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# The BEGONIA



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Begonia Society

# The BEGONIAN

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Deadline for advertising and copy is the first day of the month preceding the date of issue.

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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*;

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## MY COSTA RICAN CAPER

By Thelma O'Reilly, San Diego, Calif.

Webster says, "Caper — a leap, a skip, a spring as in dancing or mirth." My caper began December 25, 1976 when Tim, my husband, gave me a Costa Rican Tropical Horticultural Study Tour beginning February 28, thru March 13, 1977.

The tour was conducted by U.C.L.A. Extension in cooperation with the Organization for Tropical Studies. The most thrilling news was the name of our tour leader, Dr. Mildred E. Mathias, Professor Emeritus of Botany, Dept. of Biology, U.C.L.A. A complete itinerary, list of general information and an indoctrination by Dr. Mathias facilitated all necessary arrangements well in advance of flight time. The tour included visits to private and public gardens, commercial nurseries and the opportunity to see and collect material of many tropical families in their native habitats.

Costa Rica, the native source of many fine ornamental plants cultivated in the United States, is a horticultural paradise. The variety of plant introductions from Costa Rica is great because of its topographic and climatic diversity. A small country about the size of West Virginia, it is located in a narrow section

of Central America between Nicaragua and Panama, yet it has a range of elevations from sea level to over 12,000 feet. Climatic conditions support everything from thorn forest vegetation, resulting from several months without rain, to areas of lowland rain forest and cloud forests rich in mosses, ferns and other epiphytes.

Every minute of my caper was filled with exciting and different experiences, so all I can do is share with you, briefly, the most important highlights.

On a calm, sunny day thirteen eager adventurers left Los Angeles headed for Costa Rica. While enjoying an hour lay-over at the Guatemalan Airport, we were joined by five more tour members. Arriving in San Jose at dusk, we were driven to the Holland House Hotel, our tour headquarters, in a University of Costa Rican bus which was our means of transportation for the duration of our visit.

With few exceptions, days began at 6:00 a.m. They were well planned under the guidance of Senor Alphonso Alvarado, a long-time friend of Dr. Mathias, whose softly spoken English words were accompanied

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### The Cover Photograph:

#### The Begonia Wall

The main attraction for begonia lovers at Las Cruces Botanical Garden is the wall planting of *B. pustulata* and an unidentified variety. This planting covers an area of approximately 8 by 10 feet on the side wall of a greenhouse. The thick planting of the two similar begonias is intermingled with a few ferns, one succulent and a bromelaid, *Ananas bracteatus*. All the photographs with this article were taken by the author.



Holland House Hotel headquarters with view of the beautiful blooming trees, *Erythrina poeppigiana*, which thrive in this area.

with the warmth, friendliness and cooperation extended by all of the gracious hosts and hostesses who welcomed us into their beautiful gardens and homes.

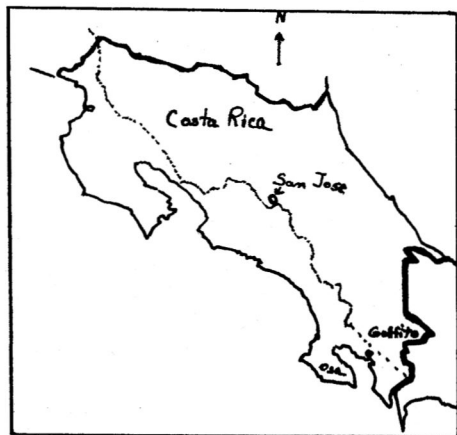
The first day, which started sunny, quickly turned windy and cloudy. A steady shower was underway before we reached our destination, the well-known Lankester Gardens, now the property of the University of Costa Rica. Here hundreds of tropical plants flourish in a naturalized growing environment, a photographer's delight. Of special interest was the fine collection of epiphytes with emphasis on orchids and bromeliads. Many of the orchids were in bloom and the huge *Lycaste* specimens were an unforgettable sight.

After lunch we visited the University of Costa Rica where we were

privileged to have an orientation to Costa Rica by Dr. Rafael Rodriguez, professor of biology. Besides being an internationally known botanist, Dr. Rodriguez is an orchid specialist and an excellent artist. He is currently preparing a series of watercolors on the Costa Rican orchids and allowed us to examine many of the originals.

The next day we viewed the magnificent gold collection and artifacts at the El Banco Central, visited the Mercade Central and enjoyed a guided tour of the Natural History Museum.

The following morning Senor Alvarado was accompanied by Senora Vera Yglisias, a peppy, enthusiastic plant collector and garden clubber whose father-in-law was president of Costa Rica for twelve years. Our



Dotted line is Inter-American Highway. The high mountains lie just north of the line. Las Cruces is 2 miles from Panamanian border, northeast of Golfito.

first garden visitation, Garden Hacienda Vjahua, the estate of Senora de Roy, was a vision of beauty created by mass plantings of trees, shrubs, vines and flowers. Most memorable were the tropical paths lined with masses of blooming *Begonia involu-crata*, the tall dead citrus tree covered with hundreds of blooming *Cat-tleya skinneri* plants and a huge, perfect specimen of *B. masoniana*. I found a ground planting of *B. 'Cred-neri'*, *B. nelumbiifolia*, *B. acuminata*, *B. serratipetala* and a white blooming semperflorens that was very interesting because it was canopied by low branches covered with bromeliads, ferns and orchids.

La Laguna, the garden of lovely Senora Teron, was built on an old coffee finca, surrounded by a beautiful mountain vista. It was obvious our hostess loved mass plantings as we enjoyed the succulents, orchids and perennial garden. She opened her exquisitely decorated home for



*B. involu-crata* bordering garden path at Hacienda Vjahua.

viewing while serving delicious refreshments.

The garden of Senora de Monte Alegre surrounded her home which was built at the bottom of a nearly perpendicular hill. The entry into her home was a lush, elegant garden room, complete with pool, statuary and tropical plants. The beautiful living room opened onto the garden which surrounded an elegant pool of simple beauty. Memorable were the large plantings of rare, stately Honduras pines, graceful native ferns and the stable of polo ponies.

At 7:00 a.m. on Thursday we departed for a three-day visit to Las Cruces Tropical Botanical Garden. Traveling south over the Inter-American Highway we reached an elevation of 11,000 feet, then dropped to 4,000 feet at Las Cruces Field Station. We arrived after dark, tired and



Unidentified begonia collected along mountain roadside about 200 feet above sea level.



Commercial pineapple planting, *Ananas comosus*, along Inter-American Highway several miles beyond San Isidro. Note forest burnings for land clearing on side of Talamanca Mountains in distance.



Bob Wilson in greenhouse at Las Cruces showing rare, unidentified bromeliad from Osa.

hungry. A delicious meal was followed by an indoctrination to the area by the famous Wilsons, Bob and Catherine, who direct Las Cruces Botanical Garden, which is now owned by the Organization for Tropical Studies. Bob Wilson owned and operated the wellknown "Fantastic Gardens" in Miami, Florida, until he founded Las Cruces.

The next three days were spent examining and photographing the garden collection of epiphytes, palms, cycads, heliconias, gesneriads, tree ferns, flowering trees, shrubs, vines, begonias and other horticultural material imported from both old and new world tropics. We did our first collecting in wild areas that were being cleared. I collected seeds from three unidentified begonia species and one climbing begonia that looked similar to *B. glabra*. Cuttings did not

survive but all seeds germinated.

I loved Las Cruces and wish we could have spent more time in this horticultural paradise. Someday, I hope to return for a leisurely visit with the Wilsons and their treasures.

Tuesday we drove to Golfito to see the old United Fruit Company garden. About 200 feet above Golfito, which is at sea level, I saw a lovely unidentified begonia by the roadside. It was in full bloom and, fortunately, I found a few old seed pods which held viable seed.

The two-day drive back to San Jose was spent making many stops to collect plant materials and seeds, plus visiting the sphagnum bogs with their endemic *Puya*.

Thursday morning our group visited Captain Hope's large plant breeding and growing area. This developed into such an interesting visit that it will appear as a separate article. After a visit to a commercial nursery that held many familiar begonias we returned to the hotel to clean plants for their U.S.A. entry.

The next day started with a tour of Hacienda Oropesa, a magnificent estate. Hundreds of semperflorens begonias were used in mass plantings in the cultivated gardens. The wild garden was actually a cultivated forest of cypress trees laden with wild epiphytes.

In the afternoon a long mountain drive ended at the finca of gracious and charming Senor and Senora de Aguilar. Here, I found an ally: our hostess loved begonias and they graced the garden and home. Her indoor patio displayed handsome specimens of *Begonia* 'Erythrophylla Helix', *B. serratipetala* and *B. metallica*. What



*Begonia metallica* displayed on protected patio at the coffee finca of Senor and Senora Carlos de Aguilar.



Thelma O'Reilly happy over finding the elusive tubers of a flame-flowered *Bomarea* in the collecting area.

impressed me were the stunning accessories used to compliment the begonias and the emphasis placed on natural growth. *B. metallica*, sitting on a wrought iron stand, cascaded to the floor. I did not see a staked begonia in Costa Rica!

On Saturday morning we visited a lovely old Costa Rican home in downtown San Jose. A walled garden featured hundreds of blooming *Cattleya skinneri* plants. What a sight to see their roots vining over the white stone walls. A spectacular collection of rare *Alocasias* and *Anthuriums* drew many raves.

The rest of the day was a race to clean and pack all of the collected and purchased plants. Dr. Mathias handled all of the necessary papers to bring our plants out of Costa Rica. She made special arrangements for

inspectors to be on hand in Los Angeles when we arrived because it was Sunday. Everything worked like a charm. All plants were released without fumigation within two hours after we landed because we did such a thorough cleaning job.

Costa Rica is more than a tropical paradise. It is a clean and picturesque country with an interesting historical background. The people impressed me with their friendly manner and warm hospitality. I'm certain I'll return to further my horticultural knowledge and renew my friendships with the wonderful Costa Ricans who helped make my tour an unforgettable "caper".

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## A Species Survey

### B. FENICIS MERRILL

By Mildred L. Thompson, Southampton, N. Y.

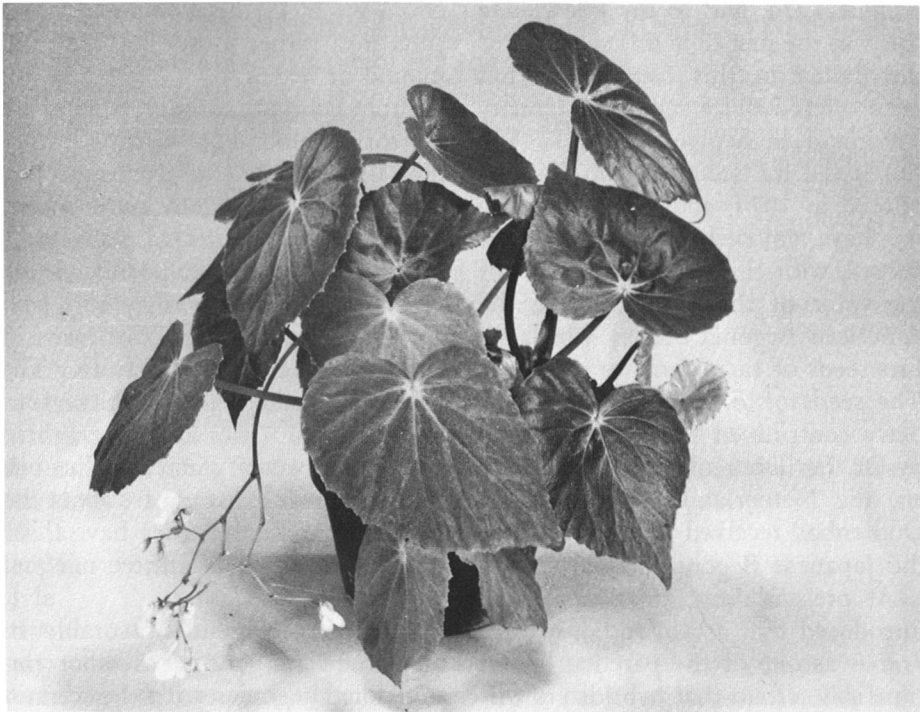
*Begonia fenicis* is the only species of *Begonia* in cultivation today that originally came from the Philippine Islands even though there have been about ninety-five species described by various botanists. Dr. Elmer Drew Merrill described seventy-five. Other renowned botanists who have contributed to the work on Philippine species of *Begonia* were A. De Candolle, Elmer, Asa Gray, F. Miguel, E. Steudel, Quisumbing, Van Geert, and Otto Warburg.

*B. fenicis* was first discovered on May 30, 1907 on rocky hillsides in Santo Domingo de Basco by a collector named Fénix. Santo Domingo de Basco is on the west coast of Batan Island in the Batanese Province,

which is in the northern and most remote portion of the Philippine Islands. The islands in this area are frequently battered by typhoons.

Dr. Elmer Drew Merrill, who was the botanist of the Bureau of Agriculture in the Philippine Islands from 1902, after the American occupation, through 1923, described hundreds of new species of various genera; *B. fenicis* was among them. *B. fenicis* was named by Dr. Merrill in honor of Fénix, the collector of this species and many other new species. In 1908 Dr. Merrill first described *B. fenicis* in *The Philippine Journal of Science, Botany*, Volume 3, pages 421-422.

For botanical classification *B. fenicis* is placed in the section *Diploclin-*



ium (R. Wight ex Klotzsch) A. DC. Approximately one-half of the species placed in this section are from the Philippine Islands; however, at the present time most of the species in this section are not in cultivation in this country. Species placed in the section *Diploclinium* are acaulescent and have a tuberous type rhizome or a short thick stem. The venation of the leaves is either palmate or pinnate-palmate. The staminate flower has four tepals (occasionally two). The stamens have filaments which are either free or subconnate and the anthers are obovate. The pistillate flower has three to four tepals. There are three styles which are united below. The stigmatic papillae make up a continuous band. The fruit has two cells and three unequal wings.

Seeds of *B. fenicis* were first offered in the Clayton Kelly Seed Fund August 1974, and to my knowledge this was the first time this species was distributed in this country. It has been offered twice more: in January 1976 and in September 1977. We purchased the seed when it was first offered in 1974, and since that time we have enjoyed growing it. Our success with this species is proof of the value of the Seed Fund of the American Begonia Society which offers seeds of rare plants to members. The seeds of *B. fenicis* were generously contributed to the Seed Fund by Dr. Jan Doorenbos of Wageningen, the Netherlands. In 1973 Dr. Doorenbos received *B. fenicis* from the Japanese Begonia Society.

At present there are no cultivars introduced that are hybrids using *B. fenicis* as one of the parents; but in time it is certain that hybridizers will

be using this species as it becomes more widely distributed.

*B. fenicis* is classified horticulturally in *The Thompson Begonia Guide* as "rhizomatous, large-leaved [generally 6" - 12" at maturity], entire/subentire." The rather thick rhizomes are covered with brown stipules. As the plant grows, the rhizomes creep along the surface of the soil and in time they spill over the sides of the container, so that at maturity the plant has a ball-like shape.

The glossy, bright green leaves are glabrous. The shape of the leaves is ovate-orbicular; the apex is sharply acuminate and the base is cordate. The leaf margin is dentate; the teeth are small. There are seven to nine veins which diverge from the place of petiole attachment. The spaces between the nodes are moderate and the petioles are relatively long, 7-15 cm. (3" - 6"); this combination results in a rather loose, but graceful, mound of leaves.

From February through April there is profuse blooming. Grown in natural light without direct bright sunlight, the flowers are pure white; they become pink-tinted with some direct sunlight. The peduncles are branched in pairs as they rise well above the foliage and then have a tendency to arch gracefully. The staminate (male) flowers have four tepals (about 8 mm long), and there are about twenty stamens. The pistillate (female) flowers are about the same size and color; they have three styles. The ovary has three unequal wings.

*B. fenicis* responds favorably to the same basic culture as other rhizomatous begonias. To be certain

that the fresh clear green color of the leaves does not become faded, it is best to be certain it receives only filtered sunlight with no direct sunlight during the midday of the summer months. In the late winter and early spring it will reward the grower with a profusion of bloom, if it receives plenty of sunlight during the winter months. This species can be grown in the moderately-sized fluorescent light garden because it remains low growing. The ideal temperature is cool, between 62° and 65°, if possible; and a relative humidity of about 50%.

For a compact plant, proper potting is essential; the plant should never be overpotted. A squatty clay pot is preferable. When the plant is mature, a moss-lined, flat-bottomed wire container is excellent because this container is conducive to a plant with natural symmetry. To encourage a full and symmetrical plant, it is advantageous to pinch some of the growing tips of the rhizomes to force more branching. If there are any bare portions of rhizomes, it is advisable

to cut them back to where the foliage ends; this will give the plant a better appearance and at the same time will encourage branching.

Propagation of *B. fenicis* is a pleasure. The best method is the use of leaf wedges because they develop so quickly into small full plants; it is amazing how quickly. Rhizome cuttings can be used and they will root quickly, but the resulting plants are not as full in the beginning stages of growth. When we sowed our seeds from the Seed Fund in 1974, they also germinated very quickly and abundantly.

Though this Philippine species is not distinctive-looking, nor does it possess any unusual intriguing characteristics, its simple graceful beauty makes it a delight to grow and enjoy. Until we found this treasure in a small packet of seeds *B. fenicis* was only a name of a species of *Begonia* to us, now it promises to be one of our favorites.

Photography by  
Edward and Mildred Thompson

#### GLOSSARY

acaulescent	stemless; stem is inconspicuous or seemingly absent
anther	pollen-producing element of the stamen
cordate	heart-shaped
filament	supporting stalk of stamen
glabrous	free of hairs
internode	space between two nodes
palmate	diverging from one point
peduncle	main flower stalk supporting either a cluster or a solitary flower
petiole	stalk of the leaf
pinnate	feather-like arrangement
section	division of a genus in botanical classification
style	stalk between stigma and ovary
stigma	the part of the pistil that receives the pollen
subconnate	slightly fused
venation	arrangement of the veins

M. L. T.

## COLD HARDY BEGONIAS

By Mildred Swyka, Middletown, Delaware

This is a follow-up to Bob Hamm's article on "Begonias and Cold" (Feb. 1977, page 40). It was written in early spring, 1977.

Had I known that it would be so frigid, I would have carted my begonias into the house, but then I would not have gained the knowledge of how much cold begonias will take. My greenhouse is a leanto type, 11½ x 24', with a green fiberglass roof. It is heated by a propane gas heater that has a fan to circulate the heated air. During the winter months, sheets of styrofoam are used over the rafters, and the space under the benches is closed off with styrofoam also.

The thermostat is set for 50°. I am sure at times the temperature went well below that during the night. I checked the temperature one cold, windy, cloudy day and it was 43°. We had eight days when the temperature remained in the low teens and never got above 20°. For two weeks I couldn't get the door open; it was frozen shut. All the windows were covered with ice. I finally poured hot water around the door so I could see what was happening.

Here is how my begonias survived this ordeal. I must consider *B.* 'Di-Erna' and *B.* 'Pink Spot Lucerne' as the toughest. They did not lose any leaves and were not affected in any way. Begonias *undulata*, 'Lucinda', 'Orange Rubra', 'Dorothy Grant', 'Thurstonii', 'Florence Carrell', 'Concord', 'Green Tree Beauty', 'Pink

Shasta', 'Richmondensis', and 'Argenteo gutatta', all survived very well. These begonias are mostly cane types. They were kept on the dry side, of course. All my begonias stop blooming once the heat is turned on. I enjoyed their blooms from late April until early November during the past season (before the extremely cold spell).

The following begonias did not like this "cold treatment": 'Irene Nuss', 'Esther Albertine', 'Helena', 'Mrs. Shingle', 'Winning Way', 'Tamo', *dichroa*, *maculata*, 'Otto Hacker', *glabra*, and 'Mme. Fanny Giron'. *B.* 'Nora Hansen' died. The others lost all their leaves, leaving pots of bare stems. After checking the pots, I found they were still alive. I covered *B.* 'Irene Nuss' and took it onto the front porch and pruned the stems back and they have come to life once again. I have dead wood in all of these plants but feel they will send up new shoots. Begonias like 'Di-Erna' and 'Pink Spot Lucerne' sent up new shoots all winter.

How much cold begonias can stand depends on several factors, the type of begonia, how dry it is kept and for how long it is subject to the cold. Here in middle Delaware if we left any plants outside, we would have to use such a heavy mulch we would smother the roots and cause them to rot. One year I tried to winter over my glads and dahlias with no success.

My begonias that were on the glass enclosed, heated porch were kept at  
(Continued on page 57)

# BEGONIAS IN AN UNHEATED CARPORT PLANT ROOM

By Elda Haring

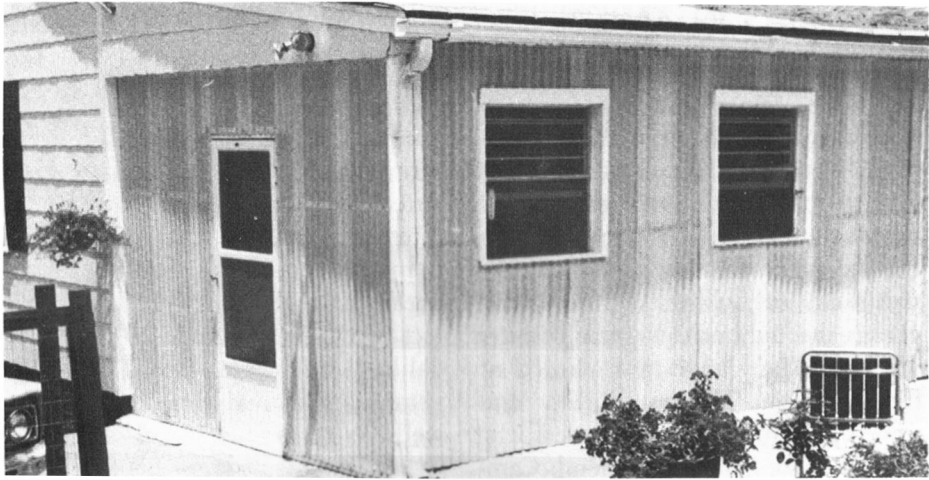
Photos by Cameron Rogers

Those members of ABS who attend lectures and demonstrations at Branch meetings as well as those of us who are intimately involved with the Society often tend to overlook the thousands of hobbyists growing begonias throughout this great country of ours. Many have never heard of the American Begonia Society and some have only just become members. One of these is my new friend, Cameron Rogers of South Carolina. Raising tropical birds has always been his one absorbing hobby and he is quite well known in this field. He owns and operates a pet shop in Charlotte, N.C., where tropical birds are in great demand. In 1971 when he and his parents moved into their present home, he became interested, for the first time in his life, in plants of all

kinds. On the occasion of his first visit to a nursery he became fascinated with the amazing number of interesting plants available to the home gardener and hobbyist. In the spring of that year he began to collect plants for his garden — daylilies, dahlias, miniature roses, caladium, geraniums, annuals and vegetables as well as tuberous-rooted begonias. Other begonias caught his fancy and soon his front porch was gay with semps, canes, shrub-like and rhizomatous types. Where he lives the nurseries rarely know begonia names. They are either called "Rex" or "Angel Winged" but Cameron has been busy attempting to identify the 125 species and hybrids that he grows.

When autumn came that first year, realizing that winter would be dull





Greenhouse which was former carport

indeed without his plants, Cameron wondered how he could keep them. There was no room in the house for plants but the carport seemed a likely place to build a plant room since it had been partially enclosed by the former owner. Cameron, being a handyman from way back, and having built many aviaries for his birds, enclosed the open sides of the 12' x 24' carport with opaque corrugated plastic panels. He installed two windows on the long side and a glass paneled door at the end. This door gives access to an uncovered patio and is now the front entrance to the house. Although the door is opened many times during the day, the cold air admitted during the winter months does no damage to the plants. The plant room is not heated except by the sun daytimes and what heat escapes from the house at night from two doors and one window that open into the converted carport. As a rule the temperature in this plant room in winter is 20 to 30 degrees warmer than that of out-of-doors. While

South Carolina winters are mild compared to the more northerly areas, there are many nights when the temperature drops well below freezing. It goes without saying that the south-east suffered, along with many other states, the coldest winter on record this past year. On the coldest night, the temperature stood at 3 degrees above zero and the temperature in the plant room dropped to 32 degrees. Of the 150 plants growing in the room, 125 were begonias. Only two canes were badly damaged by this sudden drop to freezing and Cameron thinks these might have recovered if he had given them a chance. Despite the chill nighttime temperatures his semps and Reigers bloomed all winter. Rhizomatous, such as *B. masoniana*, the rexes and various shrub-like ones showed no signs of damage and bloomed profusely in late winter and spring.

Cameron likes to grow as many of his begonias as possible in hanging baskets which he hangs on swivels so that they may be turned frequently.



Aviaries which hold rare bird collection

For a potting mix, he prefers either GroMix which consists of Canadian peatmoss, volcanic materials, Southern U.S. peat bark and river sand plus plant food additives, or Metro-Mix, a combination of proven growth aids, sphagnum peat moss, Terralite horticultural vermiculite, quartz sand, perlite, fritted trace elements and other plant essentials. Both of these mixtures are available locally. He fertilizes every two weeks during the growing season with Ortho 12-6-6. His plants are watered once a week in winter and twice in summer. His begonias are lush and beautiful, showing excellent cultural conditions.

South Carolinians as a rule do not attempt to grow tuberhybrida because high heat and humidity are devastating but Cameron's are the envy of the neighborhood in late spring and early summer. In winter his tubers are

stored in a cardboard box in a mixture of saw dust and peat and placed in a metal utility building until mid-February. Every year a few new tubers are purchased at the local nursery to replace any that have dried up or rotted. The nursery offers bulbs that are plump and well formed. Cameron does not like those that come packaged for he prefers to choose his own.

Flats filled with sand and peat moss are utilized to start the tubers into growth. Any that grow fast are potted up when he deems it necessary. Plants are not placed into the open garden until May, for the area where the Rogers live is sometimes subjected to late frosts. Many are already in bloom when ready to go outdoors. Special beds to receive the plants are prepared in the high shade of a walnut tree as protection from



the intense rays of the Carolina sun is a necessity. The beds are raised above the ground level, each measuring 2' x 6' x 8" high. In these beds are a mixture of  $\frac{1}{3}$  top soil,  $\frac{1}{3}$  sand and  $\frac{1}{3}$  peat moss, plus a small amount of cow manure. The blooms are spectacular in late May and reach their peak by the end of June. Unfortunately, because of temperatures of 90° and over in July and August blooms and foliage begin to deterior-

ate and in September, Cameron lifts the tubers, permits them to dry in the sun for several days, then cuts off the stems, sprinkles them with fungicide and stores them until time to start them for a new season. While some growers might think it is not worth the trouble for so short a season of bloom, the pleasure that these beautiful begonias afford is reward enough for Cameron Rogers.

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## BEGONIAS BEYOND THE PARK

By Pat Maley, El Cajon, Calif. — Photos by Dennis Maley

The final day of the 1977 Convention and Show at Anaheim found a large group of begonia enthusiasts waiting at the front door of the Inn at the Park, ready to depart on a day-long tour of area gardens. After an exhausting three days filled with good people and beautiful plants, I wondered to myself if these gardens would prove as impressive.

The tour schedule had endured many pre-show changes, much of this due to insecticide damage suffered by some growers. The people on Doug Frost's Show Committee, and in particular those wonderful people who opened their homes and gardens to us with little notice, certainly deserve a big vote of thanks. Our tour director, Norma Taylor, was organized and calm, in spite of a late bus and a few wrong turns.

Our first stop was at the Anaheim home of Margaret Taylor, a gracious and lovely lady who has given many years of her time and talent to the ABS, including serving as ABS President for 1971-72. Mrs. Taylor met us at her garden gate and led us in to a yard full of her own lovely specimens, plus displays of plants by the Orange County Branch and by Porter's Tropicals.

The first thing to catch one's eye was an enormous hanging basket of *B. 'Pink Shasta'*, easily 3 ft. in diameter and covered with bloom. This hangs on the patio near the house. Along the side of the yard was a lovely tiered display of specimen-sized rex and rhizomatous begonias from Porters. Another eyecatcher

was a lovely *B. 'Swirlytop'* (from Porters), its shiny dark swirls and dark red reverse lit by dappled sunlight through the trees.

I had long since conceded to myself that even the Show itself could not compare to beautiful plants in an outdoor setting.

The next portion of our trip was on foot, around the corner to the home of Cruz and Stella Sandoval, also members of the Orange County Branch. We were greeted warmly with coffee and pastries served in their lovely lath-covered back yard. The Sandoval's varied collection of tropical plants could rival many botanical gardens. Begonias of all kinds grow on tiered shelves. It would take more than one brief visit to really comprehend the great variety of lovely plants living compatibly in the Sandoval yard. A few things caught my eye . . . a specimen of *Anthurium hookeri* with leaves nearly four feet long . . . a large *Platynerium superbum*, and next to it *B. 'Freddie'* hanging in the sunlight filtering through the lath . . . a *Catasetum* Orchid from Mexico, just sending its bloom spike down through its basket. I'm sure others saw things I missed completely.

Refreshed, we climbed back on board our bus for the ride to the coast at Corona Del Mar, to visit the lovely Sherman Foundation Gardens. The Sherman Foundation was founded in 1951 as a non-profit, philanthropic and educational organization, and the Center was developed in 1966 in Corona del Mar, as a Botani-

cal Garden and Historical Research Library. The Library is devoted to the study of the extraordinary changes that have occurred in the Pacific Southwest during the last 100 years. Though designed primarily for use by students and researchers, the resources are available to anyone who has a need to use them.

The Center provides a 'Garden of Discovery' for the student horticulturalist, and hobbyist, with a wide selection of common, rare, and specimen plants. Six full time gardeners keep up the constantly changed color beds, a cacti and succulent garden, small and large shade houses, tropical conservatory, a rose garden, and numerous specimen trees and perennials.

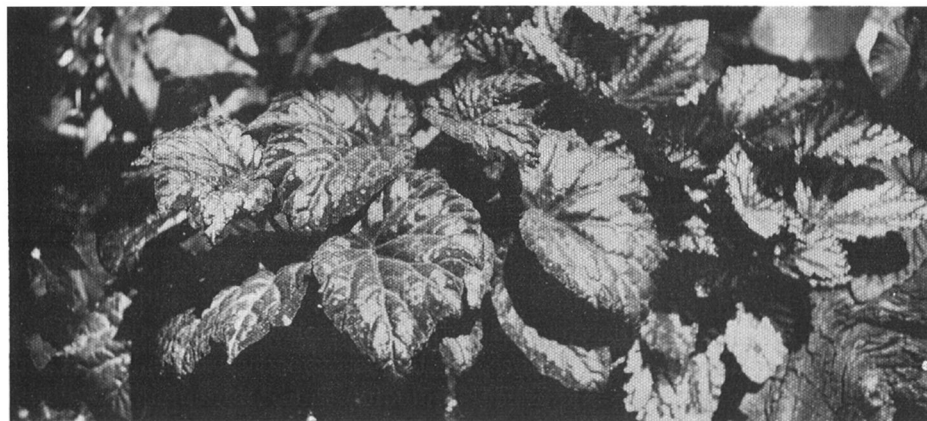
Especially beautiful is the Tea Garden where one may sit among hanging tuberous begonias and fuchsia baskets. Immense hanging baskets of begonias hang over the shaded walkways.

The tropical conservatory is a real paradise. Ground plantings of begonias, ferns, calatheas, and other tropicals grow lush under overhanging ferns. One planted area includes a specimen mound of *B. gehrtii*, its

bubbly-textured leaves up to 15 inches in length. *Ctenanthe setosa* and *Calathea zebrina* stand in 4 ft. tall clumps.

After a late Sunday Brunch, we were off once more for our final visit, this time to Valley Gardens Nursery in Fountain Valley. Valley Gardens is a retail nursery of a rather unusual nature. It is an Educational Nursery, with much emphasis on consumer education. Each weekend featured an Azalea and Camellia variety, including lectures and demonstrations. Previous weekends had featured an Azalea and Camellia Festival, a Bromeliad Jungle Show, an Orchid Show, a Begonia and Fern Show, and a Renaissance Garden Festival complete with craftsmen, potters, painters, and music. Seated in a small outdoor amphitheater, we watched a demonstration in creating colorful moss baskets.

We returned to the Inn at the Park, tired, but exhilarated by all we'd seen. With but an hour left of the 1977 Convention, we went in for a last look, a last trip through the Plant Sales for unclaimed treasures, and goodbyes to friends old and new, with promises to 'See you next year!'





Sherman Gardens entry and corridor



Tea garden at Sherman Gardens

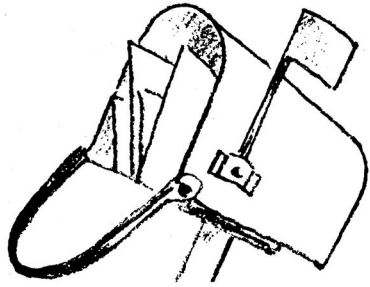


Tiers of begonias at the Sandoval's home.

Left: rex begonias on display at Margaret Taylor's home.

# BEGONIA QUESTION BOX

Write to: Elda Haring  
Box 236, Flat Rock, NC 28731



*Question:* I have a plant called a "trailing watermelon begonia", but the flowers are not typical of begonias. Can you identify it? *Answer:* Your plant is *Pellionia daveauana*. It is not a begonia. Botanically, it is a member of the family Urticaceae. It is a favorite for use in dish gardens, terrariums and hanging baskets.

*Question:* Is it natural for a healthy plant to always be losing a few leaves? Is it normal for a plant with lots of leaves like *B. 'Medora'* rather than one with a few leaves as the rex begonia. Should drying leaves be cut off or allowed to wither on the stem? *Answer:* It is not normal for leaves to be continually drying and turning brown during the growing season. However, any unsightly, browned or yellowed leaves should be cut off to keep the plant looking attractive. This comes under the heading of good grooming. If many leaves are turning brown check to be sure there are no insect pests. Spider mites as evidenced by webbing on the underside of the leaves cause them to turn brown, and aphids or plant lice clustered on stems or leaves also damage them. Washing plants twice a week with soapy water followed by a rinse of clear water will rid them of these pests. Hot air from register or radiator or too strong sun will also dessicate leaves of begonias. *B. 'Me-*

*dora'* does often lose leaves in the autumn when the temperatures are colder. It also drops leaves if it is overwatered. You are fortunate if your rexes do not drop leaves as winter approaches for many of us find that some rexes tend to go slightly dormant in winter especially if kept in a cold and humid atmosphere.

*Question:* How can I tell the difference between *B. acida* and *B. paleata*? *Answer:* Both have light green leaves with puckered surfaces. They are similar in appearance. However, it is easy to tell them apart for *B. acida* has green stems covered with white hairs while leaf stems of *B. paleata* are red with short white hairs.

*Question:* Can you give me a source for the capillary matting called Vattex P. *Answer:* This material may be obtained in small quantities from Gesneria, 309 Montauk Highway, East Moriches, New York 11940. The charge is \$1.39 per running foot, 4 feet wide. Add \$2.50 for postage.

*Question:* I have tried various mediums for seed sowing but have had best results with leaf mold. Do you know where I can buy it? *Answer:* Leaf mold is offered by Earlee Inc., 726 Spring St., Jeffersonville, Ind. 47130. Send stamp to Dept. N for price list.

## ROUND ROBIN NOTES

By Mabel Corwin, Round Robin Director

We are still having trouble with some of the robins because of incorrect addresses. Several robins have been returned to the sender. They are then sent to me, and if I do not have a correct address that person has to be dropped. I want to thank those who have sent me their new addresses. It is a big help.

We have two All Florida flights. Neither is full. If you live in Florida and would like to be in on one of these interesting robins write to me and I will include you.

### Light

In one of the Growing Under Lights robins Bernice Fassett, Illinois, writes that she installed light fixtures in the basement for her plants. Her plants were not accustomed to so much light so at first she ran the lights 4 hours a day, gradually working up to 12 hours. The plants adjusted beautifully and after 5 weeks were showing new growth.

Mary Harbaugh, Wisconsin, made this suggestion: One thing in my light set up which I had forgotten was changing the tubes. They go for years without burning out, but lose a large amount of output in the course of a year. I was reminded of this as I replaced a burned out tube and noticed the difference between the old and the new.

### Humidity

Lack of humidity is a problem for many growers. Mary has a furnace humidifier which maintains humidity at about 50%. She no longer mists her plants. It seemed that every time she did she soon had trouble with

mildew. Since she stopped misting she has had no trouble.

Val Schmidt, North Dakota, writes regarding humidity: As soon as the real heating season starts I disconnect the outside vent hose of the clothes dryer and place a nylon stocking over the end. This allows all the humid air to stay in our home instead of blowing outside. The humidity stays about 35 to 40%. I also purchased aluminum broiling trays that have ripples in the bottom to use as evaporators. The trays can be bent to fit different sized shelves and are cheaper than clay saucers. When filled with water they offer a constant humidity source.

### Growing from seeds

Linda Miller, California, described the "Brick Mother Method" for planting seeds: Pour boiling water over a brick, then put your sterilized sowing mix (pre-moistened) about 1/2 inch thick on top of the brick. Sow seeds. Keep the brick in a pan that always has about 1 inch of water in it. You never have to worry about your seeds drying out. You don't have to cover this arrangement.

### Mildew prevention

To help prevent mildew, Agnes Hodgson, Pennsylvania, suggests putting a fan in your plant room and turning it on for 5 or 10 minutes at a time to keep the air moving. Or open a door or window for a few minutes, just so there is no draft directly on the plants. It is stale, still air plus moisture that encourages mildew. Also use Lysol Spray as a control.

## Growing mix

Bernard Yorke, Australia, grows thousands of begonia seedlings. His mix is made up of peanut shells, mixed with equal parts of sand and leaf mold. He turns it all under and puts the sprinkler on. It's really good in about 4 weeks when the peanut shells start to decompose. This makes a very porous mix.

Many of the flights are full. Some have space for one or two members. Space does not permit me to list them all here. If you would like to have a list of all the robins, I will be happy to send you one. If you would like to be in some of the robins write to me.

Mabel Corwin  
1119 Loma Vista Way  
Vista, CA 92083

## California Begonia Home FOR SALE

Featured in the TIME-LIFE GARDEN BOOK, FLOWERING HOUSE PLANTS, this shade garden home is the result of 12 years effort devising an automatic system of raising specimen plants while its owner worked as a traveling photographer. All plants are individually watered by timer clocks and totally protected in the 40 x 20' enclosure. Three bedrooms, 1 3/4 baths, 80 x 110' lot. 45 min. north of Los Angeles. Being sold with ALL PLANTS, WATERING SYSTEM, and 25 producing fruit trees.

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The Begonian

# BEGONIA BONANZA

By Pam Mundell, Sacramento Branch

Cries of "BEGONIA BONANZA" will rumble through the Mother Lode when the ABS National Convention & Show convenes in Sacramento, California, 15-17 September 1978.

Although John Sutter and his mill contractor, James Marshall, tried to keep their 1848 gold discovery a "secret", it's no "secret" the Sacramento Branch, host for the 1978 convention, has "staked its claim." Already, the various committees are working hard at their "grubstakes," a certain guarantee that all conventioners will "strike it rich" in "them, thar hills" at the "BEGONIA BONANZA!"

With excited anticipation, we welcome you to the State's most historic city and invite you to participate in Sacramento's rich historical past: Relive a part of the Old West in the restored Sutter's Fort. Visit the E. B. Crocker Art Gallery, founded in Judge Crocker's home in 1873 and now owned by the city (the second oldest municipally-owned gallery in the nation). Tour the old Governor's Mansion, home to California's governors until just a few years ago. See new Chinatown which tells the story of one ethnic group that sets its stamp on the city.

Old Sacramento, on the riverfront, is the largest preservation project in the West. The board sidewalks surround cobblestone streets, gas lights, and authentic 19th century structures. The Pony Express is reenacted and live plays, reminiscent of the 1849 era, are presented in California's first theatre, the Old Eagle Theatre. Au-

thentic "turn-of-the-century" atmosphere pleases visitors at the Central Pacific Passenger Station, a reconstruction of the first terminus of the Transcontinental Railroad. In addition, over 170 shops and restaurants, unique to Old Sacramento, entice you with their wares!

The "Mother Lode" is one of the least known, yet one of the most fascinating tourist destination areas in the West — or anywhere, for that matter! You may journey into historic Folsom and the foothills of the fabulous "gold country." Just over an hour away, you can climb over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, across Donner Pass, to "Nevada Territory" Reno, Stateline and "one-armed bandits" or visit beautiful Lake Tahoe, whose waters reflect the season's changing moods.

West, through the Delta area, is the Napa Valley, heartland of the most famous vineyards and wineries in America. We Sacramentans appreciate our city's proximity to San Francisco — charmingly sophisticated and impossible to resist.

All in all, Sacramento is alive and well. Treasuring our city's past, and atuned to the present, the Sacramento Branch is looking ahead with confidence and high hopes of seeing you at the 1978 "BEGONIA BONANZA" in California's capitol city!

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# CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND

By Linda Miller, Seed Fund Director

- Fb 1 — *B. 'Agnes Tee'*. Since this seed is of a hybrid, the resultant seedlings are new cultivars which may or may not resemble *B. 'Agnes Tee'*. Parent plant has an upright, compact type of growth. per pkt .50
- Fb 2 — *B. 'B.G.H. Ben'*: an unidentified species. Low growing bush type. Naturally symmetrical; olive green on top of leaves and red beneath. Plant has much basal growth. Flowers white. per pkt 1.00
- Fb 3 — *B. cinnabarina* X *B. 'Helen Harmes'*. This cross of two tuberous parents both with brightly colored flowers, should yield some unusual seedlings. per pkt .50
- Fb 4 — *B. coccinea*: lovely medium cane with medium green leaves and red pendulous flowers. Makes a very special basket or wall pocket plant. per pkt .50
- Fb 5 — *B. conchifolia*: name means "shell-shaped leaves". Thickish, succulent green leaves above creeping rhizome; one of the smallest species in cultivation. Good terrarium or window sill plant. per pkt 1.00
- Fb 6 — *B. cucullata*: a semperflorens type, medium, with creeping stolons and erect succulent stems. Tendency for rangy growth. Purple-tinged at the joints, flowers in clusters white or tinged pink. per pkt .50
- Fb 7 — *B. dipetala*: thick stemmed, medium, hairy leaves. This species from Bombay is known also as *B. 'Mrs. Kimball'*. per pkt .50
- Fb 8 — *B. 'Kallaking'*: very unusual semperflorens with white spots and white coloring on tips of leaves. Blooms pink to red. per pkt .50
- Fb 9 — *B. hidalgensis*. This beautiful rhizomatous plant, has succulent bright green, shiny leaves. per pkt 1.00
- Fb 10 — *B. leptotricha* X *B. incana*. Try something new. per pkt .50
- Fb 11 — *B. metallica*. This shrub-like plant, has fairly large hairy leaves. Large pink flowers, also covered with "hair". Very easy grower. (See photo on page 40.) per pkt .50
- Fb 12 — *B. solananthera*: trailing stems, smooth oval leaves. White flowers with a crimson center. per pkt 1.00
- Fb 13 — *B. solananthera* X GSC: a new cross of an old favorite. Lovely for hanging basket type. per pkt 1.00
- Fb 14 — *B. solananthera* X *B. 'Patty Sweet'*: another tuberous cross with the trailing species. Very different. per pkt 1.00
- Fb 15 — *B. 'Paris Market'*. These are bee crosses. Resulting plants will not necessarily look like the *B. 'Paris Market'* which is a semperflorens with 2 inch flowers that rise in clusters above the apple-green foliage. Grows best in light shade, leaves turn red when grown in too much sun. per pkt .50



- Fb 16 — Mixed Gesneriads: reoffering of this mix which was popular in the fall. Lots of variety in this one. ....per pkt .75  
 Fb 17 — Mixed Holly fern spore. ....per pkt .25  
 Fb 18 — Birdsnest Fern spore (Asplenium), variety unknown. per pkt .75  
 Note: Still have a quantity of Amaryllis available at 25¢ per pkt.

Calif. residents, please add 6% sales tax on all orders. All customers please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all seed orders. Make check or money order payable in U.S. funds to: Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund. Mail to: Mrs. Linda Miller, P. O. Box 227, Gardena, Ca 90247.

## Mini-Ads

The rate for advertising in this column is \$1 per line (about 36 characters) with a minimum charge of \$4. Payment for the ad must accompany order. Direct questions, copy, and checks to the Advertising Manager, Lorraine Frinchaboy.

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## Cold Hardy Begonias

(Continued from page 44)

50°. This temperature didn't hurt them, but they just stood still. Only two that I found to do much at this temperature are *B. 'Rutherfordiana'* which bloomed all winter, and *B. dominguensis*.

Early in the fall, I had dug up my *semperflorens* and placed several plants in a 2' x 12' x 24' flat, cut them back, and placed the flat in the greenhouse. They came through in great shape and I see new growth about an inch high.

It would be very interesting to hear from anyone who has *B. evansiana* here in the Northeast. Did it survive the prolonged hard freeze? In 1977 the ground, which generally freezes to 6 or 8 inches here, froze to a depth of 24 to 30 inches.

I consider anyone growing begonias in the North and Northeast as growing under handicap conditions, and it is only through our great love of these plants that we do so. We can certainly dream of winter-hardy begonias just as we dream of lower fuel costs so we can turn up the thermostats.

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# SOUTHWEST BEGONIA GROWERS GET TOGETHER

## May 19-21, 1978

**GATEWAY INN, 1211 Red River Expressway, Wichita Falls, TX 76305**

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday, May 19th

5 PM to midnight — check in, registration and show entry.

Saturday, May 20th

7 AM to 10 AM — check in, registration and show entries.

10 AM to 5 PM — a series of 5 seminars and talks on different aspects of begonia growing, especially pertaining to Southwestern conditions.

5 PM to 7 PM — free time, view show, talk, clean up, buy plants at the table, get acquainted.

7:30 PM - ? — Get Together Banquet — a meal, speeches and a lot of fun with other growers.

Sunday, May 21st

A tour of local growers greenhouses, a lot of begonias, and a lot more. A great windup for a great Get Together!

Costs: Costs on the Get Together are based on breaking even or with a small profit. Any proceeds will go in the account of the Texoma Begonia Society.

Registration for Saturday to include Banquet meal	\$15.00
Registration for Greenhouse Tour on Sunday	\$10.00
Total Registration	\$25.00

Make Registration fee checks to Texoma Begonia Society.

Registration fees should be sent to: Robert B. Hamm, 2951 Elliott, Wichita Falls, TX 76308. Please send as soon as possible.

This does not include your rooms or meals. Room reservations must be made by you, directly with the Inn. Information on rooms below.

One bed, one person	\$16.00 per day
One bed, two persons	\$21.00 per day
King bed, one person	\$18.00 per day
King bed, two persons	\$23.00 per day
Two beds, two persons	\$23.00 per day
Five Dollars additional per additional person in room.	

Mail reservations to: Gateway Inn, 1211 Red River Expressway, Wichita Falls, Tx 76305 and mention you're part of the *Get Together*. The Hotel accepts the following charge cards: AMX, Master-Charge, Diner, Carte Blanche, and Bank Americard (VISA): give card # and expiration date.

All ABS members and friends are welcome. We'll be glad to see you.

Bob Hamm, Chairman  
Mae Blanton, Co-chairman

All participants are encouraged to bring plants to show, and to donate plants for both the sale table and door prizes! Let's make this a GREAT GET TOGETHER! ! !

#### Address Correction

The correct address for the Miami Show Chairman is

Mrs. Helene Jaros  
2621 N.W. 23 Ct.  
Miami, Florida 33142

**The Indoor Light Gardening Society of America, Inc.,** Dept. B, 128 West 58th St., New York, New York 10019. Dues \$5.00. Bi-monthly magazine; light garden; up-to-date, informative; seed fund; round robins; chapters.

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 P.O. Box 227, Gardena, CA 90247  
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 4111 DePaul Court, Sacramento, CA 95821  
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If your branch director is not listed, it means that the ABS Secretary does not have the name and address on file. Please send additions and changes to Virginia Barnett, 1213 S. Mullender Ave., West Covina, CA 91790.

The next branch directory will appear in the April issue.

The Board of Directors will meet February 27 at South Gate Auditorium.

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