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# The BEGONIAN



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Cover: *Begonia tovarensis*  
Photo by Alan Meerow

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## 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*.



# SOME INTERESTING BEGONIAS OF COSTA RICA

By Alan Meerow, Bronx, N.Y.

On the cover, *Begonia towarensis* nestled among the other vegetation cannot hide bright red stems. Photo by the author.

The Central American republic of Costa Rica, nestled between Nicaragua and Panama, is a tropical plant enthusiast's paradise. The terrain rises from sea level to 3900 meters in elevation, and localized endemism\* is so prevalent that one dare not pass up a plant of particular interest, for there is no assurance it will be seen again, even in a closely neighboring locality.

While offering more in the way of orchids, bromeliads and gesneriads, Costa Rica is not without its complement of ever-ubiquitous begonias. Paul R. Standley in his *Flora of Costa Rica* lists close to three dozen species of the genus, and undoubtedly more specimens have been added to herbaria since that work appeared in 1937.

The diverse geography of this country, about the size of West Virginia, can be roughly divided into three main vegetation belts which closely follow altitudinal limits. The *tierra caliente*, consisting of lowland rainforest is the type of vegetation most associated with the word "tropical". It is a bewildering array of broad-leaved evergreen trees whose buttressed trunks rise hundreds of feet above the ground, inter-connected by lianas and festooned with epiphytes. This type of forest is charac-

teristic of the lowlands on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast where daily rainfall is a certainty 300 days per year. The Pacific coast lowlands, however, experience a profound dry season of several months, and the resulting forest is a drought-deciduous thorn scrub, sharing little likeness in appearance or species with the true rainforest.

A fair portion of those begonia species inhabiting the rainforest are epiphytes, and the most familiar to the observer is *Begonia glabra*, often called by its synonym, *B. scandens*. Holding fast to the moist tree trunks by its roots, it climbs prolifically and freely produces large cymes of white flowers.

The *tierra templada*, or temperate zone, is represented at middle elevations in Costa Rica, specifically across the Meseta Central (Central Plateau) where three quarters of the population reside. This is coffee country, and the weather can best be described as "perennial spring." The residual forests of this area support the greatest percentage of Costa Rican species of begonia.

Begonias as a rule are excluded from the highland regions of Costa Rica, though a few shrubby species straggle up as far as 2400 meters upon the towering mountainsides. The *tierra fria*, as its name suggests, can become quite uncomfortably cool when the sun sets, though its glorious cloud forests provide the most

---

\*endemism: a species limited in range to a small geographic area



*Begonia ignea*, a tuberous variety apparently rarely grown, has typical pink *Begonia* blossoms.



*B. alnifolia*, named for the strong resemblance to leaves of the alder, shows "feather-veining" in its leaves.

interesting botanizing to be found within the country.

Of the middle elevation species, none is more widely known to begonia fanciers than *Begonia conchifolia*. This Costa Rican endemic is rhizomatous in habit, and the thick, succulent leaves are often distinctly marked with a blood red spot at the sinus. A large colony of this species along a shaded streambank near the town of Cartago was a most pleasing and unexpected sight one afternoon.

Four penninerved-leaf species, *Begonia estrellensis*, *B. alnifolia*, *B. cooperi*, and *B. carpinifolia*, are common along roadsides on the lower mountain slopes and at the forest edges. All are upright and shrubby and endemic to Costa Rica with the exception of *B. alnifolia*.

At middle elevations along the Pacific slopes can be found a handsome tuberous species, *Begonia ignea*. It is a robust well-branched plant with very tomentose, lobed leaves and an abundance of pink flowers.

The finest collecting sites for begonias in Costa Rica are usually along road cuts where the plants, taking advantage of the increased moisture and sunlight, form large colonies and flower prolifically. In such a situation in the coffee-producing Orosi Valley, I came upon a mass of *Begonia towarensis* exposed to full sun displaying its bright pink flowers high above the red-stemmed leaves. Contemplating a sight such as that leaves little wonder why so many are drawn to this bewilderingly diverse genus.



## BEGONIAS IN LOUISIANA

By Joycelyn O'Shaughnessy

Photos by the author

Four years ago I walked into a neighbor's yard and saw some beautiful plants I had never seen before: rex begonias. She shared some cuttings with me which I planted immediately. Most did very well. My success with these few begonias started a love affair that is growing year by year. By the end of that summer I had collected over 50 begonias. I now have over 125 specimen plants and another 50 or 60 cuttings that I am trying to establish.

Winter was coming on so my husband built me a small greenhouse. It was heated with a butane burner. But the winter was unusually cold that year (as low as 16 to 20 degrees.) I was very inexperienced and over-watered a great deal of the time. Between the cold weather and

overwatering, my lovely collection began to dwindle before my eyes. In the next two years at least half of the begonias I bought died either in the hot, humid southeastern Louisiana summer or in the very damp winters. Winter is usually not very cold, between 40 and 70 degrees, but the average rainfall is 65 inches a year. Humidity seldom goes below 60%.

In the third year of trying to raise begonias, I began to read every piece of written matter I could get my hands on. The *Begonian* was most helpful. I had learned a great deal from reading but a lot more from practical experience. I learned to judge when to water by feeling the crispness of the leaves. With the problem of overwatering under control I lost fewer plants. I also found



*B. masoniana* and rexes grow on floor of the greenhouse.



Exterior view of the greenhouse

potting in clay pots to be much better than plastic ones. However, my spreading angel wings (trailing canes) and shrub-like begonias are still hung in plastic baskets.

My collection was outgrowing the small lean-to greenhouse my husband had built two winters ago so he proceeded to build a bigger and better one, 18 feet wide and 22 feet long. Because of high humidity and severe dampness the bottom half of the greenhouse is constructed of cement blocks lying on large cement slabs. The top half of the greenhouse is covered with white fiberglass panels with alternating clear panels in the roof for extra sunlight for the angel wings. My greenhouse has a southern exposure with two windows on that side. There is a very large window on the east side for morning sun and a large entrance door on the west side for afternoon sun. There are several tall trees in my yard that

provide a great deal of shade.

With humidity being so high both in winter and in summer my soil medium must be one that drains quickly. It must stay on the dry side most of the time. I tried quite a few soil mixtures but none seemed quite right. Finally I tried one of my own ideas and it worked fine. The soil mixture consists of the following ingredients:

- 1 part top grade potting soil
- 1 part leaf mold
- 1 part peatmoss (Canadian)
- 1 part Redwood compost
- 1 part sand
- 1 part fine orchid bark
- $\frac{1}{4}$  part crushed oyster shells

My begonias grew lush and large in this medium. With proper watering techniques and a suitable growing medium my greenhouse was becoming a tropical paradise. However, after two years some plants had produced not one single bloom. I



B. 'Chantilly Lace' grew to 36" in diameter under care of the author.

tried several fertilizers without much success. One day I discovered a new fertilizer available in my area. It is Green Light Super Bloom. It contains the following available nutrients: 12% nitrogen, 55% phosphorus, 7% Potash with chelated iron. I used 1 teaspoon to a gallon of water every other week for about 8 weeks. Slowly but surely things began to happen. The foliage became brighter and healthier looking. The foliage of my rexes became more vivid and soon they were also full of blooms. The few semps that I grow were bursting with color and my trailing and large upright canes were so full of blooms many of the branches had to be staked to support the weight of the flowers.

After months in my new greenhouse I found a suitable arrangement for the begonias. Hanging basket types are hanging from the raft-

ers to get more sunlight, the rhizomatous are on benches and the rexes and a few others planted directly to the soil under the benches. The rexes especially seem to be happiest there because it is cooler and, while there is a great deal of bright light, there is very little direct sunlight. The tall canes and semps are placed where they receive sun in the morning and in the afternoon.

Over the last four years I have learned to love and appreciate my begonias and hope to be able to double or triple my collection in the future.

I still have some begonias that are not growing as well as I would like but in time I will learn the secrets of caring for them also. I hope some of my experiences will be helpful to begonia lovers who might be encountering some of the problems that I have had in the past.



## ABS MEMBER AWARDED GOLD MEDAL

By Carrie Karegeannes, Annandale, Virginia

John Scott, active ABS member in Bentleigh, Victoria, Australia, has been awarded the 1978 John Pascoe Fawkner Gold Medal for distinguished service to horticulture, the highest award given by the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria.

A long-time member of ABS round robins, John for years has freely shared research information, observations, photos, and sketches with members in England and the United States as well as with growers in Australia. Even before his retirement as an electrical foreman in 1975, he was a leader in his men's garden club, serving as show manager and as Secretary of the Indoor Plant Section and the General Gardening Section of the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria, helping to produce programs and plant shows. He displayed begonias in novel light gardens, such as an old TV case, to introduce light gardening to fellow members and stimulate interest in indoor gardening. He does quite a bit of public speaking on indoor plants, citing round robins often in his talks on begonias.

For some time John has also been horticultural adviser for occupational therapy in two hospitals, where he helps with plant propagation and care in the glasshouse and in windows of the wards. Patients' interest in growing plants can be important therapy.

John's "TV garden" was housed in an old case lined with plastic sheeting and planted as a terrarium. Charcoal on the bottom was topped

with planting mix, and assorted begonias were set in. Two 20-watt fluorescent tubes fitted under the top, one Gro-lux and one warm white. John painted a backdrop of the hills at Melrose, Scotland. Viewers at the garden show could look "without commercial interruptions," John told them. In another cabinet display, 4 by 2.6 by 2.3 feet with three 40-watt tubes, *B. goegoensis* lived two and a half years, along with *B. megaptera* and others, fronted by tiny begonia seedlings and a few African Violets. Before he introduced his first terrarium — a converted fish tank — to his club, John collected all the information he could on light gardening, much of it from robin members in the U.S.

For a spring show, John recorded native bird songs and placed the recorder in the display of native trees and shrubs, causing visitors to peer into branches for the birds.

The Royal Horticultural Society is the organizing body for horticulture in the State of Victoria, with numerous affiliated societies. In 1976 it formed a Council of representatives of all horticultural societies and garden clubs. The RHSV library, formerly in John's custody, has expanded and been given space in the Botanic Gardens, which also permits RHSV members to use its own extensive library of worldwide flora and hold monthly meetings in its facilities. A 1974 indoor plant and bonsai show there, including a large display of begonias, drew 2000 visitors.

John's gardening club has had 60

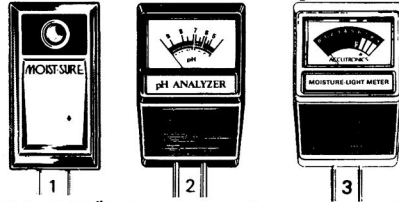
attending evening meetings and as many as 300 at its new Sunday afternoon meetings begun for persons who find late night driving difficult. Committee meetings and a busy schedule of shows crowd John's growing time, but he grows many seedlings from ABS Seed Fund offerings and round robin exchanges, studying the species. Visits to the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens and the Melbourne City Council Nursery, as well as growing seeds from collectors who have visited Mexico and New Guinea, add to his information.

Begonian readers will recall his photographs reproduced in color in the September 1977 issue. He recently reported that the *Symbegonia* at the Botanic Gardens had been in flower.

Among other growing experiments, John has cultivated bromeliad seed in test tubes, in an agar mixture usually used for orchids, and constructed a 20- by 7½-foot greenhouse using 700 old fluorescent tubes for part of the structure — again sharing information and results with others.

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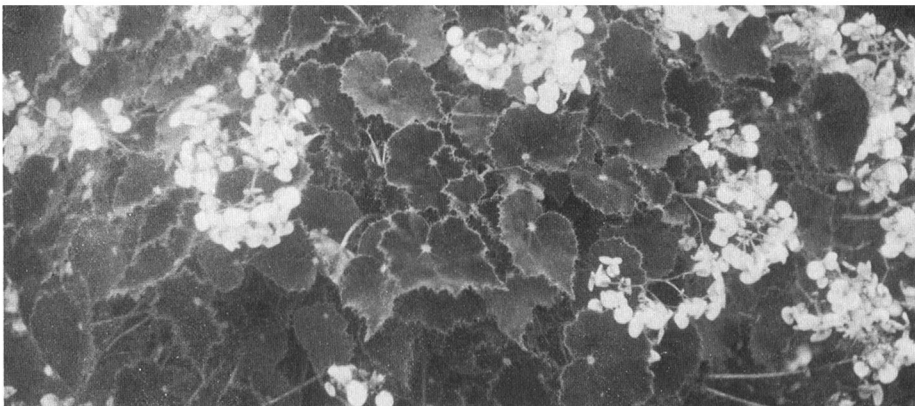
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Below: *B. 'Bethlehem Star'*, Wally Wagner's cultivar, has velvety black leaves with pale green "eyes." Although this plant was allowed to mound, it can be kept small for culture on table or window sill. Photo by W. Wagner.



## A PAIR OF PRO'S

By Kit Jeans, New Johnsonville, Tenn.

Very few people who grow begonias have done so successfully without being influenced by Elda Haring. She has been writing about begonias for the *Begonian* for the past 18 years. But I find that very little has been written about this diminutive and talented lady and I think it's time to remedy that situation.

However, I must add that one cannot write about just Elda. She would be the first to tell you that Elda is not Elda without her husband. If ever two people were tuned in on the same wave length and supportive of each other, it's the Harings. And I can say, without the smidgeon of a blush, that the woman hasn't been born who's immune to the charm of the courtly gentleman named Walter Haring.

In 1937, they started a garden together — from seed. They couldn't afford to buy plants. It was a hobby which would, over the next 30 some years, reap much more for them than flowers and more seeds. In 1973, their "cutting" garden would grace the pages of *House and Garden* and the photo essay would include a piece on how they cut and dry flowers for friends just for fun, a project basically Walt's. But back in the 30's, they weren't thinking about such end results. They were merely indulging in a pastime which brought them a great deal of pleasure for a modest price. As you might guess, however, these two people never do things half-way.

One of Elda's seed sources was



Elda Haring

the Park Company and at that time, George Park's pet project was the *Floral Magazine*, a magazine his company published for gardeners. It was edited by Elvin McDonald. Mr. McDonald asked the readers of this now-defunct publication to contribute articles on their growing experiences. Elda was one of those who took him up on the proposition. She's been at it ever since.

She does pieces periodically for the *New York Times*, *Plants Alive*, *Flower and Garden*, enterprises like *The Work Basket Magazine* and leaflets for horticultural groups and garden clubs. And the interesting thing about this is that she never writes about anything she doesn't grow. When you stop and think about that, remembering she has



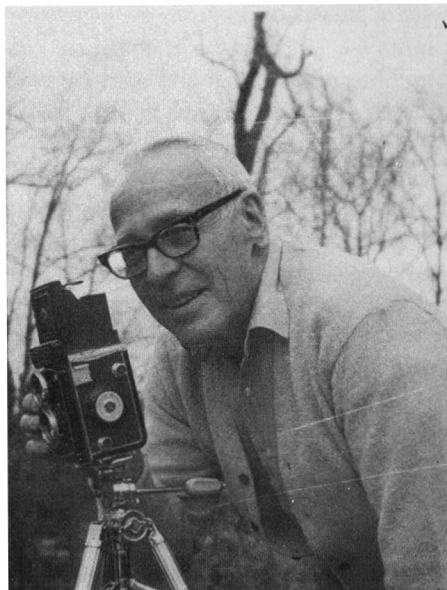
done 3 books, you realize just how much gardening lore Elda Haring has absorbed, tested, exercised and pondered over in the years since 1937.

Elvin McDonald urged her to write the first book. It was, appropriately enough, about growing from seed. As you might guess, its title is *The Complete Book of Growing Plants From Seed*. The next book came at the prompting of Helen Van Pelt Wilson and is called *Color for Your Yard and Garden*.

The last book she wrote is the one all of us in the ABS are most familiar with: *Begonias for Beginners*. It is a very practical manual containing a wealth of information on every aspect of growing begonias. And not just for beginners.

Now Walt Haring was not idle while all Elda's efforts were being expended on these books. All of them contain a great many of his photographs. He calls himself an amateur photographer. Walt is an amateur like I'm the quarterback for the Green Bay Packers. As it has been with everything else in their married life, all the books were a joint effort — by a *pair* of pros.

As for her love affair with begonias, Elda says she went through the same phases as most of the rest of us. She grew cactus for awhile, tropic-als and a number of other plants. In 1962, however, Ruth Merry, who was then Northeastern editor of the *Begonian*, asked permission of *Floral Magazine* to reprint in the society's magazine an excellent article Elda had written on the Calla Lily begonia. From that point on, begonias became the focus of her growing and



Walter Haring  
Photos by W. Haring

writing endeavors.

When I visited Elda in late autumn to get the facts for this article, modest lady that she is, she neglected to give me one rather important bit of information. (I chanced across it in an old copy of the *Begonian*). Elda Haring was the 1972 recipient of the ABS's Eva Kenworthy Gray Award. And I don't need to tell you this award, for "literary endeavors" or ". . . one who has been outstanding in his or her promotion of interest in the culture of begonias . . ." is about the most prestigious accolade the Society can bestow.

The one thing I'm not going to tell you is how Elda raises begonias. You can consult The Question Box and *Begonias for Beginners* for that. But I will take you on a tour of their lovely place in Flat Rock, North Carolina.

It starts at the end of the driveway

with a raised bed of mixed flowering plants — 125 feet of enchanting color. This is Walt's baby and he's no amateur in this endeavor either.

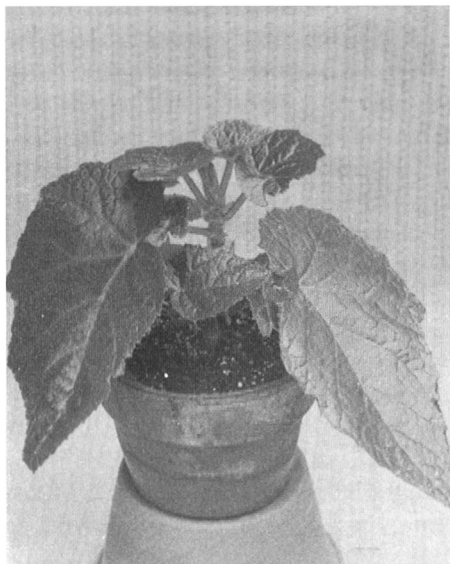
The greenhouse, which is attached to the garage, is not large. But then Elda never set out to see how many begonias she could grow, but how well. In order to give them all room, though, she keeps her plants petite. Root-pruning makes her begonias bushy and compact. And the white pebbles on the floor and in the benches are not tinged, as mine might be, with algae green. Her greenhouse is spotless. Elda practices what she preaches. Diseases and insects don't get much of a foothold in a tidy, well-kept greenhouse.

The greenhouse, however, is merely the appetizer. Elda's basement workshop is the main course. Here, without benefit of glass, grow *B. 'Exotica'*, *B. 'Velvet Queen'*, *B. 'Tingley Mallet'*, and *B. pearcei*. In pristine plastic globes thrive robust

*B. decora*, *B. rajah*, *B. versicolor* and other rare and usually finicky species. All are growing under lights and a natural humidity which ranges between 50 and 70%. This is where she tries various mixtures and methods, seeds, plants and cuttings.

Upstairs, specimen plants of begonias, gesneriads, and a few hang-over cacti are tastefully spread among the rooms and the spacious glassed-in porch. And everywhere are books and magazines on every phase and facet of gardening and plant culture. It's a plant addict's paradise.

But don't for one moment think that all this overpowers Elda and Walt Haring. Far from it. The Harings keep the plants and the library. It's not the other way around. This, in itself, is no small feat. I think the Harings ought to collaborate on one more book. Something like: *Self-Discipline For The Plant Collector . . . or Two Begonias*.



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*Begonia 'Ernest Martin'* was raised by Elda and photographed by Walt. It is typical of their cooperation in doing a job, but it is also typical of their helpfulness. Some time ago, an article on *B. egregia* mentioned that cultivars of *B. egregia* were few and far between. Shortly afterwards this photo came in the mail with a note that it was one of those rare cultivars. *B. egregia* x *B. 'Tingley Mallet'*, hybridized by Ernest Martin, was a plant Elda had in her greenhouse for a long time. I had been waiting for another article on *B. egregia* to use this photo, but this is the perfect time to say thank you and to share it with all ABS members. —P. P. B.

## CONTROL OF POWDERY MILDEW

The following information was presented in *Plant Gro Info*, a bulletin issued by Mikkelson's Inc. for growers who produce plants for the floral industry. Although the comments are directed to the quantity producer and are meant to apply to the hiemalis begonia as greenhouse crops, the plant enthusiast who is experiencing difficulties with mildew may find information that will be helpful to him. It may help to understand what sort of environment your plants have been exposed to before you purchased them.

### BEGONIA POWDERY MILDEW CAN BE PREVENTED.

Many kinds of begonias are susceptible to powdery mildew disease, but some are much more likely to become infected than others. Different strains of mildew pathogens have been identified, and these have variable growth rates on the same begonias. Different growers produce plants with varying degrees of cultural perfection and more or less substance. It is generally conceded that strong plants resist disease. When these differences are remembered, it is easy to understand seemingly conflicting reports about degrees of resistance of begonia cultivars to powdery mildew and about the effectiveness of fungicides.

A PREVENTIVE program is necessary, and it should include correct heating and ventilating as well as the use of proper fungicides. The objective in regulation of heating and ventilating is the prevention of moisture formation on the plant surfaces to prevent spore production

and spreading of the spores. There are primarily three reasons why correct heating and ventilating can keep plant surfaces dry: the relative humidity is reduced so that there is less water vapor available for deposition, the air circulation prevents the establishment of areas of higher relative humidity in the vicinity of the plants, and the plant temperature is higher than the air temperature.

The required heating and ventilating must be done in anticipation of what is needed to keep the plant surfaces dry because the amount of moisture is so slight that it cannot be seen. There should not be a problem when the sun is shining because the plants then are warmer than the air temperature and the relative humidity is low. When the sun disappears the situation is reversed — the plants cool faster than the air and the relative humidity increases. These conditions are suitable for the formation of moisture on the plant surfaces.

The basis then for the heating and ventilating program is activation of the heating system before the sun becomes ineffective as a source of heat. No, this is not at sunset. It is sometime before sunset. Toward the end of the day, continue to vent and maintain the night temperature with the heating system until after sunset. In the morning it is good procedure to establish the day temperature with the heating system before the sun is effective as the heating source.

Hiemalis begonias should be irrigated in the morning rather than in  
(Continued on page 78)



# TZU PAI TIEN KUI

## *Begonia fimbristipula*

By Richard A. Howard  
New York Botanical Garden

For thirty days during May and June of 1978 I was one of three representatives of U.S. botanical gardens in the party of ten forming the official delegation of the Botanical Society of America to the People's Republic of China. The delegation had an official invitation from the Botanical Institute of the Academia Sinica in Peking, and therefore we were guests of the Academy. We entered the People's Republic via Hong Kong and Canton and visited ten cities, with Kunming the westernmost and Peking the most northern. In each area we were privileged to visit botanical gardens, biology and botany departments of universities, botanical institutes, research stations, public gardens, communes and some areas of natural vegetation. Our travel and accommodations were fully scheduled and arranged, our visits with colleagues carefully planned; we were received graciously, with respect as scientists, and we were offered most enjoyable hospitality. We were pleased to meet junior as well as senior staff members, to learn of their work and to see the facilities of their institutions. We learned much of the trials and tribulations our colleagues had endured during the Cultural Revolution. Promises of future cooperation have resulted in an exchange of letters, requests and materials in the months since our visit. We were told that normalization would occur shortly, and so President

Carter's announcement of the recognition of the government came as no surprise.

Our last stop before leaving China was to be at the Sun Yat-Sen University in Canton. To our surprise and pleasure, the local chairman for that visit suggested that some of us might prefer to visit Seven Star Lake in the karst country, stay overnight at a local hotel and spend the following day on Ting Hu mountain examining the native vegetation, rather than visiting another laboratory, library and botany department. We agreed and accepted the invitation with alacrity. Ting Hu Shan, a classic collecting locality, is now a forest arboretum in an area of protected natural forest. On our arrival we were greeted by the director and his staff, who followed the procedure we had experienced many times. We gathered in a meeting room to be introduced to the staff and briefed on the operation and the resources we were to see. Normally, unsweetened green tea of the area is served immediately and continuously in large, covered cups, with boiling water poured from large thermoses. This time the beverage was different. A sweetened, pink-colored tea had been brewed and was served to us in smaller, standard teacups. The tea, we were told, was prepared from a local plant, *Begonia fimbristipula*, and was a specialty of the area.

We were driven to a high eleva-



紫背天葵，是夏天饮料中的佳品，用开水冲泡，其色紫红，味微酸，清香可口，若放少许白糖，其味更佳。能消暑除热，有助消化、健胃、解酒之效。  
每盒可泡水六市斤。

Begonia tea from *B. fimbriatipula* with labels from package.

tion on the mountain and had the chance to examine and photograph some of the unusual plants. The area is the type location for *Tsooniodendron*, a monotypic genus of the Magnoliaceae. Towering specimens of *Erythrophloeum fordii* (Leguminosae) were spectacular, while such genera as *Aquilaria* (Thymelaeaceae), *Litsea* (Lauraceae), *Canarium* (Burseraceae), *Ficus* (Moraceae), *Melastoma* (Melastomataceae) and *Acronychia* (Rutaceae) were represented by unfamiliar species. *Pothos repens*, epiphytic and climbing, dominated the boles of many towering trees, with the peculiar articulated leaves descending in overlapping waves. *Blastus cochinchinensis* (Melastomataceae) was represented by juvenile plants with attractive, white-dotted, gray-brown leaves with a metallic sheen. *Clerodendron viscosum*, although familiar as a cultivated

plant in greenhouses, was represented in many variants, each of which would be welcomed in cultivation. The dimorphic branches of *Psychotria serpens*, so much resembling the American *Marcgravia*, were photographed to record their unusual growth characteristics. These were our introductions to the vegetation of Ting Hu Shan.

We stopped at an area where the mountain stream had been dammed and then walked down a slippery trail cut into the mountainside. Various terrestrial orchids and species of *Utricularia* were in flower on the dripping rock face, and here occasionally we saw *Begonia fimbriatipula*, the source of the tea we had been served. Although this was a nature reserve, our colleagues gave permission for me to collect a few plants to take back to the United States. In fact, they collected more

than I did by scrambling up the hillside, removing the small plants and presenting them to me. Most plants had but two leaves arising from a scaly cormose base. None was in flower, but one very old inflorescence was seen. We were told that the plants gathered for the tea came from higher elevations and that the leaves were larger. With the plants safe in a plastic bag, we continued our descent to the headquarters area, where a public restaurant was in operation. We stopped in a small concession that sold cold drinks, candy and cigarettes to discover that the Begonia tea was for sale in packages attractively printed and wrapped in a cellophane-type covering. Adjacent to the store the tea was available in glasses — this time iced and cold and, if possible, even more delicious. We bought a number of packages for gifts for our friends in the Begonia Society, although we were not sure the product would be admitted on our return to the States.

The label on the package stated, in translation, "Special product of Tinhushan, Kwangtung Province" and "a product of Shin-hu Administration Station, Zhaoqing, Kwangtung Prov." The instructions indicated: "Tzu-pai-tien-kui is the best drink during the summer time. Soak tea in boiling water, its color is purplish red, taste slightly sour, fragrant to mouth. If a small amount of sugar is added its taste will be even better. It can keep you cool, removing any temperature, help digestion, strengthen the stomach, and is effective in dissolving an alcoholic hangover. Every package can be soaked in 10 pounds of water."

In discussing this tea with my Chinese colleagues in the United States, I learned it is indeed famous as a tea once available in monasteries in the southern mountainous areas of China. It is considered a balm for the dry stages of a head cold. It does not appear to be imported, as yet, into the United States.

*Begonia fimbriatipula* was described by Hance (Jr. Bot. 21: 202. 1883), and two collections were cited: C. Ford 6 May 1882 from Ting-ü-shan, Canton, and Rev. E. Faber 22 Sept. 1882 (Herb. propr. 22114) Lo-fau-shan. No lectotype has been selected. Subsequently Forbes and Hemsley (Jour. Linn. Soc. 23: 321. 1886) reported more material from Ford and stated, "Leaves of this or a closely allied species which are of a deep red colour, with the following note, 'Leaves of a Begonia used and sold by the priests at Tingushan monastery as a cure for fever, etc. The leaves are put in "Shamshin" (native spirit) and allowed to remain some hours, when the liquor is drunk. The leaves are sold also in Peking after being brought from Tingushan, where they have a great reputation.' In Hance's herbarium are leaves of the same species collected by Faber near Canton." Collections are available in various herbaria, indicating the occurrence of the species in Yunnan, Kwangtung, Hainan, Kwangsi and Fukien provinces. The majority of specimens have but one or two leaves, ovate to oval in outline, 4.5 x 2.5 cm. long and wide to 9.5 x 7.5 cm., and the largest 13 x 11 cm. The leaf apex is abruptly acute, the base shallowly to broadly cordate, the lobes sometimes



overlapping. The leaf margin is continuously irregularly dentate and denticulate, occasionally appearing to be fringed by the minute teeth. The leaf blade is described as dark green or yellow-green above and pale green or red and villose beneath. The smaller leaves we saw on living specimens were conspicuously deep red-purple, often iridescent above, and with lighter, almost white, spots. The inflorescence consists of one to few flowers, described by collectors as pink and fragrant. A specimen collected by W. T. Tsang noted, "For medicine".

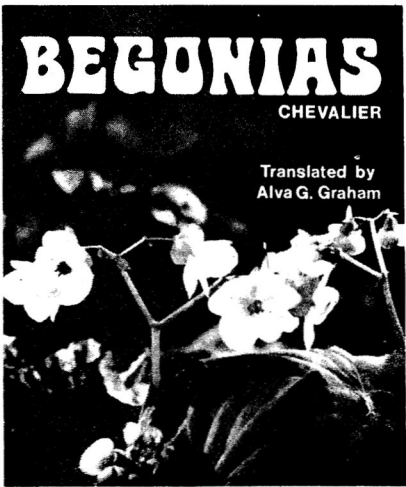
The small plants collected on Tin Hu Shan were wrapped in tissue after being washed clear of soil and passed inspection in Los Angeles without comment. However, in the greenhouses of the Arnold Arboretum the corms lost all leaves and entered dormant period. They were kept in the dark in a cool house and did not respond until removed to a warm house and placed under supplementary light. Half a dozen plants are now developing leaves. The collection was shared with Corliss Engle and Michael Kartuz, with the hope that leaf propagation techniques may be successful in increasing the availability of this unusual Begonia. This should be an attractive ornamental plant, even though it is small in stature and appears to have a dormant stage. Two other species of Begonia were also introduced as living plants.

The task of preparing a treatment of the Begoniaceae for the Flora of China has been assigned to Dr. Li Yen-hui, Institute of Tropical Botany, Academia Sinica, Xi Shuang

Ban Na, Yunnan Province, China, under the editorial supervision of Professor Yu Te-tsun, with work to begin in 1980. With diplomatic relations now established between the United States and the People's Republic of China, we can hope for the exchange of specimens on loan by scholars and perhaps the acquisition of additional material for living culture. We certainly will cooperate with Dr. Li Yen-hui with literature and specimens as his work on the Begoniaceae of China progresses.

**BEGONIAS**  
CHEVALIER

Translated by  
Alva G. Graham



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## FROZEN BEGONIA SEEDS

By Harry Beidleman, Milford Square, Pennsylvania

*Last fall after he had read Mildred Swyka's article, "Volunteer Joys" in the July "Begonian", Harry Beidleman wrote to tell us of his observations. The letter was too late to help most people take action, but at the onset of this growing season, his comments may alert you to watch for volunteers in your own garden. — Ed.*

I was interested to read Mildred Swyka's account of "Volunteer Joys." They are fun!

Mildred says, "I am sure begonia seeds do not survive the winter. . . ." but they do! Early last summer I bedded out about 20 plants grown from seeds from our exchange — I can't remember the name of the variety. They thrived and bloomed well in shades of white, pale and deep pink. Before frost I brought in a few plants, which didn't do well at all, and forgot about the whole deal until just two weeks ago. I was pulling weeds in that tiny plot and found those begonias had seeded themselves to the tune of at least a thousand plants. "When did I plant dichondra?" I wondered, because that was what the patch looked like.

The area where the seeds popped up was a moist spot at the base of a huge boulder where the sun seldom gets to, except in small doses as it moves over my woodland acres. The soil is not particularly fertile, because moss and weeds abound, except that I did include dehydrated cow manure in the original planting, along with some lime. Several hostas grow in this same area, as do wild mountain rue and several ferns. In this same spot I have had impatiens volunteer. Here in the Quakerstown area of Pennsylvania, we had a very cold winter with temperatures near the 10 to 0 degree marks for several

weeks at a stretch. Perhaps the answer is that the slope faces south and the naked trees allow the sun full scope during the winter. We did have a snow cover at least half of the winter. These seeds really survived and thrived. I dug out about 20 of the seedlings and flatted them for eventual potting just because I thought it was the least I could do to show my appreciation for their great effort.

*Mildred Swyka added a few additional comments about her garden, and though not timely, they are pertinent and may help you later on.*

I start digging my semps around the first of October, generally cut them back to eight inches or so, and put them in flats, 13" x 22" x 2" I leave the dirt on the roots and water them just enough to keep them alive during the winter. The flats get protection from frost, but they are kept cool and are not fed. Around March first, the plants start new growth and are a nice size to set in the garden beds around May 15th.

In 1977 I had to rush because of an early frost and did not even cut them back. When I began to put the dormant plants along the house last spring, we found hundreds of volunteers in the flat. These were from the seed pods that had been on the untrimmed plants. I tried to handle them especially carefully so as not to disturb them.

M. S.

## VERSATILE SEMPERFLORENS

By Hazel Snodgrass, Ventura, Calif.

The history of our beloved little "semperflorens begonias" is one of adventure and dedication. In 1821 our first little wanderer was discovered at Berlin Botanical Gardens, nestled among other plants in soil brought back from southern Brazil. It was one of the earliest begonias to be discovered.

In 1881, in a cross between *B. roezlii* and earlier hybrids that had been crossed with each other, taller stems and colors from white to pink and red appeared. In 1886, it is believed the variegated foliage was introduced. In 1890 the bronze tints added their charm.

In 1890, in a cross with *B. fuchsioides*, the typical smaller and glossier foliage appeared. Lemoine of France introduced the first double-flowered semps in 1898.

Surprisingly enough, in 1911 the catalog of Theodosia Burr Shepherd of Ventura, California listed eleven semps, one of which was double-flowered and two of which were semi-double.

Some of the early 1900 introductions still remain favorites. In the 1940's Leslie Woodriff of California and Dr. W. D. Holley and Ernest K. Logee of New England worked extensively to the further development of our beloved semperflorens.

Today there are over two hundred varieties.

Our semps have many charming characteristics. They branch freely. They boast many colors. They come in small border plants and in taller background heights. Some display

bantam blooms; the butterfly types surprise us with large, glowing flowers. They flourish in pots or strawberry jars. If cut back after peak bloom, they are almost everblooming.

The Calla Lily begonias present somewhat of a challenge, but are something everyone should try. Because they resent being moved, give them a permanent home. Include *B. 'Kallaking'* in your collection because it has much larger leaves and blooms.

Semps are easily propagated from stem cuttings or seeds. Pony paks are available at your favorite nursery. What could be more beautiful than a rainbow of growing colors?



*Begonia* 'Pink Sensation', a new semp cultivar, has large flowers that make a brilliant show on 8-10 inch plants. Photo by Ball Seed Co.

## 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. Send order to Advertising Manager, Pat Maley, 1471 E. Madison, El Cajon, CA 92021.

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**Exhibition Manual.** Optional supplement of The Thompson Begonia Guide for subscribers and non-subscribers, 100 pages. Price \$4.95, optional binder \$3.50, including packaging and shipping. N.Y. residents add state tax. Thompson, P.O. Drawer PP, Southampton, NY 11968.

**Picotee, orange, pink, dbl blossoms, 5-7".** Vigorous upright tubers. 6/\$8.00, 12/\$14.00 post paid. Check with order. Delivery in Mar/April. Pacific Tuberous Begonias, 1065 Cass St., Monterey, CA 93940.

**Working partner** with investment capital wanted for development. Woodriff's Fairyland Begonia & Lily Garden, 1100 Griffith Rd., McKinleyville, CA 95521.

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## HOW MANY ARE WE GROWING?

There are over 1200 species of Begonias known to science. Exactly how many of these are in cultivation? I am currently compiling a list for the research committee and I would like your help.

Please take a few minutes to jot down a list of those species that you are growing, especially the unusual or rare ones. Perhaps each branch could send a list of the species that its members are growing.

If you are uncertain whether one of your plants is a species, you can eliminate those with names in English such as *B. 'Sophie Cecile'*. Those that have Latin names are probably species. Species names are printed in italics in most books. If in doubt; list it and I'll check it for you.

Send your list to Scott Mandeville, ABS Research Committee, 47 Fernwood Ave., Daly City, CA 94015.

## ROUND ROBIN NOTES

By Mabel Corwin, Round Robin Director

### Planting Seeds

Everyone seems to be planting begonia seeds. Sue Ellyn Jackson, Arkansas, reported: I could find only plastic shoe boxes with green lids, so I set an opaque plastic container (like luncheon meat comes in) approximately 6" x 12" x 4" on the green lid as a base. I filled this container with perlite. I planted the seeds in 3" plastic pots filled with perlite in the bottom and african violet soil on the top. These were placed on top of the perlite in the opaque plastic containers. The clear plastic shoe box became the cover. Everything germinated like mad. When I removed the plastic shoe box I could add water to the perlite and not disturb the seedlings.

Letitia Isner, Ohio, plants begonia seeds in plastic party glasses with another taped upside down as a top to make a mini-greenhouse. Holes can be made in the bottom of the glass with a heated nail or ice pick. After germination she removes the top gradually.

### Light for cuttings

Roger Bishop, Iowa, has a large commercial greenhouse. He says: We are most successful with rex and Iron Cross (*B. masoniana*) wedge cuttings when we give them bright light when first potted from the propagating tables. We have fewer losses when we give about 2,000 foot candles on top of a shady bench rather than 600-800 under the bench. We lose them to rot quite often when they are placed under the bench. When the small plants have several leaves they can be moved to

a lower light level, say 1,000 to 1,500 foot candles.

### Styrofoam in mix

Jim Newbold, Florida, found some large pieces of styrofoam that had been used for packing. They had been thrown onto a trash pile, so he took them home. He used a piece of board 1" x 3" and drilled holes in it about  $\frac{3}{8}$ " apart. He drove small nails in the holes to make a rake to shred the styrofoam into little pieces. He uses this in his potting mix and reports it works like a charm.

### Culture of *hiemalis*

Ivah Johnson, Texas, reported on her *hiemalis* begonias: I grow my *hiemalis* plants just as I grow my *semperflorens*. I let them dry out between waterings, and I fertilize each time I water. I use a weak solution,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. to a gallon of warm water. I do not grow my *hiemalis* with my other begonias. All the others that I have require more moisture and more humidity. *Hiemalis* must have good air circulation. I group them with my bromeliads. I have been able to grow them quite well under a fluorescent light fixture with 2 40-watt lamps, or in an east window. They cannot survive high temperatures and perform best when the temperature range is 65 to 75 degrees. I tried growing them in heavy shade like the tuberous begonias, but the heat was too much for them. They seem to be pretty well immune to insects. I have not had botrytis in 2 years. I don't know if the fact that I add 1 tbsp. of benomyl to 6 quarts of soil mix has



protected the plants or not.

I have rooted the leaves of the Schwabenland types, but not the Aphrodites. I root the leaves of the hiemalis plants just the same as I root other large leaved begonias, and I slit the veins. I don't have much trouble rooting the cuttings. I let my cuttings dry until they form a callous, then put them in a plastic box with barely moist soil mix and cover. I forget about them for a week, then transplant into pots. The cuttings root rapidly.

### Potting mix

Bob Hamm, Texas, finds the mix he uses in his light garden too heavy for plants in the greenhouse because of increased humidity. He is experimenting with plastic berry boxes. He lines with sphagnum moss and plants in them. The plants drain better. So far they are doing fine.

### Mildew

Mary Harbaugh, Wisconsin, reported: This year I found it quite interesting that the plants which got mildew were upstairs on the window-sill. They had the best air circulation,

but also the warmest temperature. All my other plants were under lights downstairs with much less air circulation, but cooler temperatures. This is a reverse of what usually occurs.

Bernard Yorke, Australia, discovered a nurseryman who grows thousands of Iron Cross begonias (*B. masoniana*). He waters overhead and does not have insect or mildew problems. After watering he dusts with finely powdered sulphur.

### Mealy bug control

Betty Tillotson suggests a quick spray of Aqua New hair spray for mealy bugs. Then an hour later wash off with clear water. She finds if they are persistent they can be eradicated by the use of Cooke's Insecticide — Fungicide spray. It is a systemic.

You are welcome to join one or several robins. If you are interested write to me and I will send you a list of subjects available. It is a good way to make new friends and learn more about growing begonias.

Mabel Corwin  
1119 Loma Vista Way  
Vista, CA 92083

## CONTROL OF POWDERY MILDEW

(Continued from page 69)

the afternoon, and water distribution by tube is recommended instead of capillary mat or subirrigation because lower relative humidity can be maintained.

The fungicide program must be a preventative one beginning right after potting and continuing until the plants are marketed . . . Karathane at the rate of 6 to 8 oz. per

100 gallons, applied every two weeks should give good control on young plants. However, since Karathane may burn open flowers, most growers switch to Benlate when plants are being finished for market.

Although the comments here are made specifically for hiemalis begonia crops, the suggestions are appropriate for most kinds of begonias.

# CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND

Linda Miller, Director

## SPECIES

- MR 1 — *B. acetosa*: Brazil. Lovely compact rhizomatous species. Leaves are heart shaped and velvety, olive-bronze with wine red underside. Flowers white. Germination time: 15 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 2 — Brazil species. Beautiful rhizomatous plant, rough textured leaves, light green in the center and along the nerves, deeper olive to dark brown in other areas. The underside and leaf stems are deep red. Flowers white. (See June 1978, page 144 for photo) Germination time: 15 days. ....per pkt 1.00



*B. convolvulacea* grown in a garden site

- MR 3 — *B. convolvulacea*: Brazil. Trailing species with almost round, light green, slightly lobed leaves. Small white flowers in spring. Makes a nice basket plant. Germination time: 20 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 4 — *B. fenicis*: Philippines. Rhizomatous. Completely smooth oval, green leaves on red petioles, and loose panicles of white flowers. Germination time: 15 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 5 — *B. gigantea*: India. Name means "giant". 2-3 ft. rhizomatous plant with a swollen base sending up many tall, slim stems, topped by tight balls of white to pale pink flowers that each resemble a

- bird poised in flight. Germination time: 13 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 6 — Guatemalan species. Green star leaves. Rhizomatous type. Germination time: 8-18 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 7 — *B. incarnata*: Mexico. Frilly, fluffy-looking plant with light green leaves charmingly fluted and scalloped on the edge. Flesh pink flowers in winter. Germination time: 10 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 8 — *B. kellermanii*: Guatemala. Shrub-like with green, felted leaves. Leaves somewhat cupped. Flowers white. Germination time: 9 days. ....per pkt. 1.00
- MR 9 — *B. macrocarpa*. Shrub-like with small olive green leaves, pointed, with red underside. Flowers white. Can be grown as a basket plant. Germination time: 12 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 10 — *B. malabarica*: Ceylon. One of the oldest known begonias. A thick-stemmed upright. Grows to 2 ft. Deeply toothed leaves, which are white spotted when young, covered with short white hairs. Leaves grow to 6 inches long. Flowers are bright pink. A must for everyone's collection. Germination time: 6 days. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 11 — *B. masoniana*: Singapore. Known as the Iron Cross Begonia. Leaves are very pebbled with a distinctive mahogany marking on green leaves. Flowers greenish white in late spring and summer. Fresh seed that has been tested, will take from 4 to 8 weeks to germinate, so be patient. A much sought plant. ....per pkt 1.00
- MR 12 — *B. popenoei*: Honduras. Upright rhizome, with large, roundish green leaves. Very easy to start and an easy grower. Flowers are large and white. Germination time: 10-18 days .....per pkt 1.00
- MR 13 — *B. purpurea*: Brazil. Very special, large rhizomatous plant with palm-like, reddish leaves, frilly around edges. Flowers in large clusters, chartreuse with a pink edge. Germination time: 12-16 days. ....per pkt 1.00

#### HYBRIDS

- MR 14 — *B. episila* x *B. metallica* .....per pkt .50
- MR 15 — *B. metallica* x *B. tomentosa* .....per pkt .50
- MR 16 — *B. leptotricha* x *B. incana*: For lovers of the hairy and dry growing plant. ....per pkt .50
- MR 17 — Mixed Australian hybrids. Some very lovely plants from this group. Good germination has been reported. ....per pkt .50
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- MR 19 — *B. 'Paris Market'* .....per pkt .50

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- MR 26 — *Platycerium ridleyi*. One of the larger and more difficult to grow varieties. Very lovely. ....per pkt .75
- MR 27 — *Hippeastrum*. Lovely amaryllis in red, and red with white stripe. ....per pkt .25

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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR  
MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY  
January 22, 1979**

The meeting was called to order in the South Gate Auditorium by President Randall at 7:50 P.M. Pearl Benell led the pledge of allegiance, and Gil Estrada read the Aims and Purposes. The minutes of the November meeting were read by the secretary and approved as read. A letter from Mildred Thompson concerning the Research Department was read.

Charters for the following branches were approved: Taconic, Cheekwood, and The Palm Beaches, and the Board welcomes them to the Society.

The Board gave tentative approval of the constitution and by laws of the Southwest Begonia Growers Association, subject to approval by the By laws Committee.

Gil Estrada gave his report for the Bookstore for November and December. There was a balance on hand of \$2,244.99, expenses \$833.64, sales \$948.00, leaving a balance Dec. 31, \$2,359.35. He gave the Treasurer a check of \$1,107.00 earmarked for the Publication Account.

Second Vice President Doug Frost, reported that Wanda Elin was checking a meeting place in Orange County. They will report at the next meeting.

Eleanor Calkins, Treasurer, reported a balance on hand of \$1,811.37, receipts of \$2,139.56, disbursements of \$3,510.30, leaving a balance \$440.63, as of November 30th. December receipts \$5,345.48, disbursements \$5,442.11, with a balance of \$344.00 Dec. 31st.

Business Manager Bill Walton explained a change in renewal notices and membership cards. The Board approved \$81.00 for labels, \$50.00 for bulk reserve, and \$40.00 for permit to the Post Office.

Mabel Corwin, Round Robin Director, reported 15 Robins in November and 19 in December. Some Robins were delayed by mail, and others were delayed because they weren't sent on. Most are straightened out now.

Public Relations Director Diane Fries has written various magazines correcting information about the Society.

President Randall read the report for the Seed Fund Director, Linda Miller, cov-

ering November and December. Receipts for November were \$356.80, and \$107.58 for December, with \$5.53 expenses for supplies.

The Editor Phyllis Bates explained some problems with the getting the **Begoniam** out. The new index will be ready soon. Also, there was discussion about printing the Constitution and Bylaws again, to be considered later.

Kathy Brown, Membership, processed 103 memberships in November, and deposited \$1,434.10 in receipts. There were 167 memberships in December, and receipts of \$1,163.70. Membership as of January 22nd is 2,901.

Awards Chairman Thelma O'Reilly outlined the work she is doing.

Marge Lee sent out two Judging Courses, 4 Classification booklets, and 4 Point Scoring booklets, with a total income of \$29.75, and donated postage.

Lending Librarian Dolores Fernandez raised a question about lending books. A motion was passed requiring a deposit for books based on the value of each book. Irreplaceable books are not to be loaned but can be used at her place. Since she needs to qualify requests, the Board moved to obtain a membership list for Dolores; also one for Mabel Corwin, Linda Miller and the Editors.

Katharine Alberti, Begonian Sales, sold \$25.00 in back issues, and has a balance of \$113.00 in that account.

The Board approved a motion to send a letter of thanks to Kandid Litho for the favors that have been extended to the Begonia Society.

Nomenclature Co-Chairman Thelma O'Reilly reported she and Carrie Karegannes are working together organizing their department, and will submit names of other members soon. Some printing will have to be done soon.

A motion was passed to add Norma Taylor to the Bylaws committee. Chairman is Ralph Corwin, and others on the committee are Chuck Richardson, Gil Estrada, Margaret Taylor, Bill Walton, and President Randall.

The Board passed a motion to send a letter of Thanks to Freeway Stores for a donation of \$50.00 for a photocopy of **Die Begonien**.

After Branch reports, the meeting adjourned at 9:58.

Virginia Barnett

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The next branch directory will appear in the April issue.

The Board of Directors will meet Monday, March 19, 7:30 p.m., at the Fullerton S & L, 2310 E. Lincoln Ave., Anaheim.

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### February cover:

The plant shown on the cover of last month's issue is *B. 'Yanonali'* identified by Rudy Ziesenhenné as his cultivar. It is a cross of *B. mazae* and *B. carrieae*.

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