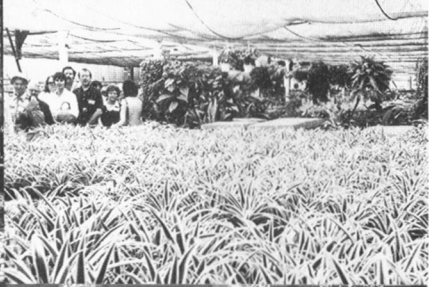
Ferns and other shade plants at
Murray's Shade Gardens



Refreshments at
Murray's Shade Gardens



Tour-end at
Murray's Shade Gardens





Mary Hofmann

Betty Cooper

Hazel Jacob

BEGONIA HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Show chairman	Betty Cooper	Tickets	Jackie Bayse
Co-chairmen	Margaret Lee, Thelma O'Reilly	Hospitality	June Rakestraw
Secretary	Jeff Stewart	Hostesses	Juana Curtis
Treasurer	Mary Hofmann	Seminars	Thelma O'Reilly
Registration	Alma Lee	Show registration and classification, placement	Thelma O'Reilly, Marg Lee, Jean Pascoe
Plant Sales	Gene Daniels, Walter Hansen	Tours	Betty Cooper
Staging	Dennis Torzeski, Ray Sodomka	Bus	Connie Azhocar
Dismantling	Boyd Herrin	Alfred D. Robinson	Lois Donahue, President
Publicity	Hazel Jacob	San Miguel	Dennis Torzeski, President
Judges	Magaret Lee	Convention	Margaret Ziesenhenne, ABS President
Ribbons, Trophies	Paul Lee		
Door Prizes	Ray Sodomka		



Committee lines up at report round-up.

OUR EASTERN BEGONIA HERITAGE

By Evelyn Cronin, *ABS Vice President*

Based on a history researched by Orpha Fox of the Bessie Raymond Buxton Branch and presented at the seminar series at the Begonia Heritage Convention in San Diego.

Approximately six years after Herbert P. Dyckman founded the American Begonia Society, the Eastern Branch of the ABS was founded, September 3, 1938, at Pomfret, Connecticut. The prime motivator was Bessie Raymond Buxton of Peabody, Massachusetts. Everyone has their folk heroes and heroines. Bessie is ours in the begonia world in the East. Bessie believed that although to the uninitiated the begonia is just another plant, to the dedicated grower the begonia is a plant set apart. She was a serious student of the begonia and one with a philosophy in full accord with the purpose of the Society, "to stimulate and promote interest in *Begonia*."

Through research we know that the decorative qualities of the begonia were recognized by ancient craftsmen of China and Japan for they often depicted begonias in their tapestries and paintings. There are incomplete records of very early discoveries of the begonia in the western hemisphere; we all know of the very early finding in 1690 of six species in the West Indies by the Franciscan monk, Charles Plumier, that led to the introduction of the begonia to the botanical gardens and eventually to the private growers of Europe.

But literature does not record when begonias as pot plants first made the voyage from Europe to adorn the parlors and conservatories of victorian America. It was early in

the nineteenth century as indicated by the 1839 catalog of the Warren Company of Boston that offered begonias "from stock imported from the great European nurseries." This firm moved to California in 1849. The John Saul Company of Washington, D.C. and New Rochelle, New York, was of the same period. It also had nurseries in California. The James Hutchinson Company opened a branch there in 1849. Each of these companies listed begonias.

Quick to capitalize on the popularity of the plant, representatives from these nurseries visited the important plantsmen of Europe each year to make sure that the most recent and best introductions would be available to them. Vilmorin of Paris sent his annual lists of seeds including begonias to individual growers in the United States. In 1847, Washburn and Co., located in the old Horticultural Hall, Boston, listed several of the "most choice sorts of begonias, mixed." In 1871 Hovey of Boston offered "magnificent rex begonias and the newest semperflorens hybrids." The following year the Shepard Company of Connecticut listed sixteen named "ornamental-leaved begonias" and eight "flowering sorts."

By the close of the century many begonias, both species and cultivars, were available to growers throughout the U.S. and Canada. But the concentration of interest remained in California where the favorable cli-

mate made it possible to grow begonias outside in all seasons. Mrs. Theodosia Burr Shepherd, the pioneer seedswoman of California, had grown, hybridized and sold begonias for thirty years. Her business closed with her death in 1906. It was during the first years of the century that Alfred D. Robinson of Point Loma, Ca., began to build his noted lath house at Rosecroft. Until his death in 1942 it sheltered one of the finest collections of begonias in the world.

It would seem that the first effort to interest begonia lovers in uniting to share their enthusiasm and pool their knowledge should have come from California, but this did not occur. Credit for this movement is given to an Ohio woman who grew begonias on her window sills. In 1921, 11 years before the California Begonia Society was founded, Mrs. John Semple (Nora) wrote to the plant club section of a popular garden magazine suggesting a correspondence club devoted to begonias. There was an eager response from growers in all areas of the country and the first begonia Round Robin began its flight. The membership increased rapidly and the club was divided. Bessie Raymond Buxton joined this first correspondence club in 1925 and soon became director of one division with seventeen members from Maine to California.

What kind of a person was Bessie Buxton? Professionally she was a New England school marm. Bessie was an accomplished musician; a diligent historian, relentless in research; and she was an able and enthusiastic horticulturist with an absorbing interest in begonias. She organized the

Peabody Garden Club and was active in establishing the Massachusetts Federation of Garden Clubs. When the National Council of Garden Clubs was in the process of organization, Bessie Buxton served as corresponding secretary (from 1929 to 1937) and then as historian from 1939 to 1943. Mrs. Buxton was also closely associated with the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and was a contributing editor to *Horticulture* magazine. She was associated with the Essex Institute of Salem, a marine and antiquities museum, and was a consultant to the New York Botanical Gardens.



Bessie Raymond Buxton

She became well known as a lecturer and was the author of many magazine articles and of several books. *Begonias and How To Grow Them*, a 55-page illustrated pamphlet, was published by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society about 1929. It was revised and enlarged in 1934. Her book on house plants, *The Window Garden*, appeared in 1936. In 1939, Mrs. Buxton produced a much enlarged and more comprehensive edition of *Begonias and How to Grow Them*, and again in 1946, a third revision of this book

occurred. Her most ambitious project was the *Check List of Begonias*, a compilation of ten thousand begonia names as found in botanical and horticultural literature. She presented a copy to ABS, one to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and a third to the British Begonia Society, with which she was in close communication. In recognition of this monumental work, Mrs. Buxton was presented the large gold medal of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1953. In 1954, Mrs. Buxton received a citation from the American Horticultural Council for "exemplary achievements as a student and champion of the genus *Begonia*." Mrs. Buxton also was presented with the first Eva Kenworthy Gray Award (1955) of the American Begonia Society "in recognition of her contribution to the original material which aided members in their enjoyment and study of begonias."

Mrs. Buxton kept an eye on the doings of the California Begonia Society. When that organization changed its name to the American Begonia Society and decided to take in outsiders in 1934, Bessie became a member. The following year she was a guest of the ABS and a speaker at the annual meeting.

In 1935, she met a kindred spirit, Ernest Kimball Logee of Danielson, Connecticut. The Logee greenhouses at that time had the largest collec-

tion of begonias in the East. Ernest became a member of ABS and of Bessie's correspondence club.

In 1937, Bessie began agitating for an eastern branch. Thomas H. Everett, chief horticulturist of the New York Botanical Gardens, encouraged her. Mr. Everett was growing a large collection of begonias for a display at the international flower show in New York. Problems arose which would be minor today. One was travel — 50 miles was not the casual trip it would be today. In March 1938 Massachusetts Horticultural Society sponsored a meeting for the purpose of forming a New England branch. A blizzard cancelled that one. A second meeting was called for September 3, 1938, at Pomfret and the New England Branch got off to a flying start with 28 members. Mr. Everett became president and Joy Logee vice president. Two meetings per year were scheduled—spring and fall.

However, this simply would not do for begonia "nuts" and a study group was formed with representatives from each of the New England States. The name was changed in 1958 to the Rhode Island Branch. The New England Branch became the Bessie Raymond Buxton Branch in honor of Mrs. Buxton who had passed away in 1955.

From the very beginning, only six months after organization, that early

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study group entered a begonia exhibit at the New England Flower Show, a tradition which was broken only in 1944 and 1945 because of gasoline rationing. This group worked on educational or garden displays and won many awards through the years. These active members also held "begonia days" at the University of New Hampshire. Dr. William Holley, a member of the University of New Hampshire staff, was president and he recruited speakers from his own university and the University of Massachusetts. "Begonia days" featured both amateur and commercial displays. Open meetings were held at the Arnold Arboretum and both Dr. Bernice Schubert and Dr. Lyman Smith of the Gray Herbarium took an active interest.

House plants became a standard feature of the fall harvest shows at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Ernest Kimball Logee, first chairman, Joy Logee, Mildred Greenlaw, Ruth and Percy Merry were among the participants. In the first few years the group estimated that 5,000 plants had been shown in 290 categories.

Let me now turn from organizational records to look at some of the accomplishments that have been brought about by Easterners.

Dr. Holley tried to improve flowers and vigor of double semperflorans. His best known cultivar is *B. 'Red Holley'*. He also worked with

calla lily begonias. When he was transferred to the University of Connecticut, he gave his seedling stock along with his notes to Ernest Logee. Logee's semps now number 40, the best known of which is "Thimbleberry".

The Greenlaws had two large greenhouses. George and Mildred did a great deal of hybridizing. Her *B. 'Rose Veil'*, a cane disappeared during a lingering illness, but *B. 'Dainty Spray'*, a descendent of *B. dichroa* through its cultivar, *B. 'Di-Anna'*, still exists.

Julia Fisher of Brooklyn, Connecticut, produced more than 20 named rex begonias before ABS registration program began, but only one survives today, *B. 'Solid Silver'*. Mrs. Fisher is better known for her *dichroa* seedlings: *B. 'Pink Parade'*, *B. 'Orange Dainty'*, *B. Anita Roseanna'*, and *B. 'Douglas Fisher'*.

Ernest Martin grew 100 seedlings of *B. 'Elaine'* but chose to perpetuate only one, *B. 'Pinafore'*.

Percy I. Merry was the first to use *B. mazae* and *B. bowerae* in hybridizing. In 1951 he grew five seedlings from *B. bowerae* crossed with *B. 'Sunderbruchii'*, one of which the New England Branch chose and named *B. 'Beatrice Haddrell'*. He crossed *B. bowerae* x *B. mazae* to produce a small rhizomatous plant, *B. 'Illsley'* (his name) and the less well known 'Emma Watson'. He crossed *B. kenworthyae* and *B. 'Beatrice Haddrell'* to produce *B. 'Needham'* and *B. 'Kingsbury'*.

Mike Kartuz is now the foremost hybridizer from New England. A gesneriad specialist, he succumbed to the lure of begonias and produced

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hybrids too numerous to count. The most spectacular is *B.* 'Mumtaz'. He is the originator of *B.* 'Buttercup' (*B. prismatocarpa* x *B. ficicola*), widely grown in the East. He has a number of new introductions listed this year. For sentimental reasons as well as aesthetic, I particularly favor *B.* 'Matild', a low, compact, everblooming shrub-like begonia named for his mother. Another is *B.* 'Orpha Fox', a medium cane with huge clusters of deep pink flowers a real beauty named for the Buxton Branch historian who compiled much of the data for this presentation.

We have many other eastern hybrids by amateur growers. Edna Stewart's best known is *B.* 'Robert Shatzer', Jim Wyrzten's, *B.* 'Beau Rouge', and Pricilla Beck's *B.* 'Bebe'.

To the field of literature and research, many Easterners have made significant contributions. Since their works are known to you, let me just

mention their names: Helen Krause of Pennsylvania, Bernice Brilmayer of Connecticut, Elda and Walter Haring now displaced from Connecticut to North Carolina, Carrie Karegeannes, Fred Barkley, Jack Golding, and Ed and Millie Thompson. In addition to their own works, they have been active contributors to the *Begonian*.

Among the Easterners who have served as national ABS officers are Evelyn Hurley, Nancy Alvord, Jack Golding, Carrie Karegeannes and Evelyn Cronin.

From a small beginning through interest and love of begonias and with Yankee determination, today there are 20 branches east of the Mississippi. I began with Bessie Buxton and so I shall end with a salute to Bessie — for she was the standard bearer for the American Begonia Society in the East.



Plants arriving for Operation Grand Donation

OPERATION GRAND DONATION

By Gene Daniels



Supersalesmen Gene Daniels, Lori Hansen, Walt Hansen

I had a few sleepless nights for the week prior to the big Begonia Heritage Show in San Diego. People were coming from all over the world to see the show and to buy rare begonias at the Grand Donation Plant Table. In 1974, we had sent letters requesting donation plants and received almost no cooperation. This year, with monthly articles that pounded in rather strong language the need for plants, I still was worried. We had negotiated with commercial growers for about 1300 plants, but would we have the 5000 plants that we hoped to sell? Yes, I had a few sleepless nights and they were accented with plants dancing around in bright, colorful cottage cheese containers and paper cups. To say I worried is to put it mildly.

I arrived at the Royal Inn about 10 a.m. and already the boxes were piled high in the plant sales area. There they were! 'Sophie Ceciles' in 5-inch clean pots, standing proudly over a myriad of rhizomatous, canes and other begonias. A sense of satisfaction overtook me until I realized that all had to be organized and priced in 24 hours. By the end of the day we had 3699 donated plants plus all those which I purchased. I here give thanks to the 17 branches and those members-at-large for coming through with the plants.

The three top branches together contributed 1331 plants: Garden Grove, Glendale and Theodosia Burr Shepherd.

But the important thing about the plants was not really the quantity. At

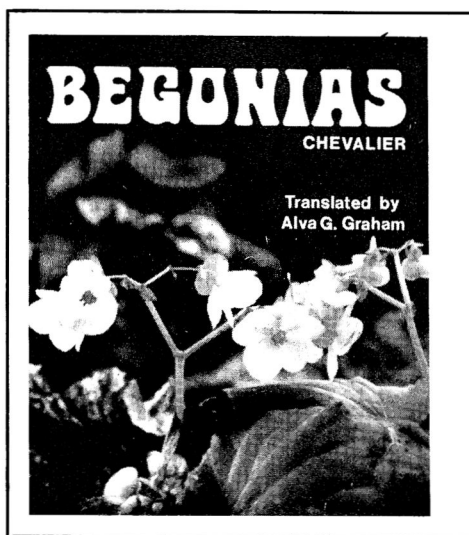
least 75% of the plants were in 4" pots or larger! Only a few had to be moved from makeshift containers. Most had good clear labels. Details like this make for better prices and more funds for the ABS treasury.

We needed many workers and they came voluntarily from many branches. I hesitate to name individuals because so many were involved that I'd be bound to leave out a few. But I'd be remiss if I didn't give a great deal of credit to my co-chairman, Walt Hansen and the two stalwarts who worked 100% of the time, namely Darlene Fuentes of the Glendale Branch and Lori Hansen of the Theodosia Burr Shepard Branch. And I must add the name of Marguerite DeCola of the Santa Clara Branch who repotted and started several hundred cuttings and plants, both donated from Japan and purchased in Capitola, in addition to the major contribution of plants of her own and by her branch. Several branches helped en masse when they were needed and here I must

mention the Sacramento Branch, without whom we would still be pricing plants.

What happened to those plants? Those who donated plants were invited to a pre-preview sale Friday afternoon. Again that evening at the preview for all members, another \$600 worth were sold! Saturday morning the sale started in earnest and the crowds formed to the point where we had to limit the number of people in the sales area at any one time. Two cash registers went steadily for two days. At the end of the time it was decided to allow the branches to take home the remaining plants to be used at branch plant tables. Everyone left with arms loaded. Show Treasurer Mary Hofmann almost needed a wheelbarrow to carry away the grand total of \$5075, approximate net profit from the plant table.

Grand Donation was a Grand Success. It proved that the branches can work together as a team for the betterment of all.



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THE MAGNIFICENT BEGONIA

(Continued on page 298)

a feature of this exhibit. The Bromeliad Society featured colorful bromeliads on a very large and handsome piece of driftwood. Many other bromeliads completed a popular exhibit of interest to the many who attended the show.

Last but certainly not least, the Plant Sale Corner arranged by Gene Daniels and Walt Hansen, and their hard working cohorts, was crowded throughout the Convention with eager purchasers of the thousands of plants, most of which were grown and donated by ABS Branches all

over the country as well as in Japan. Many rare and not-so-rare begonias were on sale. The number of visitors who flocked to the sales tables were an indication of the great interest in *Begonia* by the general public.

Those of us who were privileged to attend this Convention and Show owe a debt of gratitude to all who made it possible. The final achievement must indeed be a great source of satisfaction to the Convention and Show Committee who worked for months to perfect the many details which resulted in so successful an event.

BEST IN SHOW

(Continued from Page 296)

There is a sign on Rincon Ranch Road for Mrs. Pinky's World of Plants. It is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9 to 5:30 and it is a delightful place to visit. An excursion from most areas in Southern California to the foot of Mt. Palomar is a pleasant drive and doubly so if you stop to visit with Pinky and Mary Harrison. In their soft Florida accents, the Harrisons will share their love of plants. Though begonias and

ferns seem to predominate, there are bromeliads and orchids and other tropicals to intrigue you. There is a symbolic marker on their patio which Pinky uses when he addresses various plant society meetings:

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds
for mirth —

One is nearer God's heart
in a garden

Than anywhere else on earth.

— Dorothy Frances Blomfield
P.B.

BEGONIA 'MEDORA'

(Continued from page 287)

chose the plant for grooming over a year ago and watched over it carefully. He transplanted it to a redwood tub with a dead orangewood branch for support instead of allowing it to become pendant. This accounts for its height. He began pinching for good shape and compact growth and stopped in time to

allow plenty of growing tips to put forth blossoms. There are many early reports of difficulties in bringing this plant to bloom because the growers did not realize that *B. 'Medora'* blooms only on new growth. *Begonia 'Medora'* had a fine show of blossoms when it was judged in the Begonia Heritage Show. It won for just being very beautiful. P.B.

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ROUND ROBIN NOTES

The Round Robin Notes have been discontinued until new arrangements can be made. Debi Miller had been working with a gradually increasing load. She has been conscientious in compiling the Notes in an interesting manner. She wrote:

"When I took over the RR Directorship last year, Mae Blanton warned me that it was too big a job for one person, and that I should try to find someone to share the load. I knew of no one that I felt I could ask, and decided to try it myself. But she was right. It simply is too big a job for one person.

"For me to take the time to read every letter (78 in all) for notes and compile the column has meant that the progress of the flights has been slowed. To me, the purpose of the program is to provide for corre-

spondence, and I have felt that it wasn't fair to penalize the members of the program for the sake of the column."

We have reprinted this portion of her letter so that you will understand how enormous the task is and, more importantly, to inform you that the Round Robin Flights *will still be flying* and perhaps on a more frequent schedule as a result of her decision. The Round Robin program is very satisfying to those who participate and we concur that its major purpose should not be deterred. We thank Debi for her cooperation and hard work in preparing the Notes during the past year. We know readers will miss these helpful tips to growing better begonias. Your suggestions and comments should be sent to the editors, P.O. Box 82109, San Diego CA 92138.

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GROWING BEGONIAS OUTDOORS

Douglas Frost of Garden Grove was the speaker at a recent meeting of the Palomar Branch. His topic was "How to Grow Little Begonias into BIG Ones." The Frosts grow a great profusion of begonias in their garden. They concentrate on the cane, rhizomatous and sturdy shrubby types since these can withstand the drying effects of the fierce summer better than tuberous and very small-leaved varieties. Frosts must work constantly to supply the humidity which begonias require. In general the begonias are scattered all about the yard, protected from the sun by shade or trees or shade cloth awning. During the coldest months, the most sensitive ones may be shifted to less exposed locations and huddled together for greater protection. Even the shade cloth provides some frost protection. In general the greenhouse space is reserved for the tender small plants and propagation of new ones.

Repotting as soon as a plant fills

SEED FUND NOTES

Linda Miller has been appointed to assist Pearl Benell in operating the Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund. The multiple tasks of preparing and packaging the seeds for 1500 "customers," processing orders, mailing, and supplying the monthly column for the *Begonian*, have become more work than one person can handle.

In the coming months, Linda Miller will receive and fill orders for seeds listed in the *Begonian*. Pearl Benell will continue to receive seed that is contributed to the Seed Fund for distribution. Seed for distribu-

its container is the best way to develop begonias into large show size specimens. Doug does not skip sizes but moves the little plants from two- to four- to six-inch, etc. sizes. He showed the kinds of pots he prefers to use — plastic ones generally round in shape, and wooden containers which he makes himself. The wooden ones are especially well suited for growing rhizomatous types since they are shallower than commercially made ones.

He recommended that beginners choose begonia varieties which tend to grow large leaves. These usually have greater substance and are able to withstand rougher treatment. Also the beginning grower can see the plant making progress and is encouraged by his immediate success. Some of the varieties he suggested are: *Begonias* 'John Tapia', 'San Miguel', 'Woodlawn', 'Magic Valley', 'Kosmatka', 'Ed Bates', 'Shenandoah', and 'Templinii'.

tion should be accompanied by the correct name and a good description. It is important that seeds offered by the Seed Fund be properly identified.

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