The Begonian

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The **Begonian**

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American Begonia Society

Founded January 1932 by Herbert P. Dyckman

Aims and Purposes

To stimulate and promote interest in begonias and other shade-loving plants.

To encourage the introduction and development of new types of these plants.

To standardize the nomenclature of begonias.

To gather and publish information in regard to kinds, propagation, and culture of begonias and companion plants.

To issue a bulletin that will be mailed to all members of the society.

To bring into friendly contact all who love and grow begonias.

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American Begonia Society - P.O. Box 471651, San Francisco CA 94147-1651

Membership - Subscription, dues, circulation inquiries, and address changes: John Ingles, Jr.,157 Monument, Rio Dell CA 95562-1617; (707) 764-5407.

ABS Web Site address - http://www.loop.com/~begonia/index.html

Cover: *Photo and background photo of* **Bob Koehler's** *hybrid* **B. 'Molly's Marvel'** taken by **Tim Anderson**.
Back: Tuberous Begonia grown by **Jackie and Harry Davis**, photo by **Mary Ann Leer**

B. olbia

In This Issue

Articles

Regular Features

Make sure to make your Convention plans early, it's right around the corner and will be here before you know it. I hope to see everyone attend, you won't be sorry.

Quick

Check your mailing label. If it reads 5/97 or 6/97, your membership is about to expire. Please renew! We don't want to lose you.

Around ABS

Things have still been progressing in the Begonia world, even with the Holidays and winter weather. If you didn't notice already, a few ABS offices have changed hands. **Richard Macnair** has stepped in as the new Secretary for ABS replacing dear **Margaret Fisher** who was becoming overwhelmed with her regular job and keeping up with her Secretary duties. **Elaine Ayers** has taken over the Members-at-Large group, replacing **Thelma McRae** who has been ailing and trying to keep the Members-at-Large going with her one good arm which made it difficult for her to type. Finally, **Ann Salisbury** has taken over the duties for Display Advertising, replacing **Virginia Jens** who was trying to do her ABS duties on top of two regular jobs. Margaret, Thelma, and Virginia deserve our thanks for all the hard work they have done and though we are going to miss them we can understand how overwhelmed they have been.

I've received word that the **Rubidoux Branch** in Riverside, CA has dissolved. Their membership had dropped too low and the treasury was empty. Most of the remaining members have joined the Orange County Branch. Sad news but situations and members do change.

I've also heard from the **Begonia Werkgroep Nederland** in Holland. They now have an **E-mail address** if you would like to contact them. It's **BeWe.Huckriede@Inter.NL.net** and no you don't have to know Dutch to write.

I've received some wonderful newsletters during the past few months from most of the branches. If you aren't already sending them, please add me to your mailing list for items for this column and to see what's going on in your area. Sorry my time was so short lately to include much in this issue from the newsletters.

These happy people are the organizational meeting to form a new branch in **Oregon**. Although the branch hasn't been approved as yet for an official charter, they hope to soon be known as the **Cascade Branch**. I didn't receive a list of names to go with this photo but I figured that any group that was willing to work on a creating a new branch deserved to have their picture published. They should become official at the next **National Board Meeting**.

Minutes of the January16, 1997 National Board Meeting

The board meeting of the **American Begonia Society** was conducted by mail.

The ballots were mailed on December 16, 1996 to thirty (30) Board Members and thirty nine (39) National Directors or National Representatives. the voting closed on january 15, 1997.

The following agenda was presented to the board with voting as follows:

1. Richard Macnair has been appointed interim secretary to complete the 1996-97 term.

Do you approve? Yes-59 No-0

2. A new appointment has been made for the Members-at-Large Chairman-**Elaine Ayers** of Cleveland, Ohio has been selected.

Do you approve? Yes-59 No-0

3. The Greater Atlanta Branch of the American Begonia Society has requested the National Convention be held in Atlanta, Georgia, on June 19-20, 1998. **Russ Richardson** and **Ed Boyett** will be Co-chairmen.

Do you approve: Yes-58 No-1

Four (4) Board members and six (6) National Directors did not vote.

The next **Board Meeting** of the American Begonia Society will be held in May, 1997 at the ABS National Convention in Houston, Texas.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Salisbury, President
American Begonia Society

Submissions

I would still appreciate articles on the following topics in addition to any other topics:

Hybridizing
Begonia Culture
Propagation
Specific Begonia Culture (*how to grow a particular variety)*
Growing Under Lights
Home Research
Any Pictures of Begonias
Favorite Plants (*include good pictures*)
Growing Areas and Greenhouses (*include picture of grower and several of growing areas*)
Growing Indoors
Setting and Starting Seed

Please realize that articles or pictures are not printed in the order that they are received but as needed. Almost all will be used eventually, if not, I will let you know right away and the reason. I do appreciate your hard work. ***the editor***

Quick Tip

Quick Tips are short, one line or one paragraph culture tips. I know you have them; I've seen them in your branch newsletters, so send them in. You will receive credit for each submission that is printed.

Send Quick Tips to:

Maria Holmes
760 W. Lomita Bl. #144
Harbor City, CA 90710

MariaHolmes@worldnet.att.net

Hints on Hybridizing

by Howard Siebold

Understanding **Mendel's Law** can be helpful in hybridizing begonias but not absolutely necessary. Keep a few basic rules in mind and you will better understand the results that you get.

First rule - the characteristics of the parents that you use may be either **Dominant** or **Recessive**. That will apply whenever you cross a **species begonia** with another **species begonia**. A species begonia will produce an identical begonia when crossed with itself. For example, when crossing a tall species with a compact species, one of those characteristics may be dominant and the other recessive. The **first offspring** of that cross (**F1**) will show the dominant characteristics. You might be looking for the recessive characteristic in which case you would cross the **offspring with itself** or with each other. That gives the (**F2**) generation. those offspring will show a ratio of about three with dominant to one with recessive in that particular characteristic. The same rule applies to other characteristics such as leaves, flowers, and so on, so you should understand that the result that you desire may require several crosses of the (**F1**) offspring with each other or with themselves. You may also need to cross the (**F1**) offspring with one or both parents. This is known as "**Backcrossing**"and is a handy tool to use.

The **female flowers** are usually receptive to pollen soon after they open. If you are in doubt, make the same pollination again a few days later. The **pollen** is ripe and ready to use when you can see the yellow dust on the flower petals. Nudge the stamens with your thumbnail. If you can see some yellow grains on the nail, it is ready. Always attach a tag to the female flower when making a cross showing the date and the other parent. Don't depend on your memory! You can rub the **stamens** with pollen over the female **pistils** but that can break off some of the anthers. A better way is to remove the stamens and put them in a plastic or glass tumbler. Shake the tumbler gently and you will see the pollen on the bottom of the tumbler. Buy some good quality small artists brushes and dedicate one to each of the tumblers. Label each tumbler with the name of the pollen parent. It is easy to collect some pollen on the brush and dust it on the **pistils** of the female flower. If the cross is successful, the petals of the female will drop off in a few days. When the petals have fallen from the female flower, the **seed pod** will take a month or more before the seed is ready to harvest. Watch it carefully as slots will appear at the top of the pod near the stem. When they appear, pick the pod and put it in a warm place to dry. When it is dry, remove the stem and empty the seed on to a flat sheet of typing paper. Carefully remove any chunks of debris from the pod. Tilt the sheet of paper over a second sheet until the seeds roll off. Some chaff may also roll off so repeat the process several times. Inspect the cleaned seed with an **8X or 10X magnifying glass** to insure that it is clean.

The Second Rule is that when crossing a hybrid with itself, you will never get offspring that are identical to the hybrid. **F2 hybrids** are obtained by crossing **two F1 hybrids** and unless you can duplicate those you have little chance of success.

When hybridizing with **tuberhybrida**, you are working with the results of many years of **crosses** and **backcrosses** involving dozens of parents and grandparents. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that you have a large **gene pool** that can give some spectacular results. The disadvantage is that it is not easy to identify the dominant and the recessive characteristics. The big problem in working with tuberhybrida is that the largest and best blossoms are completely double and almost never show any pollen. Some are always **sterile**. Some of the male blossoms may tend to be less double toward the end of the season and will show stamens. If this occurs by early October, you may make crosses and have viable seed before the plant goes dormant. The alternative method is to root cuttings of the desired parent as soon as possible, perhaps in June, and allow flower buds to start. Then stress the rooted cutting to try to force the male flower to form stamens. Stress can be caused by lack of food, lack of water etc. **Frank Reinelt** was one of the early hybridizers of tuberhybrida and was perhaps the best ever. He relied on heat to promote stress, mentioning in one letter that after working in his greenhouse he was completely wet with perspiration.

(***Howard Siebold*** *is a well known and respected hybridizer of tuberhybrida begonias. His hybrid* ***B. 'Sweet Dianne'*** *won last year's* ***Alfred D. Robinson medal****. Howard previously had an article published in the Begonian; Hybridizing for Fragrance, Sept./Oct. 1989, page 68*)

More Hints on Hybridizing

by Brad Thompson

From a **hybridizer** in **Germany**, passed on to me by **Milan Sulc** of **Switzerland**, is this tip for crossing varieties of begonias that won't usually cross because they are not closely related. I haven't personally tried this method but it sounds good in theory and I intend to try it. **Milan's friend** has used it successfully. As most of you know, species will self pollinate very easily. This **German hybridizer** theorized that the reason some of the crosses didn't take was because they were so different that the pollen lacked something to complete the fertilization of the ovaries. What he did was to first self-pollinate the plant with its own pollen and then pollinate it with the begonia pollen he wanted to cross it with. In theory, the self-pollination prepared the way for some of the foreign pollen to fertilize the plant also. With this method you have to grow all the seed that is formed because only a few seedlings will be the cross and the rest will be selfs of the host plant. Those seedlings that are the cross will be easier to determine if the mother plant you choose is a species because if you are using a hybrid for this method even the selfs will have a lot of variety. With a species cross, all the seedlings will either be the species or they'll be the hybrid you are trying for.

You may not have considered this fact before but a single begonia seedpod can have multiple parents. Since each grain of pollen fertilizes only one egg to form a seed, if the female flower is brushed with the pollen of many different male flowers, there will be many crosses in the same pod. Also, since begonia ovaries are divided into three compartments, you could fertilize each compartment with a different pollen and have three different crosses in the same pod. I'm not suggesting you do multiple crosses like this on purpose (unless you to experiment.) I'm sharing the information to help explain some of those wierd crosses might have gotten at times.

Helping Seedlings Survive That Awkward Age

by Freda Holley

Raising begonias from seed is a passion I indulge without a greenhouse. I use fluorescent lights in winter and a tree shaded patio in summer. Despite my best efforts to restrain my planting efforts and not plant latter than December, by spring I always have many seedlings that have reached that awkward age; too big to stay inside and too small to survive outside in pots. Also, the plants often begin to get too warm under lights. Typically, I lose more seedlings at this stage than any other in the growing process. By accident, I stumbled on a way to bring them through that awkward age.

One day when potting up some of my older seedlings I ran out of small pots. Because I had learned that tree seedlings and tomato plants planted under plastic milk jug covers grew twice as fast and because milk jugs are easy to come by , I decided to try potting up my begonia seedlings in milk jugs but in a somewhat unique way. I put generous holes in the bottom of the jug for drainage and cut a window from one side of the jug leaving a lip of about three inches. I filled this with my usual very light seedling mix and planted three or four seedlings in the little cave. The cap was left on. I then placed the whole thing against the north side of our brick wall, the window facing out. The sun wouldn't strike the jugs there. To my surprise, these seedlings grew much faster than planted in pots. Moreover, I needed to water them very rarely even over a hot summer. I did learn that placing the jugs where sun reached them even for just a few hours a day did not work; the plants quickly got too hot.

Begonia Seedlings are happy in their caves.

With this success, I tried the very young seedlings, those at the awkward stage, planting as many as twenty to a jug. Here in their protected environment where higher

humidity was maintained, even the smallest seedlings grew. I was able to mature many more seedlings than I had in the past. At the same time, the cause of recycling was served as all of my friends now save their milk jugs for me to use for my begonias as well as my other gardening efforts. Many of my begonia jugs are in their fourth cycle of use. If kept out of the sun the jugs tend to last a long time.

(***Freda Holley*** *grows and writes about begonias in* ***Ozone, AR****. She is also the current editor of the* ***SWR Newsletter***)

Humidity lovers such as B. lubbersii do particularly well in the jug environment.

Quick Tip

I found this old churn at a farm auction. It holds 10 gallons and is made of stainless steel. I put potting soil, bone meal, perlite, and a bit of composted manure in, tighten the lid down, and spin. It's a great mixer.

Lorraine Anderson
Brush, CO

Growing Organic: or Strength In Diversity

by Tamsin Boardman

It's been said before: The best part of a begonia interest is begonia people. If sometimes I seem to be name-dropping, it's because just about everyone I meet in this wonderful group shares knowledge as generously as plants. **ABS** is, among other things, a giant mentoring program.

A case in point: **Nettie** and the late **Gene Daniels** (*OR*). These folks grew huge, beautiful begonias for years in **Ventura, California**. Did the same for several years in **New Jersey**. Then they moved to north central **Texas** and experienced so much failure that they almost gave up both begonias and ABS. Thank heavens they didn't, or we Texans would have missed knowing them. They did learn to grow gorgeous begonias here - if not as easily. So one of the first things we learned from **Gene** and **Nettie** is: **what works in one area doesn't necessarily work in another.**

This might be stated: know your advisor, and his/her location. That's why the **Round Robin Notes** always include the home state of anyone quoted. It puts you on notice that this works for this person in this area. If your area has a totally different climate, it may not work for you.

Another quote from the **Daniels** is one that, they said used to infuriate fuchsia growers: *"Always keep a fuchsia or two in your greenhouse, to keep the whiteflies off the begonias."* This quote is not meant to demean fuchsias. But it does point up a truth. **Pests** have plant preferences, and apparently whiteflies love fuchsias. For begonias, the usual varmint problem comes from mealies.

The bank robber Willie Sutton was asked, when he was finally captured, why he robbed banks. His simple reply has become famous: *"Because that's where the money is."*

In like fashion, most of us go where we have reason to expect we will find what we are looking for. Humans hunt for food in the kitchen refrigerator, restaurant, grocery store, and for nuts and bolts at the hardware store or lumberyard.

So where do hungry **mealies** go? Why, straight for the begonias, of course. Whiteflies stop on the fuchsias, aphids on the roses, scale on the ferns, but mealies really like to pester begonias.

Is the connection between **Willie Sutton** and **Gene's** comment about whiteflies and fuchsias becoming clear?

It is well known in biology circles that mono-culture encourages proliferation among pest species. Hundreds of acres of pines provide a veritable feast for pine beetles, who therefore indulge in an orgy of reproduction. Lush green lawns with one variety of grass and no distracting weeds is heaven for grubs that would remain under control in a mixed meadow.

Similarly, a greenhouse full of begonias- and nothing else - provides a haven for mealy bugs. why not? They don't even have to choose which plant to land on - all are equally delicious! Yum!

Overheard at the plant sale at the 1996 Southwest Region Get-Together in Dallas: **Begoniac 1:** *"Where on earth are you going to put all those begonias?"* **Begoniac 2:** *"The succulents will have to go!"*

Maybe not the best solution. If you consider the rainforests where most of our begonias originated, you'll realize that they contain not just begonias but thousands, of different plant varieties - and lots of pests, too! But the pests do not completely overwhelm the plants - and the diversity of plant life is a principal reason. Oh, some of the begonias will have holes in their leaves, or ragged torn edges where a larger animal has munched. But there is no threat of extinction from pests. Many of the plants have been there for centuries, co-existing with their predators. The relationship is like a see-saw, up and down at different times, but both populations live on.

So here's another suggestion for keeping happy healthy gorgeous begonias: include companion plants. In nature, begonias are found most often with selaginella ferns, bromeliads, orchids peperomias; and in drier climates succulents and cactus. Of course there are also all kinds of trees. Begonias are also said to grow well with achimenes.*

Now I'd like to drop the name of another great mentor. **Tom Keepin** (***Houston, Texas***) has a semi-tropical climate where begonias can grow outdoors all year around. He has begonias tucked in all over his very mixed garden. Some function as accents, others as ground covers, others drape over ponds. The effect is overwhelmingly charming, and begonias that never did well for **Tom** in a pot are thriving outdoors.

We can't all have ideal climates, but we can achieve diversity on the windowsill, in the greenhouse, even in the light garden. Broaden your begonias' companionship, and decrease their chances of succumbing to pest infestations. At the very least, grow a variety of different types of begonias.

**Louise Riotte, Roses Love Garlic: Secrets of Companion Planting with Flowers. Garden Way Publishing, 1983.*

Would you like to tell about a favorite companion plant and how it grows with your begonias?

Write to:

Organics
P. O. Box 69
Bluff Dale, TX 76433.

Quick Tip

Even if you live in one of the Northern States, you can grow many of your begonias as bedding plants during the frost free month. Choose a shady area and put out cuttings of some of your favorites. They will grow like weeds, believe me. I used to use this method to increase my stock of house plants for the next winter because they grew so much lusher and faster outdoors in the ground. In the fall, you can either take lots of cuttings or even try bringing in the entire plants. It's very easy to bring in pests, especially soil born pests, if you bring in plants from outdoors, so taking cuttings is better. Also, make sure to share cuttings with friends and neighbors. Cuttings should be inspected for pests also before being brought indoors. Rinsing with a strong spray of water works great as a precaution.

Spotlight on Begonia 'Tea Rose'

by Don Miller

This old hybrid was created by Leslie Woodriff of Fairyland Begonia Garden in McKinleyville, California in 1947. Leslie Woodriff's a master hybridizer. He has won many awards, both national and international for his begonia and lily hybrids. In this cross Leslie has used the white flowered B. odorata var. alba as the seed parent. This is a form of the pink-flowered species B. odorata which was found growing in the island of Guadeloupe in the West Indies in 1813. This species is classified as shrub-like and has a wonderful fragrance. The male parent is the orange flow-ered cane species from Brazil, B. dichroa. This species also has a nice fragrance.

B. 'Tea Rose' was named for its fragrance which comes from both parents. This shrub-like hy-brid has bright green shiny, ovate leaves. They are typically 2/2 by 2/2 inches in size. The flowers are pink and it is everblooming and profuse. B. 'Tea Rose' is a fast grower and develops better when grown in very strong light. Frequent pinching when young will also encourage branching and a full growth habit. As it gets older it will tend to hang over the pot or basket and make a magnificent fra-grant floral display.

This hybrid is very easy to grow and propagates easily by stem cuttings. Try this heritage be-gonia. You'll like it.

Begonias on Iriomote

by Yoshiko Shimoda

Let me tell you about two begonias that are found growing wild on **Iriomote Island**. Iriomote is located in the **Yaeyama Islands**, about 200 kilometers from **Taiwan** (*Formosa*) and about 400 kilometers from **Okinawa**. Both begonias may have originated elsewhere, in the Philippines or China perhaps, but they've been growing wild on Iriomote for a long time.

One of the native begonias (***above***) is rhizomatous, and usually grows on wet rock. The deep green leaves are 18 cm wide, on stalks 30 cm tall. Flowers come in two colors: white, on a light green stalk, and pink on a red stalk. Locally this begonia is called *"Suppan"*, and cultivated with other flowering plants in gardens. You can get an acidic vegetable by boiling it with salt.

There is a small island near **Taiwan** (*Formosa*) that was called **Koto**. The first of my **Iriomote** begonias is found here also, and in 1911 was named **B. *kotoensis***, by Dr. Bunzo Hayata of Tokyo University. ***B. kotoensis*** has been determined to be a synonym for **B. *fenicis***, a species from the **Philippines**. I am sending seeds of this one to the **ABS Seed Fund**.

Another naturalized begonia (***above***) has upright stems. It grows wild on **Iriomote** and other islands in the **Okinawa** area. It is also found in cultivation. For several years my friends and I haven't seen any flowers but recently a friend who lives near **Tokyo** saw the first flower (*it is pink*). This plant has many bulbils. In early autumn, the bulbils scatter on the ground and soon afterwards the plant goes into its dormant stage. Because of its appearance and its method of propagation, I think this must be a form of **B. *evansiana***.

(***Mrs. Yoshiko Shimoda*** *was born in* ***Okinawa****, where she has lived all of her life except during her college studies. She has been growing and studying begonias for fifteen years, and is interested in preserving the begonias she has found in their wild habitat. Her address is #504-2, Nakamine, Gushikawa-shi, Okinawa Pret., JAPAN. Photos are by* ***Midori Nobusawa***)

Rhizomatous Begonias: The Way of Clay

by Brad Thompson

Over the past couple of years I have chronicled my endeavors to grow rhizomatous begonias successfully. Now, I will admit that I have never been a total failure, but my rhizomatous begonias never seemed to thrive like my canes and most took extreme measures at one time or another just to avoid losing the variety. For that reason, I have experimented over the last few years with varying methods to try and grow them more successfully on a consistent basis.

The closest that I came recently was when I tried putting a layer of large #3 perlite in the bottom of shallow plastic pots with just a thin layer of soil over that. I first started using that method a year ago last summer and saw much better results during the winter and spring than in previous years. I had pretty much decided that it was a resounding success until later that summer when they started looking bad, suddenly. Not every plant, but the majority were very unhappy. The conclusion that I came to, by the symptoms that the plants were displaying, was that they were getting fertilizer or salt burn. Rudy Ziesenhenne has said that he stopped using perlite in his mix for that reason. What was happening, I believe, is that during the fall and winter of that year, when I wasn't fertilizing very much, the plants were fine. During the spring and summer when I was fertilizing a lot, plus the added salts in our water, was causing a fatal buildup of salts in the perlite. I knew this kind of a buildup was possible but didn't figure it would happen quite as fast as it did, (*I figured that they would be fine until repotted the next year*) Rudy had said they would have to be repotted every 2 or 3 years if you put perlite in the mix, so I figured I was safe since I repot nearly every year. An additional factor, is the fact that rhizomatous begonias don't seem to need as much fertilizer as the other types, which made matters worse.

Anyway to make a short story long, I have changed to only growing method that has seemed to be tried and true for a number of years, which is to grow them in clay pots. I have never had a rhizomatous begonia that didn't thrive in a clay pot but since clay pots are more expensive, much heavier, and harder to maintain, I have tried valiantly to find a way to grow them well in plastic. To me, it was more important to have them grow and survive, than to worry about the additional work and expense. I have repotted almost all of my rhizomatous begonias into shallow clay pots. I got them reasonably cheaply at a pottery discount company and they really weren't that much more expensive than plastic, (*some were cheaper, in fact*).

Even though this was (*late fall*) really not the best time to repot anything, I felt it was necessary because most of the plants would probably not have survived the stresses of winter. Most showed a sudden burst of growth even though winter was coming. I used my regular mix and just moved them into the same size pot they were already in but used clay instead of plastic. Nearly all of those plants thrived last year so I'm going to stick with clay. Many of my friends have also switched to clay. Anyway, go with clay for rhizomatous if you haven't been successful with the plastic.

Why Begonias?

by Walter Pease

Shortly after **Ruth** and I were married in 1952, her mother showed her how to start an African violet leaf in a glass of water. Two and a half years later, the kitchen and dining room window areas of our apartment were filled with violets.

We then moved to Vicksburg Avenue where the backyard had been landscaped with six or seven beautiful fuchsias. One of our neighbors, Bill Kennedy, was an avid fuchsia grower and convinced us to join the **Fuchsia Society**. We then proceeded to build a lath house and, within two or three years, had accumulated between 200 to 250 fuchsias.

While in the **Fuchsia Society**, we met a gentleman by the name of **John Thieben** who invited us to his home to see his begonia collection, which we did. -**WOW**! At that time his garden was the official identification garden for the **A.B.S.** and his collection was breathtaking. These we had to try!

We had attended several meetings of the **Inglewood Branch of the A.B.S.** as guests when **John** decided he should form his own branch. Hence, the **Westchester Branch** of the **A.B.S.** was created. We immediately joined as charter members and have been active begonia addicts ever since.

Most of our original African violets and fuchsias slowly began to disappear as our yard became a show place for begonias, ferns and bromeliads of which we were very proud.

My interest happened to lean more toward the tuberous types while **Ruthie** took on all the rest, but both of us hare never ceased to be amazed at the beauty of begonias. There is no other plant family like it. **That's - why Begonias?"**

(***Walter and Ruth Pease*** *are longtime members of ABS and have held many Offices and won many awards*)

Australian Convention '98

The **New South Wales Begonia Society** is hosting **Convention 98 "beautiful, beguiling, bewitching begonias"** in Sydney, Australia. The dates are **April 10th - 13th, 1998**. If any of you have ever thought about a visit to Australia, then this could be a great oppurtunity for you to see how begonias are grown ***"down under"***. **Sydney** is worth a visit even if there wasn't a begonia Convention being held so this would be icing on the cake.

The **NSW Begonia Society** has a great show planned with excellent tours, seminars, luncheons, plant sales, and begonias in abundance. The plant sale will include many new begonias from the best Australian hybridizers.

If you would like more information on **Convention '98** contact the **Editor** or you can contact:

Peter Sharp, Convention Secretary
2/238 Jersey Road
Woollahra, NSW 2025, Australia

phone: 02 9327 3240

Around ABS Continued...

The **ABS Webpages** sometimes brings people together in unusual ways. One day **Betty Treat Petrich** e-mailed me regarding a collection of **begonia books** that were owned by her mother. Her mother was **Marie Treat**, an **ABS Judge** and longtime member of the Society who passed away a few years ago. **Betty** didn't really have a use for the books, since she didn't inherit the begonia fever, so she contacted me to find out if the books were worth anything and if I knew of anyone who would want them. It was a pretty long list of books, all of which are out of print, and I knew they would be invaluable in a begonia growers library. I talked to **Ann Salisbury** about it one evening and a couple of days later I got a call from **George Macias** of the **San Jacinto Branch**. Being a newer group, they didn't have a library for their branch and wanted to know which books **Betty** had. I read **George** the list and he got pretty excited and wanted to know how to get ahold of this woman. I only had her E-mail address and **George** didn't have a computer so his friend **Lawrence Pope** E-mailed me. I sent Betty's address and **book list** back to him, and **Lawrence and Betty** took care of the final details. Needless to say, **Betty** was happy that her mother's books were going to a good home and the **San Jacinto Branch** was happy they now had a **library**. I'm sure **Marie Treat** is looking down and smiling that her library is being used by begonia growers. It was also a nice gesture for her daughter, **Betty**, to take the time to see that begonia growers got the use of it.

Tom Keepin, 97 Convention Chairman, *took this picture of B. 'Margarite DeCola' as an example of* ***how nice they grows 'em*** *in Texas. You'll see for yourself in Houston at the Convention.*

If you have a computer, it's now easier than ever to get in touch with **Kelton Parker** at the **Fort Worth Botanic Garden**. An anonymous donor contributed a new modem to Kelton so he could get on-line with his computer. As you know **Kelton** heads a large begonia species bank at the Garden and numerous projects for ABS, so it was essential that he have access to a faster way to pass information. **Kelton** is now on-line and you can contact him at **begspbk1@airmail.net** and he'll be glad to hear from you.

Another little matter is that your **Editor** has a small change to make. I moved and also would like you to use my other E-mail address. To contact me you can now call **310-530-7428** or E-mail to **begonia@loop.com** or write to:

Brad Thompson
2436 W. Lomita Bl. #1
Lomita, CA 90717

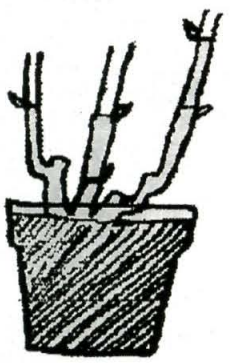
Repotting: *Potting Up or Potting Down*

by Brad Thompson

Well whether you pruned your plants last month or not, this month it's time to start repotting. Depending on how they fared the winter you will be potting up or potting them down. Remember not to repot plants that you just pruned (*unless you're absolutely sure you won't overwater*) but if you pruned earlier and you have good growth going, go ahead.

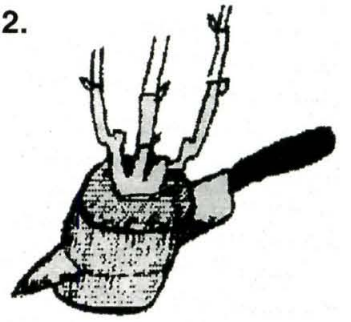
One comment I'd like to make is that whenever I talk about watering less, I mean water less frequently, not give less water. You should always water plants thoroughly when watering so that water runs out the bottom of the pot. If you just give less water , the roots will die in the parts of the pot that stay dry. I'll talk more about this in the potting down part.

1.



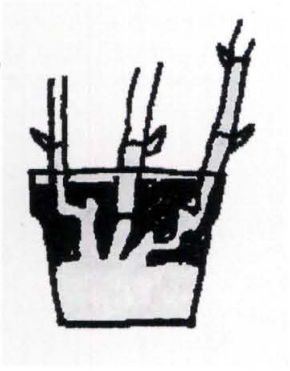
In Drawing One: You can see your basic cane or shrub that you've had for a few years with several old stumps from previous prunings. Your options are to just pot in a larger pot and hope for enough new growth to cover up the stumps, prune all the canes back to the soil line, or pot lower in a larger pot to cover the stumps up. The best option is the latter; you will get a lot of good basal growth and the old gnarly growth will be buried.

2.



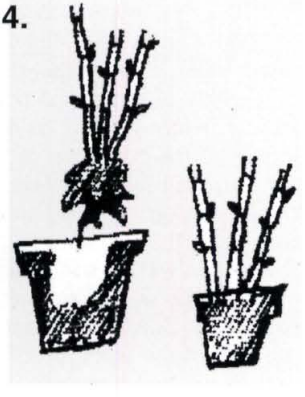
In Drawing Two: You can see what needs to be done to prepare the plant for potting lower in the new pot. If the new pot is taller than the pot you removed the plant from, you may not need to do anymore than loosen soil from the bottom of the plant with your hands. You should loosen a little soil from the sides too. If you're going to repot into the same size pot or a pot about the same height you will have to slice some soil off the bottom of the plant, either with your hands or with a knife as in the drawing. Cut off plenty so that when you set it into its new pot, it will set low enough when soil is added on top so the stumps will be buried as in **drawing three**. Don't worry that you're going to hurt the plant; pruning the roots will encourage new root growth. You may need to trim back the top of the plant also if you have to do a drastic root pruning. Again, just be careful not to keep the plant too wet.

3.



In Drawin Three: You can see how the plant will be placed and how it will look in the new pot. Put a thin layer of new soil mix in the bottom of the pot first. Place the plant in the center of the pot (*if the plant was originally way off center you can trim a little off the side of the root ball so it will be centered in the new pot*) and pack soil mix firmly down the sides of the plant. Continue filling and packing till the pot is full and the stumps are covered, leaving some space at the top for watering space. After repotting, water thoroughly 2 or 3 times to make sure the new soil gets wetted or you may end up with dry spots that won't rewet.

4.



In Drawing Four: You can see when you need to pot down. There are many ocasions when you may need to down-pot plants, especially plants that stayed too wet all winter. These are plants that may have been put in too large a pot to begin with or plants that you just love to water, or stayed out in too much rain. If you lift a plant gently out of its pot as in **drawing four** and most of the soil stays in the pot, it means the roots have died and there aren't any roots holding the soil together as in a healthy plant. If you pull on the remaining soil that's on the plant you will see that it falls off easily too and you will see few or no healthy roots (*healthy roots are whitish with lots of little root hairs on them.*) You need to remove as much of that old soil as possible without damaging the plant and repot it in fresh soil in a pot slightly larger that the remaining rootball. If it's a large plant, you may need to remove some of the top also so the rerooting plant won't have to support all that foliage.

I suppose I should mention something about soil mixes. I can only tell you about what I use, you will need to experiment to find what works best for your watering practices. The mix I use has been called Ronnie's Mix, Elda's Mix, or Mary's Mix but will be referred to now as Brad's Mix. The ingredients are equal parts LGM planter mix, #2 perlite, LGM leaf mold and small orchid bark(1/8 to 1/4 inch size). This mix works well for me, it's light and porous (*at least for the first year or so*) and does grow begonias. There are many different types of begonia mixes and which type you need to use really depends on the area you live in and what's available. Please don't send letters asking where to get LGM products, they are local, and I only gave you my mix as an example. I'm sure other brands will work the same. Also, I'm able to grow outdoors all year and this particular mix doesn't work well indoors. If you have other questions don't be afraid to write or call, I'd love to hear from you...

Potting Basics

by Brad Thompson

Regular repotting is very essential to the well-being of your begonias, especially in their first few years, as they are growing and maturing. Later, after the plants are mature and have already reached the maximum size you want them to be, you can let them go for a couple of years without repotting. Yearly repotting will still be beneficial. Even with plants that you intend to keep in the same sized pot, you need to change the soil to keep the plant growing vigorously because the elements of your soil mix do break down over time. It loses its draining qualities and its airspaces needed to hold oxygen. You have certainly noticed with plants you have repotted that the mix, especially in the bottom of the pot, has turned to fine mud. The following is a list of tips and procedures for repotting.

1. You should wait until a plant has filled its pot with roots before repotting. If you gently remove the plant from its pot, you will be able to tell if it's ready. If the plant holds all of the soil together then it is ready to be moved up. If there is still loose soil that stays in the pot after you pull the plant out, it needs more time. (*Pulling the plant out of the pot will not hurt it any.*) If you have waited too long and the plant is root bound and the soil ball is totally filled with roots, then you should gently loosen it before repotting. Just a little reminder about potting down. If you pull the plant out and it doesn't have hardly any roots and most of the soil falls off, you may want to pot it into a new pot that fits the rootball to get it going again.

2. Selecting the pot: Don't pot up into too large of a pot or make too big a jump in size. Generally, only move up one pot size at a time, because it's better for the plant to be potted more frequently in smaller jumps than to make one big jump. An analogy would be, you could easily jump off a cliff if you did it in two foot jumps but if you did the whole hundred feet at once it would probably kill you (*yes you'd be tired but you wouldn't be dead after 50 two foot jumps.*) If you try moving a 4 inch plant up to an 8 inch pot in one jump thinking the plant will grow bigger and faster, you would probably have the opposite effect, if the plant lived at all. The problem with potting up too fast is not with the mix, it's a problem with the amount of water that will stay in the mix. A 4 inch plant can't use up the water in an 8 inch pot quickly enough. The soil stays too wet, sours, and starts killing what healthy roots the plant has. For small plants only move them up in 1 inch increments until you get to about 6 inch size, when you can make 2 inch jumps in size. Such as a 6 inch pot up to an 8, then an 8 up to a 10 etc. An additional note; when moving up the smaller plants you need to remember that moving from a 3 inch round pot (*for example*) to a 4 inch square pot is a much larger jump than moving up to a 4 inch round pot. Don't move up to the square that way unless your plant is very well rooted and has pretty good size. Even then be careful with the watering.

3. Your potting mix: Many of you have your own potting mixes, and if what you are using is giving you good results then keep using it. Mixes work differently depending on the growing conditions and your watering practices. I have experimented with various mixes over the years and have found that the only mix that works perfectly for me is the mix that most of our members use. The reason it works well for me is that; its very porous and allows water to drain well, it has enough organic

matter in it to counteract my alkaline water as it breaks down, and my plants like it and grow strong healthy roots. I have tried other mixes based on Supersoil, Unigrow, and Bandini and some other commercial mixes but none of them really worked well for me. Some commercial mixes contain sawdust, which binds up the nitrogen in the soil, so your fertilizer doesn't work properly and some stay either too wet or too dry, to work well for begonias. Even when mixed with other amendments such as perlite, leafmold, etc. they just didn't seem to work as well as the mix I use now. Some growers also use peat or peat based mixes. They may work well if you live where you have to water frequently because of extreme heat in the summer. Peat mixes are very hard to keep wet if they ever dry out completely. If you ever buy a plant that s planted in peat or a mix that is very different from the one you use, remove as much of the original soil as you can and repot it in your own mix. If you eave the old mix, especially peat moss, t can dry out later in the middle of your pot and not rewet with normal watering. You won't even know until the plant starts to suffer. I've had plants that I eft the peat soil on and planted them in baskets and they always seemed to be vilted looking even though they had just been watered. When they were emoved from their pots, I found that he couple of inches of fresh soil were ine but I had a large brick of dried peat noss in the middle that was as hard as a rock. When I watered, the water just an around the dry middle and out the bottom, so the middle never got wet. You can see it's important that vhatever mix you use, the plant always stays in that same mix. If you change o another mix remove most of the old nix first.

4. When repotting, except for hizomatous and tuberous, try to plant the begonia deeper than it was planted before. This is especially important if you have old stumps at the base of your plant from previous prunings. This will give your plant a fresh new look and also cause new bottom growth and new roots to form. If necessary, especially if you want to keep it in the same size pot, remove enough soil from the bottom of the plant so it can set low enough to cover up those stumps. Make sure to allow for at least a thin layer of new soil in the bottom of the new pot.

5. Filling with mix: There are differing opinions on this point but I'll give you mine of course. I like to firmly pack the new soil around the plant. The reason I do this is; to remove large air pockets which will fill with water, to make sure the plant is in good contact with the new mix, and so the new mix will stay the same wetness as the old mix. If you only fill around the soil ball loosely, when you water later, the water will flow too easily through the looser outside mix and may not wet the soil ball evenly. Some feel that if you pack the soil down you damage the roots too much but I haven't found that to be the case in the hundreds of plants that I have repotted that way.

6. Fertilizing when repotting: When I repot my plants, I always give them a fresh dose of slow release fertilizer, such as Nutricote (TM) or Osmocote (TM). This makes up for any times that I miss my regular fertilizing (*which I use in addition to Nutricote*) and especially keeps all of my plants that I grow around the front of my house fertilized. I never make it out there with my liquid fertilizer, so that's usually the only fertilizer they get all year. Repotting is the easiest time to apply the slow release because you know they need it then. If you consistently use the slow release for every plant you repot (*except for your*

rhizomatous begonias which may be burned by surface applied slow release fertilizer) then you won't miss any. Follow the directions on the box for amounts and how to apply, with any fertilizer you use.

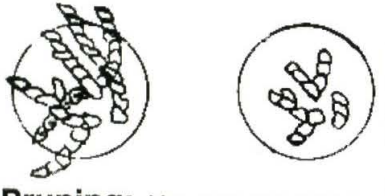
Hopefully this article will help remove any questions and doubts you have about repotting and will help you get a good start this year. I know there are probably some things I didn't cover. Write to me if you know of something I left out or other questions you might have. Also remember that you can send questions to **Horticulural Correspondent, Shelley Andros** on any begonia topic. That's what she's there for. Her address is listed on the ABS offices page or you can E-mail her at (**ANDROSLAND@aol.com**).

Rhizomatous Basics

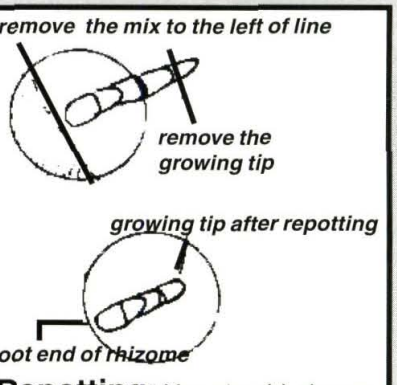
Pinching: To make your rhizomatous begonias grow fuller you can pinch out the growing tips after the blooming season is over. In the upper drawing you can see an older rhizome that is getting bare before pinching out the tip. In the lower drawing you can see that after pinching new shoots come out all along the rhizome. As mentioned, wait till after the blooming season is over to pinch or you may pinch out the future blooms.

pinch out the growing tip here

side shoots forming after pinching



Pruning: Yes, you can prune rhizomatous begonias to keep them full and confined to the pot. The drawing on the left shows rhizomes growing over each other and over the edges of the pot. Prune back all the rhizomes that cross over another and over the edge. The drawing on the right shows how the plant would look after pruning. Notice that the plant is now centered in the pot.



Repotting: You should always repot rhizomatous begonias so they will end up centered in the pot. Recenter the rhizome so that the growing tip is set back from the pot edge. The plant will now grow in all directions.

Potting Mix: Getting the Dirt on Begonias

By Tim Anderson

One of the most popular topics of conversation among a group of Begonia people is, "***What do you put in your potting mix?***" or "***What mix do you use?"*** Since Begonias, for the most part are not very particular about what they grow in... What? You say, **"They are particular?"** OK, OK, but in the wild begonias can be found growing almost anywhere where there is moisture with constant humidity, during at least one season of the year. Does this mean then that we can't grow all types of begonias in one basic potting media. No, you can.

There are four elements that should be provided for a plant by a soil mix: **(1)** Something to hold on to, an anchor, a comfortable place to grow where the wind will not make a tumble weed out of the plant. **(2.)** A water reservoir, like a sponge, storage for as long as possible as much water as possible.
(3) Nutrients, (*I use a refrigerator and cupboard to store mine.*) A soil needs something also to store food for the plant. *"A soil should have good 'aeration exchange capacity,"* a soil scientist would say. **(4.)** A soil should provide access to air or nutrient gases. Oxygen is good, I particularly like it, but the plants like carbon dioxide better. The nutrient gasses in the air are as important as **NPK** (*Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium*), the three most famous soil provided nutrients.

As long as we mix something up that provides these four requirements to our little charges, they should be most grateful. (*Forget about air movement, temperature and light for the moment.*)

Let's examine these 4 requirements: **(1.)** A place to grow. We start with a pot, or suitable container, into which we will put something heavy enough to hold our little beauties up so the slightest breeze will not knock them over. The best source of weight in this case, is a good grade of horticultural sand, a sharp sand, a coarse sand, usually a silica sand. As opposed to a round grain sand that acts like quicksand that as it's wetted will not allow air to move properly. Since the roots of plants need as much air as the top of the plant, this cannot be allowed. A good sand, by itself, sounds like a complete media for our Begonia plants. Well, yes, it almost could be, but... a 6" pot would weigh a ton and the ability of sand to store plant food is not the best.

(2.) We add a water storage element. Peat moss is the material of common choice. A good leaf mold, a good organic compost, the new coconut peats et. al., can and will do the job. Like a sponge they will hold water and nutrients. For hundreds of years peat moss and sand has been the most common 'soil mud' in container use.
(3.) Now let's fill the refrigerator and cupboard with nutrients for our plants, or 'fertilizer'. The most common choice is fast food, such as a water soluble fertilizer. Fast food does not store well, as you know. The next type is slow release materials. These are the canned foods of horticulture. They store longer and have made life easier and are always ready. Homemade foods. when done correctly arethe best. This would be the use of things like bone meal, fish meal, alfalfa tea, etc. This is the media of the true 'art' of horticulture and one must be a true 'gourmet cook' to use them successfully. Thankfully, we have access to these other prepared foods that will satisfy the

plants nutritional requirements **(4.)** Last but not least, the most important of all, we must supply both the top and bottom of the plant with copious amounts of air. The top of the plant is always in the air, but the roots, must also have air. A really good mix of coarse sand and coarse peat moss can allow air to move in the roots. Peatmoss decomposes and as it does it will eventually block air movement around the roots. To keep the air spaces open a coarse material is usually added such as: ground tree bark, gravel and styrene beads. (*Notice we did not say perlite, with good reason, which is yet another story.*) Lastly, we put a drainage system in our containers to facilitate drainage and to ensure good root access to air. This is done with course gravel, broken pot shards, etc. The newest and best is to recycle plastic shipping peanuts. This article maybe be somewhat over simplified, but I hope this will give a new slant on an old topic. Enough rambling I have to go pot!

(***Tim Anderson*** *writes about and grows begonias in* ***Miami, Florida*** *where he runs* ***Daisy Farms***)

"A Good Leach"

by D. Keith Dabney

Leaching, or flushing, means watering a potted plant with plain water or some other non-fertilizer solution in order to remove any accumulated salts. These salts, or minerals, are present naturally in most water sources, and in fertilizer solutions. Many are important micronutrients (*elements other that the "big three" macronutrients listed in the three numbered analysis of fertilizers.)*

Many African Violet and other plant growers use a **"constant feed"** program, meaning that they feed their plants a dilute solution of fertilizer with each watering (*called watering "weekly, weakly", this method not only makes it nearly impossible to forget to fertilize, which was a bad habit which I solved by switching to constant feeding*). Recently on Gesneriphiles, the Internet mailing list for people who grow gesneriads including African Violets, some wrote of leaching a plant and winding up with a droopy plant. Even though information on leaching or flushing plants is mentioned in nearly all houseplant books, I think that the basics of the process bears repeating, in case it is new to some reader. We may have a reader who does not read book after book on basic indoor gardening for pleasure and for those occasional gems of cultural wisdom.

Many, if not most, growers have heard that overwatering kills more plants than underwatering. Perhaps fewer know that an overwatered plant may look like it is dying of thirst. Wilting in an overwatered plant is due to the root hairs and other of the smallest roots having "drowned" and died, leaving the plant with inadequate root area for the amount of water uptake which it needs. The person who flushed with water and wound up with a droopy plant probably added the water for flushing to a plant which already had nearly saturated soil. An overwatered plant looks droopy, with wilted-looking leaves, and the natural reaction is to water. This worsens the problem, and may even kill the plant. To avoid such a situation when flushing plants with water, it is best to wait until the next

time the plants needs watering, and then to add an amount which will leach accumulated salts from the medium. As for how to leach plants, one suggestion, which I read was; that for a 6" pot, one should leach with 1 quart of water. Another method is to add water until it pours from the bottom holes of the pot, and to repeat this one or two times. Since I wait until each of my plants needs watering to leach them, it takes me a while to work through my collection of about 120 pots. Before long, I have forgotten which plants I have leached, and which should receive the dilute fertilizer mixture with which I normally water.

Such worrying over leaching a plant twice may appear trivial to some, but I don't think that it is overdoing it. Since we have such a mild climate here in San Francisco, some pots may not require watering more than every two weeks, especially during a foggy spell. This means that if I forget and leach a plant twice, it will go without fertilizer for possibly an entire month. To a avoid this, I have tried making a mark on the side of a pot which I have just leached, and then resume regular feeding. At the office, where I "only" have 40-50 plants, I have made a list of the plants, and put a check next to each plant when I am leaching the collection. Both methods have drawbacks. Marking the side of the pot sometimes looks unattractive, especially on a light-colored pot, and I have to change the mark each time, or have a row or marks. Another minor problem is that the marks don't wash off easily when washing pots, so things can get a little confused after potting into a pot with a mark. Usually this is no big deal, for if it is an obviously recently potted plant, I glance at the label and forego leaching that pot if less than one month has elapsed.

The symptoms of excessive salt buildup include a white crust or deposit on the surface of the pot or planting medium. Some growers use water with an additive to aid in the leaching (*a sort of "super leaching", I think, and also noteworthy.)* One such person is commercial orchid grower Harry Tolen of Chula Orchids, who wrote in his newsletter of June 1996: *"...about once a month, use a half a teaspoon of Magnesium sulfate, Epsom salts, in a gallon of water and leach the pots to get excess fertilizer and minerals away from, they will respond better. You can actually clean up your old clay pots by soaking them in Epsom salts. Use a heavy dose, say a tablespoon to a gallon and let them soak overnight. Next day all that crummy stuff will wipe off."* Epsom salts are available in drug stores and grocery stores. The other additive which he uses, citric acid, is a little more difficult to find. Here are more of his thoughts on leaching: *"I fertilize everything, which takes about an hour and a half, then I start over and go around with the citric acid at 1/4 teaspoon to a gallon to leach all the fertilizer off the leaves and out of the pots."*

So there we have it. These are my thoughts and experiences on leaching (flushing) potted plants to avoid potentially dangerous build up of harmful salts, along with information on the same topic from more experienced growers. I hope that, rather than scaring the reader, this might inspire even better plant care.

*(**Keith Dabney** grows and writes about begonias in San Francisco where he is a faithful member of the **San Francisco Branch**.)*

(**Editors Note:** Always test new methods on a couple of plants first to gauge any possible ill effects, such as the citric acid mentioned above, which most of us have never used for this purpose)

Propagation: Cone Cuttings

by Brad Thompson

For this issue, our propagation topic is cone cuttings. Now I'm sure some of you have already done cone cuttings, but not everyone knows how. I'm going to put a little bit of a new twist on it to keep it interesting. This method will only work for rhizomatous begonias (*yes that includes rexes*) and a few canes with rhizomatous parents, such as B.'Catherine Calvert' (*no I'm not sure that's the way its spelled but you'll figure it out*).

Drawing 1: You can see a whole rhizomatous leaf as it would look before cutting and the part outlined that needs to be removed. This method works especially well for large leaves you don't feel like cutting into wedges.

Drawing 2: You can see how the leaf looks after you remove the center. Hang on to that center piece you cut out because you can root that too. If the leaf is especially large, you can cut around the leaf again. You can also cut the section in half or thirds to make more than one cone cutting from the one leaf.

Drawing 3: You can see how you will set the cutting to root, both from the side view and from the top view. Roll your cutting around to make a cone shape and stick it into a small pot that is already 2/3 full of perlite with the top side of the leaf as the inside of the cone. Hold your cone together with one hand as you fill the rest of the pot with perlite (*fill around the outside of the cutting first so it will keep its shape and then fill inside the cone to the same level*) and then set the pot in about an inch of weak fertilizer water (*1/8 to 1/4 strength*). You can set several of these cone pots in a sweater box or just do a single in a smaller container. The container does not have to be covered but works best if partially covered. It may be too humid if fully covered. The middle piece of the leaf you had left over can be stuck into another pot of perlite and rooted like a regular leaf cutting. Cuttings rooted this way don't usually rot. As an added note; when you root your cone cuttings, they root best under lights but lights are not necessary. Mary Sakamoto uses this method for rooting leaves in her little greenhouse right on the bench.

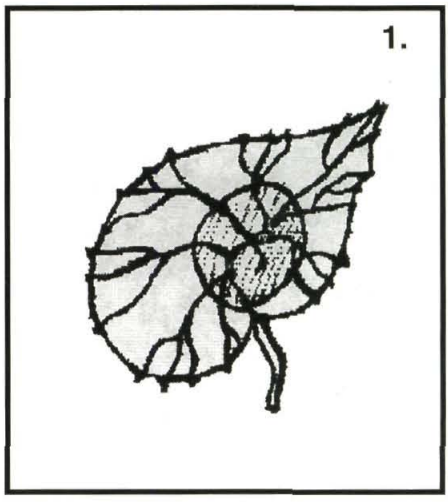
You don't have to use the perlite method that I've outlined above. You can root cone cuttings in whatever medium and method you have used for other types of cuttings. I've even rooted them directly in water using a small baby food jar to put the cone in.

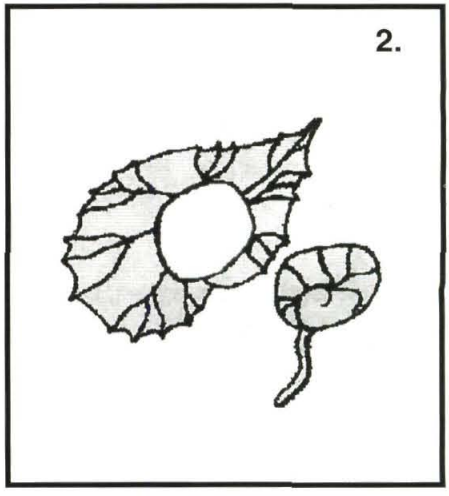
In times past, I've had trouble with bortrytis causing leaf cuttings to rot, regardless of the method I was using to root them. This year I figured out a simple method for eliminating this problem. Once I have made leaf cuttings, I dip them in a container of fungicide (*mixed to the proper concentration according to the directions on the bottle.*) I hold the leaf by the stem and dip the entire leaf except for the cut end. I lay them out for a while with the fungicide still on them and later rinse them with plain cold water. This rinses off any spores and the fungicide, so I can handle the cuttings without having to wear gloves to make wedge or cone cuttings. After the cuttings are put down, I spray them lightly again with fungicide and seal the

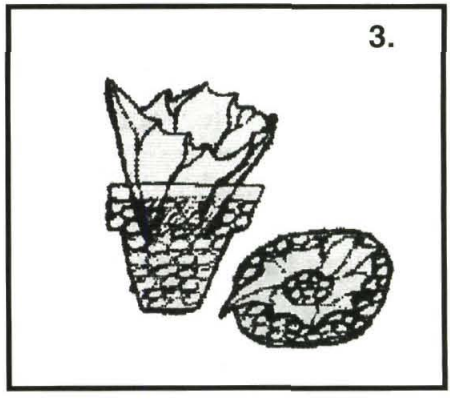
sweater box so new spores can get in.

It takes awhile for plants to come up, 2 to 6 months depending on the variety, so be patient. Keep the tray filled with an inch of water and wait and eventually you will have a pot full of little plantlets. When you do have the plantlets you can do one of two things; you can pot up the whole thing or you can separate the little plantlets into individual pots as soon as they are big enough to handle. If you are interested in getting a nice big plant for yourself, leaving them together is the way to go you will get a nice full plant quickly, but if you're more interested in getting a lot of plants divide it up into as many plants as you can. Each vein on the original cone cutting will have a plantlet on it and you may get as many as 10 to 20 plants off a single cone. Before you pot up the cone cuttings, make sure to knock off some of the extra perlite.

The advantages to using cones cuttings are; you get a full plant faster, it's less time consuming than making wedges, and they take up less space under your lights. You can experiment with some of those less-than-perfect leaves that you have to remove from time to time.



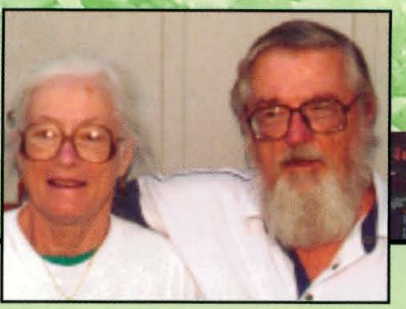




Quick Tip

Pruning rhizomes that cross over each other will eliminate hiding places for mealy bugs and potential areas for rot and disease.

A Visit with Jackie and Harry Davis



Photos and text
by Mary Ann Leer

When visiting the **Davis'** garden in Aptos, Ca., any gardener worth the title is immediately drawn outside to the backyard which consists entirely of a bathhouse and greenhouse full of begonias and other tropical plants. **Jackie Davis** has been growing and hybridizing begonias now since 1974 and with the assistance of husband **Harry** (*who did much of the construction and now helps with many aspects of the begonia growing*) has turned a suburban lot into a botanical garden-like showplace during the summer months.

Jackie's specialties are hybridizing and growing **tuberous** and **rex begonias**. Each year **Jackie and Harry** pot up about **900 begonia tubers** which find their way onto every shelf and into every hanging location and open spot of ground in the garden. However she also finds room in the ground & greenhouse for canes, species & shrubby begonias.

She belongs to two local **ABS** branches, **Santa Clara Valley and Monterrey Bay Area**, and has been the president and national representative for many years of the **Santa Clara branch**. Besides frequently speaking at the branch meetings, she always shows up with a tray or two of begonias to share with members and often brings interesting and unusual begonias to show and teach with. These often include species grown from ABS Seed Fund seed(*to which she also contributes seed*) and sometimes her plants demonstrate the variety that can result from the seed of just one cross.

She invites both branches over for a potluck lunch and garden tour every summer and these pictures reflect her garden in the summer of 1996. Her garden has also been on the open-garden tour for two **ABS** conventions, one in Santa Cruz in 1982 and the other the San Francisco Convention of 1989. One of the things that makes **Jackie's and Harry's** garden more than just a plant collection is that **Harry** specializes in growing epiphyllums, fuchsias, ferns and streptocarpus and that they both have an artistic way of putting plants together. **They certainly do the ABS proud!!**

(**Mary Ann Leer** grows and writes about begonias in Mountain View, CA)

Some of Jackie's Rex Hybrids

Conservation News

by Tamsin Boardman, Conservation Chair

New Arrivals in Fort Worth. Begonia curator **Kelton Parker** has received, from the **Missouri Botanic Gardens**, **B. *ravenii***. This begonia has a red stem, medium green leaves, bright pink flowers, and reproduces by bulbils and also be rooting just about anytime a node touches soil. Kelton managed to set seed, which was viable, and hopes to be able to send a few plants of this recently discovered and named (*for the Director of the Missouri Botanic Garden*) Chinese begonia to the Convention in Houston.

Thanks to **Bill Ash**, **Kelton** also has **B. *malachosticta***, a most unusual and beautiful begonia discovered in **Sarawak** and published by **Dr. Martin Sands** of the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew** in The Kew Magazine in May 1990. Cuttings from B. *malachosticta* were rooting in Fort Worth in December.

Saving Begonias: As begonia habitat worldwide is burned, bulldozed, developed, begonia species are in danger of vanishing. In an attempt to keep as many alive as possible in cultivation, **ABS** sponsors an **Adopt-A-Species program**.

Members can adopt one or more species, keep them growing, watch and describe them, propagate them, distribute them. The idea is to get each species as widely grown as possible giving it more chance to survive. Ideally, several members in different locations will adopt the same species, correspond, and cross-pollinate, so that plants do not become too inbred.

Currently there are **72 individual members** and two branch members, with **95 begonia species adopted**. We are also affiliated with two Begonia Species Banks: one at the **Fort Worth Botanic Garden** under direction of curator **Kelton Parker**, with about 300 *species, and one at the* **University of South Florida Botanic Gardens** under curator **Dale Sena**, with about 140 species. As part of their distribution pledge, members are also encouraged to send seed to the **Seed Fund**. Another goal of the program is knowledge: expanding our knowledge of each individual species and how it grows. Members are asked to fill out questionnaires about their plants and the growing methods they find that work with these often somewhat finicky begonias. Eventually this information will come out in a **Species Catalog**, a brainchild of former **Seed Fund Director Diana Gould** who dreamed that someday we would have easily accessible information on each begonia species: what it looks like, where it originated, how to grow it successfully. If you've ever lost a unique species, you know the frustration that more information could have helped you avoid.

The **Adopt-A-Species project** and its quarterly newsletter ***"Save Our Species"*** is funded by **ABS** and free to participants (*although donations through ABS are gratefully accepted and tax-deductible: just specify for "SOS" on your check*). If there's a begonia species you'd like to adopt, write to: **Conservation Chair Tamsin Boardman, P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale, TX 76433** and you'll be signed up. Note: you must maintain **ABS Membership** to participate.

Scott Hoover, Executive Director

of the New England Conservatory and a member of the **Explorer Club**, has undertaken through the years several begonia collecting trips and brought some exciting begonias into cultivation. The last issue of the ***Begonian*** reported on **Scott's expedition to Indonesia** sponsored in part by **ABS**, in large measure through a bequest from the late **Martin Johnson**, long-time **ABS Conservation Chair**. If you'd like to go along on that trip from the comfort of your branch meeting, the **ABS Slide Library** has a new program based on **Scott's slides**.

Recycled Containers: Recycling is part of conservation, too. It reduces the burden on natural resources in addition to reducing the size of landfills.

There will be a **Division** just for **recycled containers** in the show at the **1997 ABS Convention in Houston**, ***"A Texas Love Affair"***. Points will be scored for health of the begonia grown in the container (*there's certainly no point in having one that doesn't suit begonias, is there?*) as well as for originality and artistry of the container itself. Plastic soft drink bottles and margarine tubs have been done before - think up something really clever and try for a **trophy in Houston**!

Begonias On-Line

by Kathy Goetz

The new **on-line begonia discussion list** is going very well. It has almost **70 begoniacs** subscribed and has covered a variety of topics, from basic culture to pesticide use, just during it's first few weeks. We have some of the best growers in the country involved, including both old-time hobbyists and commercial growers. These folks can answer almost any question you might have about begonias.

Subscribing to the discussion list is easy. **Just send e-mail to begonias@dnc.net** with the word **subscribe** in the subject line. Posting a message to the list is just as easy. Once you have subscribed, just send e-mail with the subject in the subject line. I would also suggest that anyone with an Internet connection, check out the **ABS Web Page** at (**http://www.loop. com /~begonia/index.html**). It is full of wonderful information about growing begonias.

Learn and Play in Houston in May

by Tamsin Boardman

"A Texas Love Affair" will feature workshops and seminars to help you learn more about our favorite plants: **Begonias!**

On **Thursday** morning **Maurice Amey** will do a workshop on grooming for show. You're welcome to sit in, listen, watch - or to bring your own show plant(s) and groom them under the knowledgeable eye of a consistent show winner. Those of you who know **Maurice** know this workshop will be more fun than a barrel of monkeys! A plus is that the show will be even more spectacular with all the perfectly groomed begonias coming out of the workshop.

Does your begonia collection cover every inch of floor and shelf space in your house or greenhouse? Do you have any old panty hose lying around? Learn how panty hose can help remedy the space problem. Attend the workshop on mounting begonias! You can go home and free up space by letting your collection hang out all over the place - beautifully. Sit in and watch, or bring a spare pair of pantyhose for a hands-on introduction to this exciting method of growing begonias.

Save **Friday** afternoon for a very special treat, an introduction to a new group of breath-taking exotics. **Dr. Martin Sands**, botanist and begonia expert at the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew**, will speak on his experiences searching the wilds of **Southeast Asia** in search of begonia species and introduce us to his finds. **Dr. Sands** has published six of his new species discoveries, which include such beauties as **B. *malachosticta*** (*think B. chlorosticta with hot pink spots*).

Following a break for questions and visiting with **Dr. Sands**, our own **ABS** and **Southwest Region** member **Bill Ash** of **England**, who serves as a back-up begonia grower for both **Kew and Glasgow Botanic Gardens** and also as **Curator of the National Rex Collection**, will tell us how he grows the rare and difficult **Southeast Asia** beauties and give us a slide show peek at his **Silver Medal-winning begonia display** in the prestigious by-invitation-only **Chelsea Flower Show**. Since Bill's also an expert photographer, this will be a visual artistic treat. You'll also pick up tips on how to move begonias without destroying them.

There will be lots more going on- a humongous, bodacious Texas-sized show and sale, lots of begonia chatter, begonia boutique, garden tours, food and the nicest people on earth; begonia lovers. We'll hope to see you there!

Quick Tip

You really need a vacation and what better place than to spend time in Houston, TX at the

1997 ABS National Convention,
"A Texas Love Affair".

Besides all the wonder-ful plants and goings on, you'll get to make new friends and visit with old.

Just think of all the great new begonias you could go home with. I know there will be many new hybrids available...

anon

*This picture of **B. 'Margarite De Cola'**, taken by **Tom Keepin** at his home, is a perfect example of the excellent begonias to expect to see at the **ABS Convention in Houston.***

Seed Fund Director Needed

You probably noticed that there was no **Seed Fund listing** in this issue. **Beth Castellon** had to resign as **Seed Fund Director** because of other committments so the Seed Fund is in the middle of being transferred to **Ann Salisbury**, who is urgently seeking a volunteer to assume the job. **Ann** will keep the ***Seed Fund*** *going till a replacement* is found but she's already wearing too many hats right now.

ABS Bookstore

The Bookstore has binders available to hold your issues of **The Begonian**. You can purchase them for $5.00 each which includes postage. These binders are invaluable for keeping your issues nice and fresh and will hold one years worth of issues.

send your check or money order to:

Betty Benningfield
P.O. Box 969
Anahuac, TX 77514

Change in E-mail for the Editor

I'm doing away with my extra e-mail address soon so please note my *new e-mail address,* **begonia@loop.com**

I received an urgent request from **Kew Gardens** for the following plant material. If you are able to help, please do.... The Editor

ABS Members,

Anyone who is in the possession of a plants labeled with one of the names cited below,could you please send some living material to:

Rafael Govaerts
The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Richmond Surrey, TW9 4SL, U.K.

The material will be verified and used in
conservation programs.

Begonia *argyrocoelis*
Begonia *ascotiensis*
Begonia *baumannii*
Begonia *bismarckii*
Begonia *brevicaulis*
Begonia *bufoderma*
Begonia *bunchii*
Begonia *cowellii*
Begonia *davisii*
Begonia *diversifolia*
Begonia *fissisepala*
Begonia *floribunda*
Begonia *gehrtii*
Begonia *gilsonii*
Begonia *grata*
Begonia *hiemalis*
Begonia *jaurezii*
Begonia *laetevirens*
Begonia *langeana*
Begonia *lemaoutii*
Begonia *macrotis*
Begonia *marmorea*
Begonia *mollicaulis*
Begonia *morelii*
Begonia *nigrescens*
Begonia *nigricans*
Begonia *nummulariifolia*
Begonia *rubellina*
Begonia *rubrosetulosa*
Begonia *rugosa*
Begonia *rutilans*
Begonia *socotrana*
Begonia *solimutata*
Begonia *trullifolia*

Bob Koehler World

by Tim Anderson

Bob found his first begonia quite by accident. One day he stopped at a garage sale. In a corner he spied what he later was to learn was a begonia named B. 'Sophie Cecile'. Taking his prize home he moved aside his other plants to make room. Now, when one visits Bob, almost every plant one sees is a begonia. Bob has taken his begonia interests the full route. He has more than once taken 'Best of Show' in the Central Florida shows. Last year his Hybrid, **B. 'Molly's Marvel'** won **Best New Introduction** at the National. Bob has made *many significant new begonia crosses; among the* most noteworthy are: **B. 'Kit Jeans Mounger'-** This plant is truly unique. The leaves are palmately compound and each segment has a double helix. This rhizomatous hybrid is a result of a cross between **B. *thelmei*** (*macdougallii*) ***var. purpurea*** and **B. 'Cowardly Lion'**. The leaf color is a coppery red that turns hot pink when the sun hits it. It is a medium sized grower reaching 24 to 30 inches across in the best conditions. **B. 'Gilligan's Island'** is from the same cross as the prior hybrid. It is a larger version with broader leaflets arranged closer to the vortex. The color is darker ,closer to raspberry. Other unique members of this cross are; **B. 'Wally's World'**, **B. 'Molly's Marvel'**, **B. 'Outer Limits'**, **B. 'Green Acres'** and **B. 'Gunsmoke'** . This last one, **B. 'Gunsmoke'** is not compound, the leaf is quite large, flat, and almost black. My personal favorite is **B. 'Paul's Pride'**. This is a fairly large grower with closely arranged leaflets similar to **B. 'Kit Jeans Mounger'**. This is a real "*think pink*" plant, being a true mix of soft pink and chartreuse. **Mr. Koeler's** first seedling begonia to be released was **B. 'Sweet Thang'**. Bob grew out over one hundred seedlings from an open pollinated B. 'Pink Rubra'. He kept only one and that was **B. 'Sweet Thang'**. This plant is a more floriferous version of the seed parent in compact form. Bob is now growing some very nice offspring from a cross between **B. 'Juanita's Jewel'** and **B. 'Emerald King'**. The selections from this cross have deep green leaves that keep their dramatic spots to maturity. They are free flowering, with deep pink flowers. **B. 'Avalanche'** has leaves that are almost pure white with spots. **B. 'Pearls'** is even better but smaller in size. **B. 'Fountain of Youth'** is the largest grower with quite a flower show.

(***Tim Anderson*** *is a Web Surfer and begonia grower from* ***Miami, FL***)

Bob and Dale
examine one
Bob's hybrids
at Dale's hom

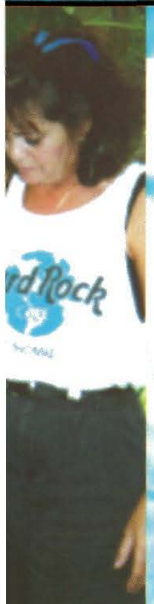
s and text by **Tim**
erson and **Bob**
Cochran

Dale Sena

by Bob Cochran

When ever the **Miami** hurricanes are playing a home game or when the **Miami Begonia Society** has it's show ,we see **Dale Sena**. She is a member of the **Miami Chapter** but lives in **Tampa**. **Dale** became interested in begonias when she found a plant of **B. *listada*** at a mall show in Southern California. Her interest motivated her to join the Santa Clara Branch .Now she is a member of the **Florida West Coast Branch** as well as the **Tampa Branch**. As a **Junior Judge** this gal can be found helping out at any show in the state. Along with her own interesting collection, Dale is the **volunteer Curator of the begonia species collection at the University of South Florida's Botanical Garden**. She has taken the collection fom a few plants to almost two hundred. While in Mexico she collected plants ,some unidentified, which has added interest to the the collection. She has help with her begonia collection from two great dogs **Lady** and **Rocky**.

(**Bob Cochran** is also a Web Surfer and begonia grower from **Florida**. He is currently Pres. of the **Miami Branch**.)



Editor's Notes

Well, another great growing season is upon us and I hope all of you are as excited as I am about it. I'm really excited. I mean really, really excited. OK, maybe not really, really but I'm getting enthusiastic just thinking about it.

If you noticed that this issue and the issue before it were later than usual then I will just have to beg your forgiveness and try to push things back on schedule for the next issue. I was in the hospital a couple of times in December (*no, I'm not trying to get any sympathy points*) and even had to do the final proofing of the January issue from the hospital. You wouldn't believe how hard it is to Fed Ex a package from the hospital but at least it did give me something to do. It didn't help speed things up that it was also the holiday season.

This issue is a couple of weeks late because after I got home I bought my own place and moved. I have much more space for my books, computers and plants, and it's going to make working on the Begonian much easier for future issues. It took 12 pickup loads just to move my plants but they are happy in their new home. It's hard keeping the multitude of papers, books, letters and pictures needed to produce *The Begonian* arranged in a cramped space so it was becoming overwhelming trying to keep track of everything. Now that I have room to spread out, everything can have it's own space. Also, now that I have my own place, instead of renting, I can do whatever in the heck I want to do. I have tried to keep everything going during this past couple months of trials and tribulations but I'm sure I have missed answering letters and e-mail along the way. If I missed you, write to me again and I'll do better. Please except my apologies if I've slighted anyone. Oh, and yes I'm much better now so you don't need to send cards or anything. I hope to see all of you in Houston for the Convention.

If you noticed this issue has a different look to parts of it and there are more color pictures, it's because I've finally gotten the new scanner going full blast so am able to do all the scanning myself. In the past we have been limited to a certain number of color photos (usually 12 or 13) but now we'll be able to have as many photos as I can fit into our 16 pages of color. To explain; we pay for 16 pages of color each issue whether we put color on them or not because of the way the magazine is printed. We were limited to a certain amount of pictures, however, because it cost nearly a $100 per picture to have the printer scan them for us. Now that I have the capability to do my own scanning, there isn't an extra cost for the photos. Now I don't claim to be an expert scanner yet so you will just have to bear with me if any of the pictures aren't perfect in the next few issues. I don't know for sure how they will look until I get my issue of The Begonian in the mail, just like you do. Of course, I do have a pretty good idea beforehand but you never really know until it's in print.

I hope you also noticed the new **B & K Tropicals ad** (*B&K is Bob Keohler*) on page 65. We can easily do color ads now, including color pictures, art, etc. If any of you have considered placing an ad, contact **Ann Salisbury**. Ann will have an updated price list and I will compose your ad for you at no cost if you need help.... **brad**

The American Begonia Society

Elected Officers

President.....Ann Salisbury
P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa OK 74653
(405) 628-5230
fax (405) 628-2236 M-F 8-5
Past President.....Gene Salisbury
P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa OK 74653
1st Vice-President...Bruce C. Boardman
P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale TX 76433
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740 Lamat Rd., La Habra Heights CA 90631
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1408 Sunset Dr., Vista CA 92083
Secretary.....Richard Macnair, 177 Hancock St., Cambridge, MA 02139
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Appointed Chairmen and Directors

Audit.....Paul Tsamtsis
1630 F St., Sacramento CA 95814
Awards.....Mary Sakamoto
6847 E. Sycamore Glen Dr., Orange CA 92669
Back Issues.....Keith Fletcher
P.O. Box 1, Tonkawa OK 74653
Ballot Counting.....Ingeborg Foo
1050 Melrose Way,Vista CA 92083
Book Store.....Betty Benningfield
P O Box 969, Anahuac, TX 77514
Branch Relations.....Mary Bucholtz
1560 Lancaster Terrace #1008, Jacksonville FL 32204
Business Manager.....John Ingles, Jr.
157 Monument, Rio Dell CA 95562-1617
Conservation.....Tamsin Boardman
P.O. Box 69, Bluff Dale TX 76433
Convention Advisor.....Bob Cochran
951 SW 99th Ave. Pembroke Pines, FL 33025
Convention Chairman.. .. ...Tom Keepin, 4513 Randwick Dr., Houston, TX 77092
Entries/Classification.....Leora Fuentes
13747 Wilderness Point, San Antonio TX 78231
Historian.....Norma Pfrunder
1958 Sycamore Ct., McKinleyville, CA 95519-3900
Horticultural Correspondent.Shelley Andros, 740 Lamat Rd.,La Habra Heights, CA 90631
Judging.....Maxine Zinman
Rt.1, Box 73, Boyce VA 22620
Members-at-Large.....Elaine Ayers
3939 Lee Heights Bld., Cleveland, OH 44128
Membership.....John Ingles Jr.
157 Monument, Rio Dell CA 95562-1617
Nomenclature.....Carrie Karegeannes
3916 Lake Blvd., Annandale VA 22003
Parliamentarian.....Margaret Lee
1852 31 st St., San Diego CA 92102
Public Relations.....Russ Richardson
1854 Chancery Lane, Chamblee GA 30341
Research.....Kelton Parker
3220 Botanic Garden Dr., Ft. Worth TX 76107
Round Robin.....Virginia Hamann
1169 Lincoln Ave., Chester IA 52134-8508
Seed Fund.....Beth Castellon
Propagation Range, New York Botanic Garden, Bronx, NY 10458
Slide Library.....Charles Jaros
200 Maureen Dr., Sanford FL 32771

BEGONIAN STAFF

Editor: Brad Thompson, 2436 W. Lomita Bl. #1, Lomita, CA 90717 (310) 530-7428
E-mail address begonia@loop.com
Nomenclature Editor: Jack Golding
Editorial Assistants: Maria Holmes, Teri Dykzeul, Janet Brown,Ramona Parker

Advertising Staff

Display Ads: Ann Salisbury
P.O. Box 452, Tonkawa OK 74653
Plant Society Ads: Wanda Macnair, 177 Hancock St., Cambridge, MA 02139

for subscription, dues, circulation inquiries contact:

John Ingles Jr.
157 Monument
Rio Dell, CA 95562-1617

American Begonia Society
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Rio Dell, CA 95562-1617

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Make sure to attend the ABS National Convention in May