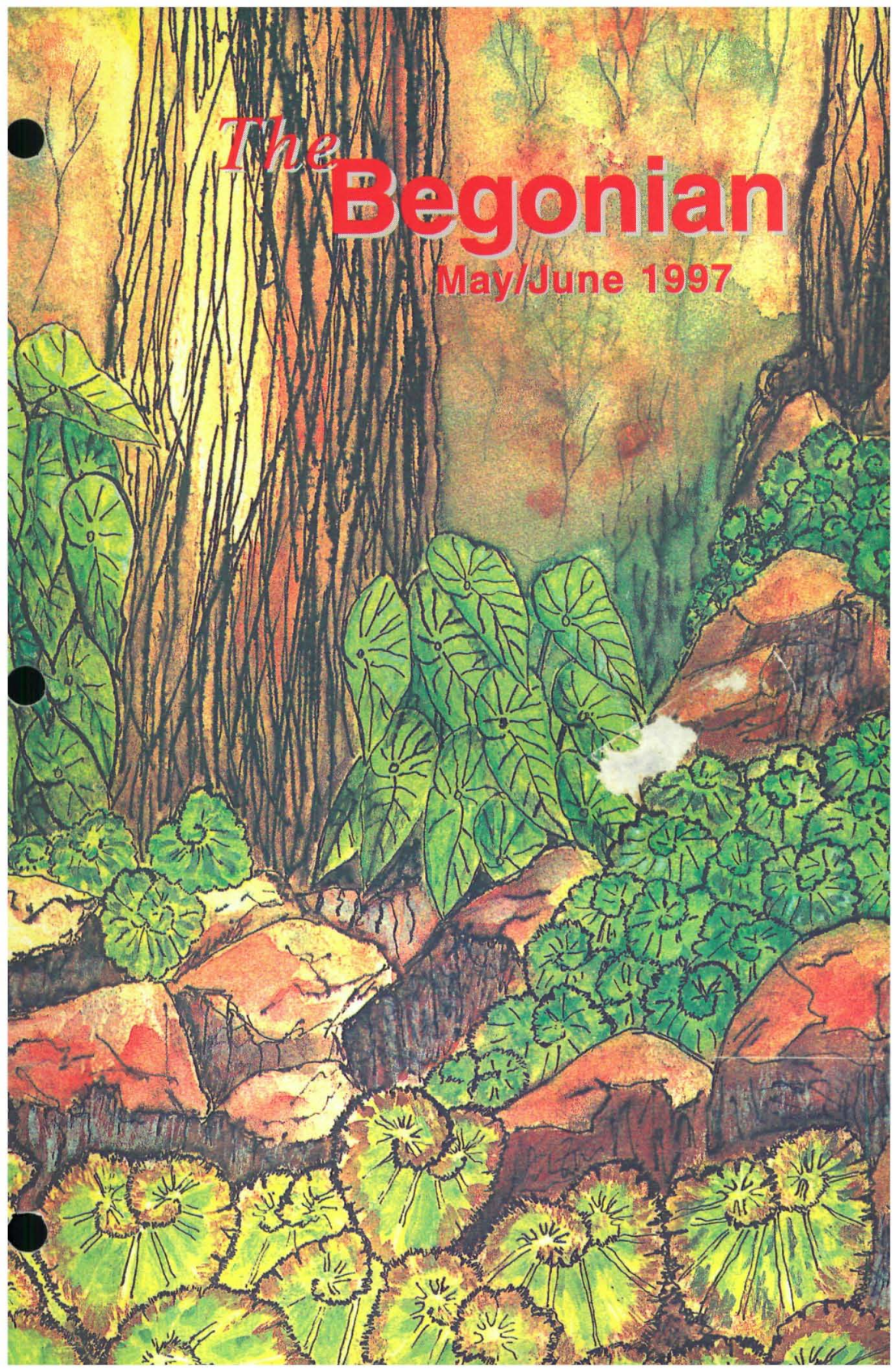


The
Begonian

May/June 1997



The Begonian



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Publication of the American Begonia Society

American Begonia Society

Founded January 1932 by Herbert P. Dyckman

Aims and Purposes

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

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

To standardize the nomenclature of begonias.

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

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

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

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Cover: Water color painting "*Begonias on the rocks*" by Brad Thompson.
Back: Photo of *Ntsubane Begonia*, taken by Dr. Tracy McLellan in Ntsubane Forest, South Africa.

Make sure to complete and send in your official ballot on page 100.

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If you take pictures at this year's Convention in Houston, make sure to make extra copies to share with fellow members that were unable to attend. Send them to the **Editor as soon as you are able so they can be included with the **Convention Coverage** in the next issue.**

Quick

Check your mailing label. If it reads **7/97** or **8/97**, your membership is about to expire. Please renew! We don't want to lose you.

Around ABS



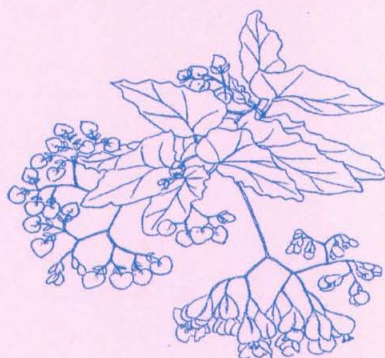
One correction for the last issue: In the article about **Jackie and Harry Davis** the photos were taken by Mary Ann Leer's husband, **Jules Resnick**. Sorry, Jules.

A sad note in the Begonia world. Begonia grower and master hybridizer, **Leslie Woodriff** has passed away at the age of 86. **Leslie** created many wonderful new hybrid begonias, his first being **B. 'Orange Rubra'** in 1947. 50 years of work leave a great legacy. He will be sincerely missed. There will be more about the life and legacy of **Leslie Woodriff** in an issue later this year, as soon as enough information can be gathered to do a proper tribute. *If you have pictures of **Leslie**, his hybrids, or anything to contribute, please send it to the **Editor** as soon as possible.*



*In the photo above, **Joy Porter** prepares to hold an **Owl moth** at **Butterfly World** during a tour at last year's Convention in Florida. Is that a look of Joy on Joy's face? She looks unsure.*

IN MEMORY



On February 13, the Astro Branch, Houston Satellite Branch and newly formed San Jacinto Branch lost a long distance member and friend.

Mary Keepin lived in Pensacola Florida, where there is no branch of the ABS. **Mary** has been a member of the Astros since it had its early beginnings as the Astro Begonia Study Group. **Mary** loved begonias and raised mainly cane-like and shrub-like. Her son Tom kept her supplied with many begonias. Even though there was no branch in Pensacola, **Mary** would carry at least one plant with her to the Thrift Shop where she volunteered, or to the bowling alley where she bowled several mornings and evenings each week. If it were your birthday, anniversary or you were just having a blue day, she had a plant to cheer you along with a sweet smile and just the right words. **Mary** was a Begonia Ambassador in the true sense, spreading begonias and love everywhere she went and to everyone she met.

Mary is now at the right hand of Mother Nature in her Begonia Garden.

Coming Events



The Theodosia Burr Shepherd Branch of the ABS is celebrating its **60th year** of raising rare begonias and is extending an invitation to all gardeners for a **free tour** of branch president **Pam Hantgin's garden on Saturday, June 14, 1997, noon to 4 p.m.** at

94 North Santa Rosa Street, Ventura, CA 93001.

(Any questions of Pam? Call 805-648-1 530).

Pam has a lovely garden of approximately five-thousand square feet. In it are about 250 begonias (*half of which are tuberous*), 40 hanging baskets of tuberous and other begonias, 125 fuchsias in hanging baskets, about an equal number of fuchsias in the ground, as well as numerous ferns and other shade loving plants. There is one greenhouse, one large and one small shade house; there is also a large area under shade cloth. There will be plants for sale.

Westchester Begonia Society Annual Show & Sale

"Why We Love Begonias"

July 19 & 20, 1997

Westchester Christian Church

8740 La Tijera Blvd., LA

Sat., July 19 - 9 am to 5 pm

Sun., July 20 - 12 pm to 4 pm

To have items included in the "Coming Events" column, make sure to send the Editor a press release a couple of months before the intended issue.

Submissions



I appreciate all the articles and photos that I've been receiving over the past few months. Make sure to keep up the good work. I am running out of **Grower Spotlights**, however. All of you have fellow members in your clubs with beautiful gardens, maybe even it's you. Get that camera out and start snapping some photos and jot down a few notes about them. You don't have to be an expert photographer, I can crop and fix most photos as long as they're at least in focus. It would be great if you were an excellent photographer, though. More is always better as far as photos are concerned so I have lots to work with.

I still want articles on all the topics listed in previous issues. I'm still waiting to hear from hybridizers about their methods.

Remember to send items to my new address.

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

Quick Tip



Keep sending your Quick Tips to:

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

MariaHolmes@worldnet.att.net

The NPK's of Life



By Shelley Andros
Horticultural Correspondent

Are great looking plants your goal?

Well, then, we need to get down to the root of the matter; the feeding of your plants. There are many different ways to feed your plants and I encourage all of you to watch your plants and see how they respond to your feeding program.

There are time-released fertilizers, water-soluble fertilizers, organic fertilizers and inorganic fertilizers. The type of fertilizer you use depends on the time you have to spend with your plants and the types of plants you're growing. Lots of begonias, I hope?

Let's look at the nutrients that make up our fertilizer pallet. The **NPK's** (*Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium*) are just the tip of the iceberg. Six minor elements are also important factors for proper growth of your plants and need to be considered when growing in a soil-less media. **Nitrogen** is considered the most important nutrient for plants and is the first nutrient listed on the percent composition of the fertilizer. **Nitrogen** is not a mineral and will not already be present in the mix like phosphorus, potassium and the minor elements are. **Nitrogen** must be supplied on a continual basis since it is soluble and readily leaches out the the root zone. **Nitrogen** can be supplied from decomposing organic matter, fertilizers, or from the atmosphere by rainfall. When a plant is deficient in nitrogen, the entire leaf will be pale green to yellow. It is only absorbed in the nitrate form. The fertilizer label will tell you what form the nitrogen is in; the nitrate or nitric form of



nitrogen is readily available for absorption by the plant. Ammonium forms of nitrogen will be slower to be available, (*taking 2 weeks to 3 months with temperature*

playing a role in the conversion to the nitrate form.) Most nurseries switch from an ammonium form to a calcium form of nitrogen during the winter months because of the temperature needs of ammonium forms. Organic forms (*blood meal, fish emulsion, alfalfa, and urea*) of nitrogen must first go through a conversion to ammoniac nitrogen, which then is converted to nitrogen in the nitrate form. The results of organic fertilizers are worth experimenting with. Watch out for your critters (dogs or cats), they love many of the organic fertilizers and can prove to be problem.

Phosphorus is the second nutrient listed on the fertilizer label. Unlike nitrogen, **phosphorus** is not soluble and does not move through the mix. Phosphorus will bind with the soil particles where it is applied. It is best to incorporate phosphorus in the mix prior to planting so the it's available in the root zone as the roots develop. During rapid growth periods, the **phosphorus** absorption and renewal cycle around the soil particle, takes place continually. Boost your phosphorus and decrease your nitrogen about a month prior to the bloom cycle of your plants for more bloom. When **phosphorus** is deficient, plant growth will be stunted and slowed.

Potassium is the third percentage on the fertilizer label. Potassium, like phosphorus, is not soluble and does not readily leach out of the media. It is important to incorporate potassium in the root zone like phosphorus to insure

root uptake.

Calcium is considered another major element for plants growth but is not listed in the top three. **Calcium** is very important in cell manufacture and growth.

The minor elements are; **magnesium, sulfur, iron, zinc and manganese.** These all play an important role in plant development. In container growing it is important that these elements be incorporated in the mix, also. This can be accomplished by incorporating a dry fertilizer with minor elements to your mix prior to planting. Look for a **chelated** form of **iron-zinc** and **manganese**, these are readily available forms that your plant can take up. If you want to experiment with different methods of fertilizing, try using a dry fertilizer with minors in your mix and using a soluble fertilizer to provide **nitrogen.** Try using an organic form of nitrogen to see the results.

It is very important to follow the recommended rates or if you want to constantly feed cut the rates in quarters and use more often. I find that constant feed has some of the best results for plant growth with an occasional leaching with clear water; letting the water run out of the bottom of your pots once every 4 to 6 weeks. This washes out excess salts that can burn your root tips. It is also extremely important not to fertilize plants when soil is dry, this can burn your root tips. Cutting your rates in the winter and continuing to feed your plants can also lead to rewarding results, this is commonly done in nurseries but not often with the back yard grower. If the type of begonias you grow go completely dormant, you don't need to feed, this will only waste your fertilizer and money.

There are many different fertilizer products on the market. Many are the

same, just manufactured by different companies. Turn the bag over and look at the fertilizer breakdown to see what you are buying. Remember that nitrogen in the nitrate form is readily available to plants. The higher the number in the analysis the more concentrated the fertilizer is and the less you use. Once you have incorporated the minor elements they don't need to be reapplied.

I have seen good results using **Magnesium sulfate (epsom salt)** on a regular basis in small amounts. Experiment with your plants and different types of fertilizers. Make sure not to over-fertilize your plants; this can burn your roots and kill your plants.

Two handy devices that help to regulate your fertilizer programs are an **EC meter** and a **pH meter.** Check with your local nursery or farm supply house if you're interested in purchasing these instruments. An **EC meter** reads the salt level in the water and liquid fertilizer and a **pH meter** reads the acid content of your water and your liquid fertilizer.

Do you have a begonia growing problem or question concerning their culture?

Send your questions to:

*Horticultural Correspondent,
Shelley Andros*

*at:
740 Lamat Rd.
La Habra Heights, CA 90631*

or E-mail to:

ANDROSLAND@aol.com

What is *Begonia partita*?

by Dr. Tracy McLelland

Begonia growers are familiar with a plant called **B. partita**, which was introduced into wide cultivation by Prof. Doorenbos, from the Netherlands, in the 1970's. The plant has very distinctive leaves with three lobes, one of which is very long and narrow. Its horticultural classification is "semi-tuberous", along with its close relatives, **B. dregei**, **B. natalensis**, **B. suffruticosa**, **B. rudatisii** and **B. homonyma**.



All of these species have an enlarged stem base, or **caudex** rather than a tuber (or *semituber*?). When these plants are grown from seed, the caudex can achieve a large size, and its smooth brown surface and interesting shape make the entire plant attractive. It is apparently the size, shape and color of the caudex that makes the largest species in the group, **B. homonyma**, popular as a medicinal or magical plant among **Zulus**. **B. partita** is often a subject for bonsai-like plants, where both the caudex and the delicate interesting leaves make attractive subjects.

I have done a lot of work on (this) **B. partita** because of the distinctive leaf shape, and was interested to find out

Below: *Begonia partita* at the locality where the type specimen was first collected in 1913. (smaller photo is closeup view of the plant)

Facing Page: **Ntsubane Forest** from above. *Begonias* grow along the river



where they might be found in nature. Dr. Doorenbos told me that he had originally found the plant in the **Amsterdam Botanic Garden**, and it had been there for a long time, but there was no record of its origin. I had searched through all of the herbaria in South Africa, some in England and the US, and had never seen a specimen like it. I assumed that it was somehow derived from plants in the **B. dregei** group, but that the distinctive leaf shape had occurred through its long tenure in greenhouses, perhaps as a new mutation.

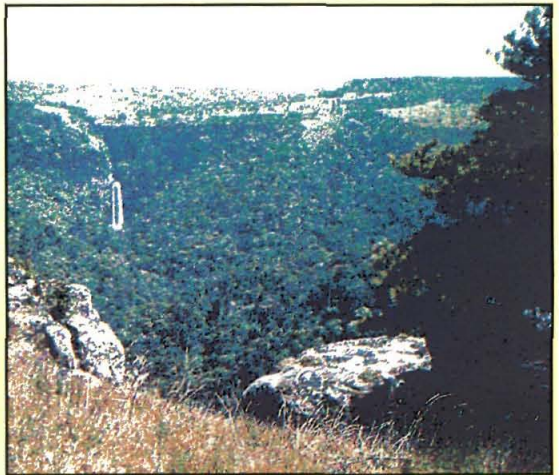
I've spent the last several years hunting for *B. dregei* and its relatives in the forests of the southeast coast of South Africa. I've come across a great variety of plants, including many that had not been recorded before. The first several years of intensive collecting yielded nothing that looked like "*partita*". But then, one of my co-workers was cleaning out old books in the herbarium

at the University of Transkei, and came across a small notebook with pressed plants, the sort of thing that a botanist would take into the field to identify the more common plants quickly. This was "*partita*", but even more so. The long lobe of the leaf was even longer and thinner than in the cultivated plants I had worked on, but there was no information about where the plant came from. We asked the person who had made the notebook if he could remember. He said he thought it was a coastal forest, and one of the other plants in the book had the name of a forest: **Ntsubane** (pronounced: *ent-SOO-bahn-eh*). Forests in this part of the world exist as small patches, usually on steep hillsides or deep river valleys, with patches of grassland on the hilltops in between them. **Ntsubane** forest is the largest forest in the region, and is relatively undisturbed, since it is dominated by a species of tree with poor wood that no one is interested in cutting down.

Now that we had an idea these plants might exist in this forest, we went to search for them. Amazingly, it took only two days of exploring before we found the plants. Not, *as is common with begonias*, on a steep cliff near a waterfall, but on flat ground near the banks of a fairly large river. They grow underneath a shrub, *Isoglossa woodii*, which is about waist high, and provides dense shade over the begonias. The leaves on these plants were incredibly long and narrow, pointing downwards, and from a distance the plants looked like the grasses that grow near them. I have brought plants back to the lab to grow and the leaves they produce in the brighter light are shorter and wider, and they are more similar to the cultivated form.

B. partita was originally described by

Irmscher in 1961, and now that plants have been found in nature, it's worthwhile to consider whether this is the correct name for them. The name *partita* refers to the deep incision between lobes of the leaves, a leaf shape that is called parted. **Irmscher** distinguished **B. partita** from **B. suffruticosa** and **B. dregei** by the presence of hairs on the upper surface of the leaf, and convex margins of the leaves, rather than concave as in *B. suffruticosa*.



The edges of the leaves differ from those of **B. suffruticosa** in having a few, if any, small teeth, rather than the large, jagged teeth of **B. suffruticosa**. The type specimen, on which the name must be based, was collected by **Hans Rudatis** in 1913 on a farm called **Glenrosa** in what is now the province of **KwaZulu/Natal**. This area is now covered by sugar cane and forestry plantations. I have been there three times, and finally found begonias with a lot of assistance from farmers, nature conservation officials and forestry managers, in what is likely the same place where **Rudatis** collected them.

The plants were in a little patch of forest near the old **Glenrosa** farmhouse, along a old railway line, and are indistinguishable from those on which **Irmscher** based his description of **B.**

partita. They are very different from those found in **Ntsubane** forest and those known commonly in cultivation as "**B. partita**". They have five lobes in the leaves rather than three and more similar sizes of the two largest lobes of the leaves. Also, they are different in the presence of hairs on the upper surface of the leaves and around the petiole where it joins the leaf blade, and in the shape of wings on the female flowers.

The most recent taxonomic treatment of the *Begonia of Southern Africa* was done by **O. M. Hilliard** in 1976. She recognized only two species in the groups, **B. dregei** and **B. homonyma**, and said that **B. natalensis**, **B. suffruticosa** and **B. partita** should be included within **B. dregei**, and **B. rudatisii** within **B. homonyma**. Her reasoning was that the leaf shape appears to be the only characteristic that varies within the group. Also, the variation in leaf shape occurs within plants as well as between, so that there is no way of making clear distinctions between species. According to Hilliard, both **Irmscher's B. partita** and the plant in cultivation that is called "**B. partita**" should be called **B. dregei**. This might make sense taxonomically, but it is very unsatisfying to people who grow plants that look very different from each other to have to use the same name for them.

If our familiar friend, that has been called "**B. partita**" is not **B. partita**, then what should it be called? One option for

names, employed by the **National Botanical Institute** and **Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens** here, is to give the name **B. dregei** "**Ntsubane**" for a selection of a species from one particular place. That would apply to the plants I have collected from the **Ntsubane** forest. Even though they are very similar to the "**partita**" in cultivation, we do not know for certain that they came from there originally. **Dr. Doorenbos** did the best he could in coming up with a name for our cultivated friend, but **B. partita** cannot be the correct name for the well-known plant, because the name (*if it were to be recognized*) applies to plants that are very different. Probably the resolution to this puzzle will involve naming sub-species, varieties or forms, but I am not prepared to do that until I have more information. The most general finding of doing research is that you always come up with more questions than you started with.

(**Dr. McLelland** has spent the last several years studying the begonia species of South Africa, particularly the tuberous and semi-tuberous types. It has been quite awhile since we have heard from her and this article was a pleasant surprise. She has promised to follow this article with at least two more, so look for them in future issues. If you would like to contact her you can write to her at: **Dr. Tracy McLelland, Genetics Dept. WITS University, WITS 2050, P/Bag 3, South Africa. You can also contact her on the Web at 108TRM@cosmos.wits.ac.za**)

The silhouettes below show the different leaf shapes of the different types of *B. dregei* in question.



Growing Organic or; Away from Home

by Tamsin Boardman

Has this happened to you? You're traveling, a long way from home; maybe you're in a foreign country, and don't speak so good the language. Suddenly, you see someone from back home - not a close friend, maybe even someone you don't much like - but, oh what a joy to see a familiar face!

I remember once running up and hugging a young man, a friend of a friend, not my type at all, simply because I'd been away for over a month. Bob (*that's not really his name*) was just as thrilled to see me (*I wasn't his type, either*) - we spent several delightful hours together talking of friends and places we knew back home. Back home we reverted to mere acquaintances. It's called homesickness.

Now about begonias: they have homes, too. Perhaps yours came from a steamy jungle, or a lofty peak in Peru, or a dry stream bed in Africa; or the greenhouses of a famous hybridizer; or a backyard in Houston, or San Francisco. Suddenly it's transported to your place, a foreign habitat, and it's not happy about it. **What can you do to cheer it up?**

1) Provide some semblance of its old home: warmth and humidity for the jungle resident; cool moist air for the San Francisco native; bright light, deep shade...whatever it takes to remind it of

home. Most begonias, if introduced to your environment slowly, will gradually adapt to your growing conditions.

2) Take a cutting (*or more, if the plant is big enough*). Cuttings are insurance; the rooted cutting may also adapt more rapidly than the parent plant, which is already accustomed to different conditions.

3) Try growing the really finicky plant in a terrarium under lights, which will give you much greater control over growing conditions.

4) This will be really controversial. Go against the conventional wisdom, and grow your new plant in the same pot with others that like similar conditions. In their original homes, all begonias grew with other begonias - and other plants - roots all tangled up, stems entwined. Just try to imagine a trailing/scandent species surviving without a supportive friend!

Bear in mind that begonias are heavy feeders but overdose easily. Feed often in small amounts - don't follow directions for general houseplants; use a diluted solution, even of the gentler organic feeds. For a quick pick-up, try Super Thrive (*a vitamin & hormone solution, 1 drop to the gallon of water*), liquid seaweed, fish emulsion, and/or molasses. Apple cider vinegar (*1 tablespoon to the gallon*) is helpful if you have alkaline water.

May your homesick begonia friend find happiness in its new habitat!

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

Write to:

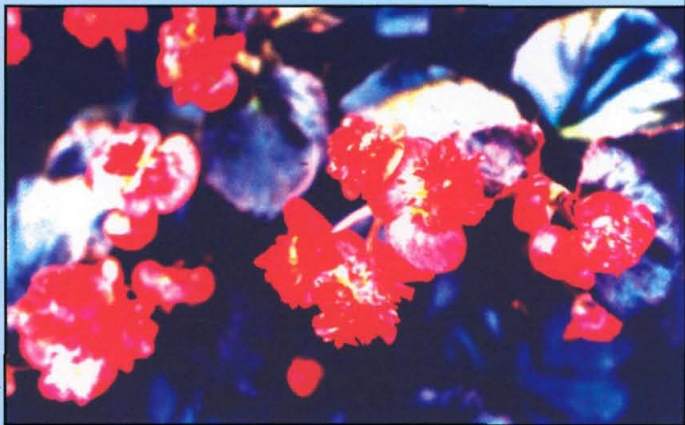
**Organics
P. O. Box 69
Bluff Dale, TX 76433**

Begonia Spotlight B. 'Firefly'



by Don Miller

The group of begonias least represented in Begonia shows these days is probably the semperflorens group. You hear comments like, "Oh, they are so common." or "They are too easy to grow; why mess with them."



But in this group there is a lot of variety.

There are bronze leafed cultivars and green leafed cultivars. And there are varieties with variegated leaves; some are mottled with yellow and some with white. You have large flowers, small flowers; single flowers and double flowers. Some are tall growing and some are short.

I would like to introduce you to one of my favorites. This is a miniature semperflorens called **B. 'Fire Fly'**. B. 'Fire Fly' was introduced by **Logees Greenhouses** of Danielson, Connecticut in 1949. It is a miniature, meaning the leaves are smaller, and its over-all growth habit is more compact. But what is so delightful are the jewel-like, fully double, bright red flowers. The flowers contrast beautifully with the deep bronze leaves.

When it is young, you may want to pinch the stems a few times to keep it bushy. Then, give it morning sun or strong filtered light. This will encourage the bright red flowers. In Latin "semper" means "ever" and "florens" means flowering. **B. 'Fire Fly'** like the other semperflorens is capable of blooming all year a Although our hot southwest-ern summers can slow down flowering in the mid-summer. So, for something a little different try growing B. 'Fire Fly'. (Don Miller grows, studies and writes about begonias at 1010 Mt. Alburn Ave., Dallas, TX 75223. Don is a past winner of the

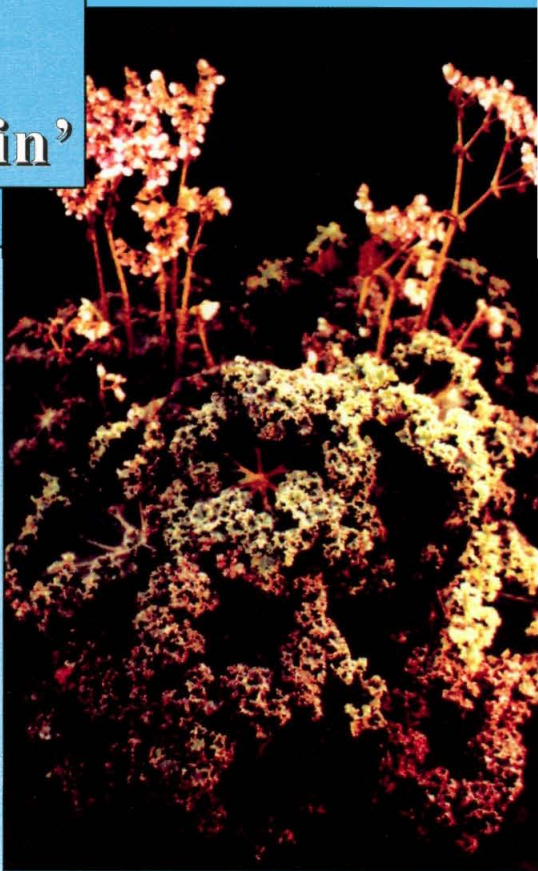
Begonia Spotlight B. 'Munchkin'

by Don Miller

As I look at B. 'Munchkin', I can imagine that it must be a species from the Land of Oz, and Dorothy brought it back during her collecting trip to this enchanting land. But alas, Dorothy of Kansas did not introduce this hybrid. In fact, it comes from another enchanting land called **Logee's Greenhouses** in Danielson, Connecticut. B. 'Munchkin' was created in 1979, when B. 'Madame Queen', a crested hybrid with large bronze leaves, was crossed with *Begonia carrieae*, a species from Mexico.

The mature leaves of this rhizomatous hybrid are 4 inches by 6 inches. The leaf blade is a deep bronze almost black on the upper surface and maroon below. The leaf margin is so densely ruffled and crested that a mature leaf can be surrounded by a one inch band of pinkish white crest that looks like foam. The main veins can be pinkish on the top from the maroon underneath. The leaf is ovate and the margin is lobed.

B. 'Munchkin's' growth habit is tight and compact and makes a nice full specimen. In the late winter and early spring medium sized peduncles (*bloom stem*) rise above the foliage and are covered with medium pink flowers. B. 'Munchkin' is fairly easy to grow just give it strong bright light and a little extra humidity. This beauty is easily propagated by stem or leaf cuttings. Although it did not come from *The Land of Oz*, B. 'Munchkin' will intrigue your friends, but be careful because the wicked Witch of the North may covet this one. This is a very striking begonia that you should make room for.



Book Review



Tamsin Boardman reviews
***The New Houseplant: Bringing
the Garden Indoors***
by Elvin McDonald
Macmillan, 1993 \$25

Elvin McDonald began writing about plants in his early teens. During his career he has written forty-plus books on growing plants, served as secretary of the **American Horticultural Society**, been Director of Special Projects for **Brooklyn Botanic Garden**, a founding editor of **Flower and Garden** and gardening editor of **House Beautiful**. Can he have any more to say? Oh, my, yes! ***The New Houseplant*** is a delight. First of all, it's a class act: lovely easy-on-the-eye print on fine paper, photos that range from pretty to breathtaking (*check out the oldest gasoline station in Chagrin Falls, Ohio on page 33*).

Rumor has it that there are people who live in houses with no plants. Just for those folks, **McDonald** begins his book with an introduction entitled "***Validating the Houseplant***," praising purification of air, the clean fresh smell, and a "*miraculous relief of the stresses of life... the notion that a radish cannot be hurried through a fax machine says it all!*" Sure he has convinced the reader, he jumps right in and advises on places and ways to introduce plants to the household, recommends more books to read, tells how to use his book (*read it from cover to cover, then use it as a reference*).

The basics to growing are covered in helpful detail in chapter two; included

here are lists - what to grow in sunny, semi-sunny, semi-shady, shady spots; and a "houseplant needs at a glance" chart giving light, temperature, and humidity uses. There's also a list of preferred pH for each plant family, but you won't find that until page 238, in the chapter on plant problems.

Our family, **Begoniaceae**, is allotted five pages in the large section on houseplants arranged by families. Although **McDonald** does not follow the **Thompsons'** horticultural classification system adopted by **ABS**, the information is - *as you seldom find in a book on plants in general* - accurate and interesting. Included is a list of fragrant begonias, carefully divided into species and hybrids. Please don't feel slighted with only five pages; begonias also appear throughout the book, starting with a photo of a **Mabel Corwin**, *B. prismatocarpa* cross (*p. 13*). In fact, our **Mabel** appears several times, and demonstrates hybridizing techniques and transplanting seedlings. Later on there's a welcome section on miniatures, where you'll recognize another **ABS** name: **Michael Kartuz's** *B. 'Buttercup'* is one of the minis pictured.

McDonald concludes with more help: a glossary of terms, a lengthy list of resources that includes how to contact plant societies, and a good index. How many books of coffee-table beauty can you count on as reference books? **The New Houseplant** scores in both categories.

(**Tamsin Boardman** is the former Editor of ***The Begonian*** and still manages to crank out interesting articles with her continued busy schedule. If you would like to write to **Tamsin**, her address is listed on the officer's page, at the back of the magazine, under Conservation.)

On Growing Rexes:

Suggestions From John Howell

compiled by Freda Holley

Every beginner at growing begonias eventually tries **Rexes**. Too often we fail because these are among the most difficult to grow. **John Howell**, whose Rex show entries and hybrids are well known to **SWR** show attendees, has suggestions that may make us more successful.

He says: "The potting mix needs to be very well drained. Water well when mix is slightly dry to the touch with ½ strength liquid rose fertilizer every 2 weeks when the Rex is growing fast. Rex begonias have an eight month growth cycle and a four month dormant cycle. The dormant cycle is triggered by short days. Fourteen hours of good light will prevent the Rex from going dormant if the soil does not dry out or go above 80-85 degrees. When the rhizome starts to go dormant, reduce the water to once a month and store in a cool location until there is ten hours of good light available. The optimum growing temperature is 75 degrees. Before starting to grow in the spring, it is best to re-pot it in fresh mix, so it will have good drainage. Most of the begonias need 60 degree soil temperatures to start growing. The acid sap of healthy begonias is an anti-freeze to 24 degrees F".

"**One-quarter** inch of coarse quartz sand on top of the mix will prevent soil diseases splashing on the stem and leaves of plants.

"**Growing impatiens** among the begonias is a good idea as it is time to water the begonias when the impatiens wilt."

When you get around to hybridizing

your Rexes, John suggests that you "try to pollinate when the temperatures are between 68 to 78° F. Pollinate only healthy plants. When your seed are ready and planted, also keep the temperature between 68 to 78 degrees.

(**Freda Holley** is Editor of *The SWR Leaflet*, where this article first appeared.)

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 opportunity 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

Begonia 'Guy Savard'

by Brad Thompson

B. 'Guy Savard', ('*Corliss Engle* ' x '*Orpha C. Fox* ' x '*Mandarin* ') is a cane hybrid created by **Patrick Worley** in 1982. **B.'Guy Savard'** is classified as a low-growing cane and has deep pink flowers. It's grown mostly for its spectacular leaves that are narrow and pointed, with a wavy, serrated edge and covered with pinkish lavender splashes.

There is a little confusion surrounding **B.'Guy Savard'** because there are a few slightly different plants called by that name. The confusion arose because, at the time it was being tested, there were also several sister seedlings being tested that looked similar. After **B.'Guy Savard'** was named, some of those sister seedlings also acquired the name because of the similarity, I'm assuming, or by accident.

B 'Guy Savard' is not necessarily an easy plant to keep from year to year because it doesn't like cold, so it can die back severely in winter outdoors . It especially doesn't like wet feet, so can also die easily from being over-watered. It can also be prone to mildew if grown in an area it doesn't like (as are many of our hybrids). Those factors aside, though, the plant is worth the trouble of growing it correctly.

If you manage to grow one to specimen size, you shouldn't have any trouble maintaining it from year to year after that. It is such a beautiful cane

when grown correctly that you should try your hand at growing one. I have lost a couple myself but both times it was because I let it stay too wet during the winter when it was most vulnerable. Plants that I have grown during the summer and that I kept sprayed regularly for mildew grew fast and bloomed well. It makes a wonderful basket, as you can see by the picture, because it doesn't get too tall and doesn't put up any large stems that have to be kept trimmed back. There are very few begonias that have **B.'Guy Savard's'** coloring to their leaves and a well-grown plant in your yard can be a



real **show-stopper**.

To grow **B.'Guy Savard'** properly, make sure not to over-pot or over-water . It can take the cold (in frost-free climates) as long as you put it in a protected area where it will not get wet feet at the same time from winter rain. (I think the reason it is so susceptible to cold and wet is because it has slender stems that can be damaged easier.) As long as you put it on a spraying routine, any mildew can be controlled and if you find a location it especially likes, you may not even have that problem. It grows best in a hanging basket where it gets better air circulation **B .'Guy Savard'** is one of **Patrick Worley's** best hybrids and is surely a plant you should have in your collections.

What About Rhizomatous Begonias?

By Mike Kartuz

There are over 1000 known species of Begonias, and almost 700 species of rhizomatous begonias. According to Millie and Ed Thompson's book, '*BEGONIAS, The Complete Reference Guide*', the first begonia species was discovered by **Charles Plumier** in **1690** in the **Antilles**. Some of the most outstanding species still growing today were discovered before 1850, such as **B. nelumbifolia** and **B. heracleifolia**.

Perhaps the oldest known rhizomatous begonia hybrid is **B. 'erythrophylla'**, developed in Germany in 1845 by crossing **B. manicata** with **B. hydroctylifolia**. Another old hybrid, **B. 'Ricinifolia'** is of uncertain origin and **B. 'Chumash'** obviously shows its **B. 'Ricinifolia'** parentage.

Most rhizomatous begonias are characterized by rather thick creeping stems with very short internodes. Another group has rhizomes at or below the surface of the soil, with erect stems. Examples of this group are **B. diadema** and **B. deliciosa**. Another group has more widely spaced internodes, such as **B. pustulata** and **B. versicolor**.

Rhizomatous begonias are characterized by their great variety of leaf shapes, sizes, and textures. Many of the most beautiful distinctive foliage types need high humidity and are often

grown in terrariums. **Rex** begonias are also rhizomatous but are placed in a class by themselves.

Rhizomatous begonias generally require less light than cane or shrubby types. While they can be wintered outdoors in coastal Southern California, they usually suffer and shed most of their leaves. They should be kept fairly dry during winter and protected from winter rains which can cause them to rot.

Most rhizomatous begonias flower in spring, usually when they look their worst, on fairly tall stems, in shades of deep pink to white. Many are fragrant, most noticeable in late morning after being warmed by the sun.

Shallow pots are recommended for growing rhizomatous begonias, such as bulb pans or azalea pots. A very well drained potting mix is essential. Repot, divide, prune and propagate rhizomatous begonias in late spring, after flowering, and new leaves begin to appear.

Nearly all varieties are easily grown from leaf cuttings. Use new, but mature leaves. Rhizome cuttings are the fastest, especially those with a few leaves attached. Use Perlite or a similar sterile propagating mix. Provide high humidity, with clear plastic shoe boxes or sweater boxes, and cover with clear plastic wrap in a warm, well lighted area out of direct sun.

(Mike Kartuz is a well-known and long-time member of ABS. Mike grows and writes about begonias at his home and commercial greenhouse in Vista, CA. If you would like to contact him, his address is on the officer's page)

ROUND ROBIN NOTES



by Virginia Hamann
Round Robin Director

33 Hybridizing: Cynthia

Bishop(Ca) likes B.' Lottó' as a pollen parent. This is a large red semper florens. A cross using epipsila as seed parent made a plant that is bushy and a heavy bloomer. The rest of the seedlings resembled Semperflorens.

6 ODD-RARE-AND UNUSUAL:

Freda Holley (AR) is mystified by B. angularata, angularis, compta, and now stipulacea...all look alike to her. She wonders if the seed was labeled correctly. They also resemble B. 'Grey Feather'. #332 and #333 from Seed Fund were slow and difficult to grow for Freda. A neat way to send pictures in robins, using a printer copier they can be reproduced on sheets of paper, thus no lost pictures and the colors come out very true to nature. B. gehrtii is hard to grow in hot climates, it seems to like cooler temps.

#5 HYBRIDIZING & BREEDING:

Ken Mackey (NZ) hybridizes using tuberous begonias. Double blooms have no stamens for pollinating so he takes cuttings hoping they will produce single blooms that will set seed. The procedure produced seed and Ken is waiting for germination and the plants produced.

Kathy Goetz (OR) asks; "*How long to wait for germination before giving up?*" She had some that took two months to sprout. **John Howell** (TX) said it took B. masoniana 7 weeks. He picked out 15 plants to pot up and 3 months later he found 25 more seedlings to transplant, seeds can germinate in succession.

#20 PHOTOGRAPHY: Daniel Haseltine (ILL) suggests one should use the same brand of film & film speed until it is mastered then go ahead and experiment with something else. He finds a SA 400 to be the easiest to use as it is not grainy and gives a good latitude of use under most light conditions.

2 TUBEROUS: Stacey Bishop (IN)

sent pictures of her begonias, all in bloom --spectacular! **Campbell Watts** (IA) has decided to get new fluorescent light tubes for his stands as his plants look like they need more light. **Monte Richards** (SD) uses Mag Amp in the pots at the start of the season and also liquid fertilizer.

#10 BEGONIAS-ALL KINDS: Jack Bohy (ILL) reminds members to let up on watering and fertilizing during winter months if plants show signs of dormancy. Members listed their favorites and the degree of ease in growing.

#31 SOUTHWEST GROWERS: Misting systems seem to be working for members; they give seedlings a boost. Rex Begonias growing in **Cynthia Bishop's** (CA) fern grotto, built into her greenhouse, are doing great.

#12 BEGONIAS & COMPANION

PLANTS: The question of potting medium came up. How important is it? The most important requirements are as follows:

1. Provide support to roots and plant.
2. Provide moisture.
3. Allows for good drainage.
4. Must be sterile, no pests or pathogens.
5. Low salinity-no toxins.
6. Correct PH for growing desired plants.

This was from **Kathy Goetz** (OR) in her notes on propagating: Proper fertilization is most important in growing begonias.

#57 MINI BEGONIAS & PLANT

TALK: Anne-Sofie Asplind (Sweden) has a nice big greenhouse now and has lots of lovely cuttings starting. **Cynthia Bishop** (CA) says to mist *B. leathermaniae* but use a fast draining soil as it does not like wet feet.

#55 Species: Kathy Goetz (OR) likes her misting system for seed starting and cuttings. *This robin is in need of members.*

9 GROWING UNDER LIGHTS:

Lorraine Anderson (CO) has a plant porch where she is creating an atmosphere like a rain forest using an ultrasonic humidifier. In the humidifier she is using Lysol to combat mold spores.

Lois Schneyer (MI) has a home and plants in Alaska as well as Michigan. She is kept busy keeping her cuttings started in plastic containers and potting them up when she returns to Alaska.

#2 TUBEROUS BEGONIAS:

Growing the tuberous begonias under lights to promote early bloom is often discussed. Maximum light is 37,500 ft. candles per 14 hour days. 20,000 ft. candles per 14 hour day is minimum.

Monte Richards (SD) found planting information in Blackmore and Langdon's catalog. They said to completely cover the tuber with rich moist compost so roots will form over surface of tuber. This will help the plant get more nutrients and steady it in the pot.

Stacey Bishop (IN) planted small dime sized tubers in wire baskets lined with long spagnum moss. She filled the baskets with her regular potting soil. The plants grew to large proportions, with nice blooms. The tubers had doubled in size by fall. Tubers not grown this way did not do as well, proving they need more air and drainage. Stacey

Official



1997 ABS Ballot

About the Candidates

Bruce C. Boardman is a member of Dallas Area Branch (TX) and former National Director for Southwest Region. He has served as ABS 2nd Vice-President for 2 years, and as 1st VP for the past year. He has also served as Conservation Chair, and has worked on the Begonian staff for 8 years.

Former President of ABS, **Gene Salisbury** is well known to everyone after his two terms in office. Gene continues to be involved in ABS as an ABS Judge and as Past President on the Board.

If there are two ABS members in your household you will receive a second ballot by mail. Please do not duplicate the ballot.

Ballots must be received by July 21. Votes will be counted on July 22.

The ABS Bylaws Article VII - Elections Section 5 state:

"The Committee shall invalidate any ballot containing any writing other than the marks necessary to register votes for candidates nominated under the procedures provided for under these Bylaws..." The Ballot Counting Committee reminds members that the ballot is voided if personal remarks or additions are made on the ballot.

Please don't invalidate your vote!
Comments maybe made on a separate piece of paper.



Quick Tip

The supermarket containers used to package fresh mushrooms are terrific for sowing seeds or rooting plantlets. They're deep and sturdy and fit on any average windowsill...

.. **And** still another: A tried-and-true "*recipe*" for rooting begonia leaves and cuttings: Mix one part milled sphagnum moss with one part horticultural sand. Water thoroughly before inserting cuttings; do NOT cover cuttings, but check frequently to keep medium moist. Great for strong root systems, and almost fail-proof, in my experience.

.. **In a pinch**, you can use plastic 3-oz. Solo cups (*so useful for leaf wedges, plantlets, etc.*) to create "*plant stakes*" for plastic wrap-covered seed flats. Just cut a straight line down to and around the bottom, and remove it. You then have the shell of a Solo cup, which can be sectioned into as many pieces as needed to help keep the plastic off emerging seedlings.

Karen Lynch
Glen Ridge, NJ

Shrub begonias need extra humidity to propagate well. Do this by putting 1" of perlite in the bottom of the tall utility-type box, insert the cuttings, and cover tightly with plastic wrap.

Begonia Display at Tropical Plant Show



By Wanda Macnair

At the behest of President **Ann Salisbury**, my husband **Dick** and I participated in the two-day tropical plant show featuring begonia plants in Bennington, Vermont. This show was primarily sponsored by the **New England Tropical Conservatory** and the Horticultural Program of the **Southwest Vermont Career Development Center**. Because of a donation by the **Salisburys** on behalf of the **ABS**, the **ABS** was also a sponsor, along with other civic groups.

Many of the begonia plants on display were obtained as cuttings from the **New York Botanical Gardens**, and **Logee's Greenhouses** and were grown on by students of **Dick Lutz** at the school. These were shown along with ferns and other companion plants throughout a large hallway. **Dick (Macnair)** and I took a display of about 30 terrarium plants and a large mixed terrarium to show some of the possibilities for growing this family of plants.

The show was remarkably well-attended by **483** paying attendees, plus **200** parents and relatives of performers in the high school band and the **Vermont Youth Orchestra**.

On Friday, **Scott Hoover** and I spoke to around **400 sixth graders to twelfth graders** in three sessions, on collecting in the wild, and growing these plants in the home. On Saturday, several work-

shops and lectures were presented, including those by **Scott Hoover and me**. Videotapes were made of these presentations and will be available to the **ABS**.

Response was almost overwhelming, and with the help of **Scott** and the several others active in the **New England Tropical Conservatory program**, plans to form a **branch of ABS** were pursued, with the first meeting scheduled for **April 12**. This **new branch** would cover a tri-state area in southern **Vermont**, Northwest **Massachusetts**, and upstate **New York**. Any **ABS member** in this area who wishes to learn more about the group should contact:

Mary M. Fuqua,
96 Grandview Drive,
Williamstown, MA 01267.
413-458-5336.

*(Wanda and Richard (Dick) Macnair are devoted members of the **Buxton Branch** and **ABS**. They never fail to attend the **ABS Board Meetings**, even if they have to fly to California to attend. Both are extremely hard workers that can always be counted on to join in and help on a project. You can write to **Richard and Wanda at 177 Hancock Street, Cambridge, MA 02193**)*

Quick Tip



Cut up old bleach bottles to make labels for your plants. The bottles also make good stakes for small plants. You can cut them to exactly the size you need.

Mike Kartuz
Vista, CA

GROWING FOR SHOWING

By Brad Thompson

Part One of Two Part Series

As usual for this time of year, we need to concentrate on how to grow our plants to get them ready for shows. I know some of you are thinking, well, I never enter plants in shows, or I can never grow show plants, or I already know everything so I don't need to brush up on show culture. My answer to that type of thinking is; you should be entering plants in shows to support your clubs and so the general public can see just how much variety there is in the begonia family, you can grow show plants, and you don't know everything. Even if I can't convince you to grow show plants, the culture tips I'm going to share with you will still be valuable for you to grow beautiful plants for your yard.

I know some or most of you think that I only grow plants for show or that's all I care about. That isn't true, I do try to grow all of my plants as if they were going to a show because I just like nice plants. I rarely look at a plant and say "Oh this one is going to the shows later in the year", I just pick out the ones that live up to their potential. You shouldn't set some plants aside and say well, I'm going to grow these for the shows and the rest I'm going to just let grow. You'll have more success if you try to grow all of them nicely. You'll be surprised how many you have to enter later.

The most important thing for growing a show plant is just plain proper culture.

If you supply your plants with the right light, water, fertilize regularly, watch for pests and mildew, prune and pinch, and repot, then you have all the elements for excellent plants. If you leave out any elements, your plants will not be a good as they should be. It does take some time to learn proper culture but I had show plants the second year I grew begonias, so most of you probably already have the basics down.

1. Light: The amount of light you give your plants will have a major effect on how your plants look. Plants that are not in enough light will have growth that is elongated and not very much bloom. Plants in too much light will have smaller leaves, too tight of growth, and brown edges. You'll have lots of bloom but your foliage will look like hell. The majority of begonias like filtered light all day. If you don't have shade cloth, then use an area that gets morning or late afternoon sun. As a general rule, canes and shrubs can take more sun and rhizomatous can take less sun. My canes and shrubs grow under shade cloth (70%) where the sun comes through almost all day and along my house where they get full late afternoon sun and they love it. My rhizomatous begonias grow in all the areas that are too shady for the canes, like on the north side of the house where they only get a little sun in the morning through shade cloth. I also grow them under benches along with all of my rexes. They do need good bright light though. I'm not suggesting you grow them in the dark and some do like more light than others.

2. Water: I can't express enough about the importance of proper watering. The surest way to stunt your plant's growth is to not water properly, especially over-watering. Take advice from a former over-waterer, they don't like it. Part of the problem is choosing the proper mix and the proper sized pot

for the plant (*I won't go into details, we covered this in the Mar/April Issue*) and the second is learning how often to water. Since I knew that I was an over-waterer the way I learned how to overcome the problem is: When I thought the plants needed watering, I forced myself to wait one or two days more to water. Eventually I learned how dry they should be. The surface of the soil should be dry before you water again. If you're unsure, then stick your finger into the soil to see if it feels wet or not. If you read the *Begonian* you'll know that begonias in the wild usually grow in very shallow soil with very good drainage. In hot weather you won't have to worry as much about how often to water because they'll be drying out every three or four days. If you have a plant that wilts and the soil is wet, you have over-watered. If you have a plant that always seems to wilt before your other plants are ready to water and you've checked the soil and its dry then it needs a bigger pot.

3. Fertilizing: You can't have nice full plants if you don't fertilize, so, if you aren't a habitual fertilizer then you better become one. Plants that are in pots use up all of the nutrients in the soil very quickly. If you don't resupply those nutrients with regular fertilizer, your plants are starving, and living on a diet of dirt and water. Prisoners get better treatment than that. Try fertilizing with $\frac{1}{4}$ strength fertilizer once a week and see if you aren't amazed at the results after just a couple of weeks. You'll have a hard time getting lush growth if you don't learn to fertilize. Although your plants will survive (*I said survive, not thrive*) for a long time, without that fertilizer they will never live up to what they could be with just a little care. If you have a large collection of plants, you should invest in a Syphonex to fertilize with. It will make the job much simpler and maybe you'll be more willing to get around to it more often. A Syphonex attaches to your hose bib and has a small tube that goes

into a pail of mixed fertilizer. When you attach your hose to it, it automatically draws fertilizer as you water. Some people are afraid to use one because they aren't sure how to mix the fertilizer to the right concentration so I'll tell you what concentration to use. The directions say to mix the fertilizer to 16 times the normal amount you would normally use, so if your fertilizer says to use **1 teaspoon per gallon** the you mix **16 per gallon**. That is for full strength.

Since I water with $\frac{1}{4}$ strength fertilizer I'll give you the math. My fertilizer says one teaspoon per gallon so I multiply that by sixteen which gives me **16 teaspoons per gallon**. I use a five gallon pail so I multiply that by five (**16 teaspoons x 5 gallons**) which gives me eighty teaspoons (**80**). To get $\frac{1}{4}$ strength I divide by four (**80 teaspoons divided by 4**) which gives me **20** teaspoons per **5 gallon pail**. I use slightly less than that like 18 or so just to be safe. If you need more explanation than that just ask me.

4. Pests and Mildew: The quickest and easiest way for a really great plant to be ruined for a show is to not watch out for these two problems. I don't know how many times I've had really nice plants that looked like they were going to be winners. Later, they would be covered with mildew spots just before the show because I didn't keep up with checking and spraying. Plants with bugs or mildew are disqualified from the show and kicked out so this an important aspect. Make sure to inspect them frequently and take the appropriate measures.

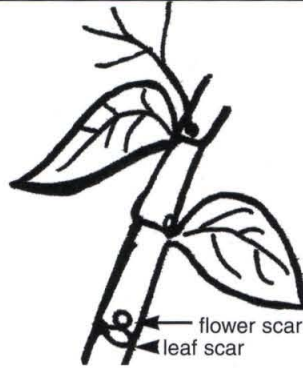
5. Pruning and Pinching: These two aspects of culture don't have that much to do with the health of your plant, like all of the other items, but are just as important for beautiful plants. We've gone over pruning in an earlier issue of *The Begonian*, so I'm not going to go

into detail on that. Besides, if you haven't pruned your plants already, you probably won't get around to it anyway unless you do it pretty soon. With pinching, though, now it the time to start in order to get your plants to branch well and to make your plants full especially your baskets. Pinching involves removing the growing tips from all of the branches to force side growth. It took a couple of years for me to be converted over to the pinchers side. I couldn't believe the results once I started pinching all of my plants. It's almost a necessity for full baskets, but less important on large canes if they were pruned properly in the first place.

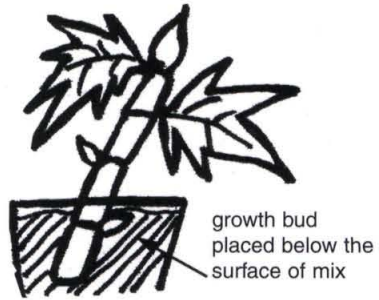
Rhizomatous begonias benefit from pinching also, and develop into nice full plants with little effort. If you don't pinch the rhizomes they will continue to creep right across the pot and over the side. Don't let this happen to you, pinch, pinch, pinch. When pinching, let the stems on your plants grow out three nodes and then pinch, let them grow out three more nodes, then pinch again, etc. Stop pinching at least 6 weeks before a show so you'll have plenty of bloom.

This overview should show you how important each cultural element is to the success of growing exceptional plants and, hopefully, will help you in your endeavors. In the next issue, will be the second part to this article and will cover the mechanics of actually getting the plant ready for the show. Basics such as cleaning the pot, staking, etc.

Propagaton Tips

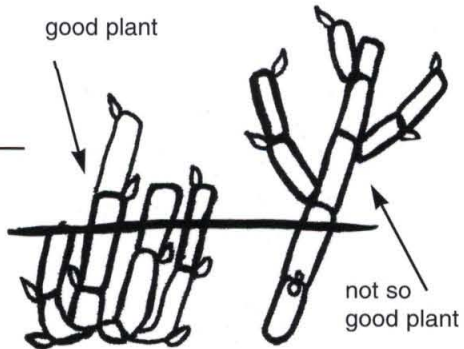


In the drawing above, you can see a cutting that isn't any good for propagating because the nodes all have flower scars and no growth buds.



In the drawing above you can see a proper cutting, with at least one growth bud. This bud should be buried beneath the surface of the mix to produce future bottom growth.

good plant



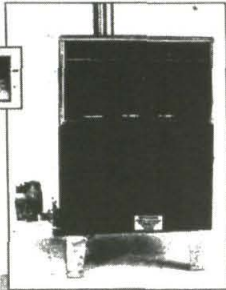
The drawing to the right shows the results of using good and bad cuttings. The plant on the left was a cutting that had a growth bud beneath the mix. This bud eventually branched out beneath the mix to form new shoots that are growing up from the base of the plant. The plant on the right shows what will happen if you use a cutting that doesn't have that bottom growth bud. This was a cutting with a flower scar at the bottom. All the growth is above the soil and it will never be a nice looking plant. If you already have some plants that look like the one on the right, you can bury the plant lower in a new pot to reroot the plant with buds under the mix.

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Clayton M. Kelly

Seed Fund Notes



Ann Salisbury, Seed Fund Director

Since we didn't have a seed fund listing last time, I decided to have as many choices as possible for this issue. I hope you like this issue's offerings.

Species Seed

B. ulmfolia: Trinidad. Thick-stemmed species. Has hairy, elf-shaped leaves. It blooms freely in late winter with white blossoms.

B. nelumbiifolia: Mexico. Rhizomatous with large peltate green leaves. Sometimes known as the "pond lily", it has pink flowers.

B. kellermanii: Guatemala. It has round, white, hairy, peltate leaves and white flowers tinted with pink.

B. egregia: Brazil. A thick-stemmed species that grows 3 ft or taller. Leaves are lanceolate, hairy, large (up to 12 inches long.) White flowers in winter thru March, large pendant clusters; female ones are very fragrant.

B. carolineifolia: Mexico. A graceful species with an erect, thick rhizome. Leaves are glossy green, palmately compound. Pink flowers in winter.

B. vanderveldiana: No information

B. peltata: Mexico. Shrublike begonia, referred to as the "succulent begonia". White-felted peltate leaves and medium-sized white flowers

B. leathermaniae: Boliva. Tall, cane-like species with bulbous root at soil line. Velvety textured, deeply lobed with silver shadings along the main vein. leaf blade has a duff of pale green spines where it joins the petiole.

B. johnstonii: Africa. Tall, loosely branched with pale green leaves and red-spotted stems; few- but large pink flowers.

B. crassicaulis: Rhizomatous with thick trunks, medium-large palmate leaves, and white flowers that appear in winter after leaves drop off.

B. mollicaulis: Tropical Africa. Shrub-like with soft green leaves covered with white hairs. Flowers white in pendulous clusters.

B. humilus: Annual species with triangular leaves. Collected in Trinidad by Dr. Tracy Mclellan.

B. paranaensis: Brazil. Thick stem, large leaves with dentate margins. Huge clusters of small white flowers in early spring.

B. sharpeana: New Guinea. Rhizomatous with large round, bronze leaves with flowers bright red on outside, white inside.

Hybrid Seed

B. 'Cleopatra': Rhizomatous hybrid, profuse blooming winter-early spring, pink flowers.

Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund

The Seed Fund is a service to members only. It is a privilege of your membership.

The Seed Fund would appreciate receiving donations of any fresh seed, as our supply is very limited at this time. Thank you!

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Casa de Coulat

Joan Coulat is a remarkable woman and a devoted grower of Begonias. Besides being one of the stalwart members of **ABS** and the **Sacramento Branch**, she also manages to work 60 hours a week at a local nursery (*Capital Nursery if you're ever in Sacramento and would like to stop in and visit*). She makes sure the nursery keeps a good supply of **begonias** available for all her loyal begonia growing customers. I don't know how long **Joan** has been growing begonias but let's just say it's been long enough that I might give away her age by telling you.



Joan has won many **ABS awards** for her begonias and takes home the **Best in Show** trophy at the **Sacramento Branch** pretty regularly. She also has a drawer full of cultural certificates she has won over the years. This attests to the great growing skills of this member. Besides growing begonias well, she is also a **Senior Judge** for **ABS** and has given many lectures at branches and at **National Conventions**.



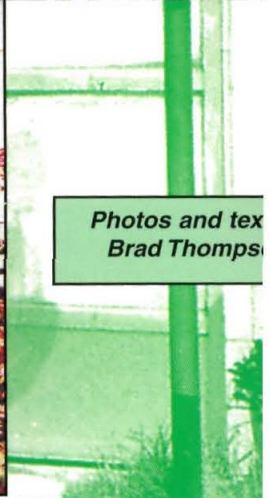
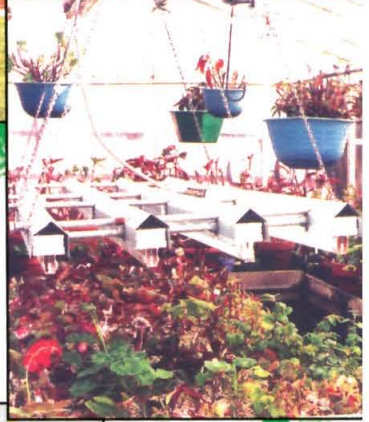
Joan lives on a good size piece of property in a nice part of the Sacramento suburbs. On this property, besides her growing areas, she also maintains a swimming pool and baseball-diamond-size yard to entertain the grandchildren when they visit. This same concern for the comfort of her grand-children extends to everyone she meets. She just loves people and is a very gracious hostess as I found out when I traveled to Sacramento to speak for their branch. She didn't know me from Adam but had me stay at her home where I felt very catered to for my entire stay. Sacramento gets a little too cold for year-round outdoor begonia growing, so besides the large shadehouse where she grows during the summer, she also has a nice green-house. Somehow during the winter she manages to squeeze all her plants inside and still grow a few hundred



sale plants for the annual show and sale. In fact, the entire center bench in her greenhouse is solely devoted to propagation. As you saw in a photo a couple of issues ago, she also maintains a collection of large terrariums in her home (*from which she shares generously*.) Joan is one of the real treasures of **ABS** (yes, there are many special members) and we're lucky



to have her. (*If you would like to write to **Joan**, her address is 4111 De Paul Court, Sacramento, CA 95821*)



*Photos and text
Brad Thompson*

Conservation News



by *Tamsin Boardman,*
Conservation Chair

Cause for Celebration

Every once in a while there's good news on the conservation front. **Rhodora Buss** sent some in March, in the form of a clipping from the **Sioux City Journal** about the **Ecological Corridor Project**. With backing from such diverse factions as botanists, local governments, and the World Bank, the project seeks to salvage and expand scattered remnants of the **Brazil's Atlantic Forest**.

Item: only 3% of the original forest remains.

Item: between 1985 and 1990, government studies showed the forest was razed at a rate of 13 football fields an hour.

Item: in November 1996 botanists in Bahia State discovered 476 types of trees in a 2.5 acre plot - a record for biodiversity.

The Ecological Corridor Project will establish corridors to link remaining isolated pockets of forest, planting the corridors with native plants and trees. Seeds are being collected for the country's "endangered tree bank."

Why is all this of interest to begonia lovers? Because **Brazil's Atlan-tic Forest** is home to the vast majority of **cane-like begonia species**, that's why - as well as other types of begonias and thousands of their preferred companion plants. Look back through the photographs by photogra-

pher/botanist **Jacques Jangoux** (*Begonian*, J/F '89, J/F '93, M/J'96) to get some idea of what is at stake.

Collections Benefit All

Some of us are fascinated by begonia species, excited about new discoveries. We don't need much persuading to back a collecting trip. Other members grow only hybrids - so why should they get involved in expeditions to look for new species? To expand the gene pool for new hybrids, of course!

Tamsin also heads the "Save Our Species" project and edits the newsletter for the project. If you would like to contact her, refer to her address on the officer's page. The article below first appeared in the 'Save Our Species' newsletter.

My Love Affair with *B. partita*

by *Estelle Sullivan*

B. partita: This species was collected in the wild as early as 1897 and grown in the **Berlin Botanical Gardens** in 1914. It was not named until 1961.

The first time I saw ***B. partita*** was at a **Southwest Region Get-Together**. It was one of the most wonderful plants I had ever seen. My first thought was "I just have to have that one!", but looking at the entry card I saw it was a **semi-tuberous species**. The word "*tuberous*" was very intimidating, and led me to believe that it would be next to impossible to grow along the Gulf Coast of Texas. It gets so very hot! Nonetheless, I still felt I must have one.

The following year the **Houston Astro Branch** visited **John Howell** in **San Antonio**. Looking with amazement at all the different kinds of begonias I suddenly saw a **B. partita**. And **YES!** It was for sale. A rather small plant, but I felt I could - or hoped I could - grow it to be a show specimen. That I did! The following spring it had grown to be a beautiful plant, with an abundant amount of blossoms - the blossoms were snow white with male and female blossoms on the stem.

In April 1993 the **Garden Clubs of Texas** held a convention and flower show in **Houston**. I entered my **B. partita**, and to my amazement won **Best of Show**. The judges were quite taken with it. . None of them had ever seen a plant like it, and could barely believe it was a begonia. Receiving Best of Show would lead you to believe I had mastered the art of growing **B. partita**. Wrong. A deluge of rain was more than it could tolerate. Within a couple of weeks my beautiful **partita** was dead. I was not completely convinced the rain was the only culprit. I thought it possibly could have acquired a fungus. As they say, "*back to the drawing board.*"

So, back to John's I went, to acquire another **partita**. Fortunately, I was able to get another, plus several other kinds of semi-tuberous begonias: 'Weltonensis', *dregei*, and two *dregei* varieties, *natalensis* and *suffruticosa*.

All the semi-tuberous are growing fairly well in spite of a horrendously hot summer. They sit under a large pecan tree, receiving filtered sun and an hour or so of very late afternoon sun. The growing medium is a mixture of 4 parts Canadian peat, 2 parts vermiculite, 1 part perlite, and 1/2 part play sand. The first three ingredients have always been my standard mix, but I added the sand hoping for better drainage. After potting, I scratch a little bit of Fung-Away into

the mix. I am still leery about the rain, so when the downpour lasts more than a day I move the semi-tuberous to a protected area. Now I am probably petting them too much, but we'll see what happens in a year or so. I'll let you know.

Seeds I have not tried yet, but I have had some luck in propagating by cuttings. I try to plant by moon signs (*some think this is just an old wives' tale, but it has proven to work too many times*). The most successful method for me so far has been in long fiber moss. Soak the moss until completely wet and soaked. Cut into 1" pieces and place in 4" pots. Insert cuttings into moss and keep wet continuously. I have had the best results with **B. dregei** and **B. dregei var natalensis; var suffruticosa** is the hardest. If anyone has a better method to suggest, please let me know. I have a waiting list for rooted cuttings - I prefer to give rooted cuttings.

Even though I am aware that semi-tuberous begonias are somewhat of a challenge, I am afraid my love affair is not only with **B. partita** but has *extended* to all the semi-tuberous types. Hopefully I will be able to obtain more kinds . Maybe all of them. Well...I can dream, can't I.

I would like to extend my greatest thanks to **Kelton Parker** of the **Fort Worth Botanic Garden** for all the very interesting information he has sent. Without it, the programs I give on semi-tuberous begonias would not have been nearly as interesting.

(*Editor's Note: Estelle Sullivan grows her semi-tuberous begonias in Santa Fe, TX. If you would like to contact her, her address is P.O. Box 57, Santa Fe, TX 77510*)

Mary, Mary, how does your garden grow?

Her garden grows pretty darn well, as her many trophies and cultural certificates will attest to. **Mary** is a tireless worker



for **ABS** and the local **California branches** (*she belongs to 4*) and has been ever since she saw her first cane begonia at the **Long Beach Show**. That begonia was **B. 'Jumbo Jet'** and she was so amazed that she's been a cane lover ever since. Over the last couple of years **Mary** has also taken a fancy to the rhizomatous and tuberous begonias. She has successfully shown that **tuberous begonias** can be grown in **Orange County** when most people said it was too hot.



Mary has a very large shadehouse that her husband **Eddie** built for her and it's the envy of all her friends. When asked whether **Eddie** likes begonias or not, **Mary** will only reply that he **tolerates them**. His tolerance must also extend to begonia growers because he has gone out of his way, many times to help host club activities at their home. (*Ask Eddie for his famous barbecued fish recipe.*) **Eddie** told me personally that he really couldn't care less about begonias but he just likes begonia people. **Mary** grows many of the sale plants for all the club's shows and sales and also grew a couple thousand for the Irvine Convention in a smaller shadehouse that Eddie built for her when she outgrew the original.

When Mary first started growing begonias she was very quiet and though she was a hard worker even then, she rarely said much at meetings. Now she speaks at meetings and shares her growing secrets and is very active on the **National Board for ABS**, besides being on **2 Convention Committees**. I guess those nice begonia growers have drawn her out of her shell. **ABS** could use a few more members like **Mary**. I have the good fortune to be friends with **Mary** and she is the main test grower for my new cane hybrids. Of course, I may have stretched our friendship a little by including the pictures below but she'll forgive me (*one day, I hope.*) If you would like to contact **Mary**, you can write to her at **6847 E. Sycamore Glen Dr., Orange, CA 92869**



The many faces of Mary Sakamoto

*In these two pages:
Various photos of
Mary Sakamoto's
home and yard.
Pictures by Maria
Holmes and Brad
Thompson.*



*Below: Mary's home plays host
to several events each year for
the Orange County Branch. Here
a group gathers at the annual
Orange County Branch Fiesta.*



or Mary, Mary, quite contrary...

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

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Mabel Corwin's secrets: *how she grows her fabulous rexes*

by Mabel Corwin

I grow all types of begonias, but I do have a special fondness for **rexes**. The brilliant colors and interesting textures always attract attention. **Rexes** require

more humidity than other begonias. I think that is the main reason many growers find them difficult. Lack of humidity causes the leaf edges to become crisp and dry and the plant simply does not flourish as it should. I have about 300 rexes growing in my shadehouse. This is the way I handle the problem: I place all of the rexes on low benches. The ground is covered with a thick layer of gravel. During warm weather I water the gravel. As the water evaporates it cools the air and adds humidity. Most people grow on a smaller scale. Humidity can be added by placing pots on trays of wet gravel. Grouping plants together and placing a pan of water nearby also works. Indoors a humidifier would be

helpful. Rexes also can be grown in terrariums if there is no other way to provide the necessary humidity. The right amount of light

is important to bring out beautiful colors. They should not have any direct sunlight. One of my reasons for growing on low benches is that the light is less intense. It seems to be just right for rexes. They are sometimes grown under the benches in the greenhouse. This works well if good air circulation

can be maintained. Usually we are told the grow rexes warm. I grow mine in the coolest part of the shadehouse.

During the winter our low temperatures are often around 40 degrees F. We usually have a few nights that are colder. Most of the plants have no

leaves, or few leaves—they simply rest during the cold weather when the nights are long. In February new growth starts and during the spring months the growth is very fast. While the plants are resting I check each one carefully. I usually pinch off the tip of the rhizome or cut it back to the edge of the pot if it has grown over the edge. This forces new growth along the rhizome and makes a full compact plant. If it has an upright rhizome I cut it back part way. If the plant has been growing in the same pot for a year I usually pot up into the next size pot. Usually the plant needs to be set slightly lower and sometimes centered in the pot if it is growing off in one direction. I do this potting in March and April, when they are growing fast, and I start to fertilize.

Rexes respond to a regular feeding program during the spring and summer months. I start with an all-purpose formula such as **14-14-14** or **20-20-20**, then alternate with **15-30-15** or something similar. I taper off the feeding in late summer when growth slows down. In recent years mildew on rexes has become a real problem. Prevention is very important. Good air circulation is





a bit touchy. Spiral-leaved varieties may be difficult. However, many new hybrids are being introduced that are easier to grow.

When I make a cross I always make sure that one parent is a strong grower. This usually results in a strong plant that is easy to grow. If you have adverse conditions, or are a novice you should start with varieties that are easy to grow, such as **B. 'Helen Teupel'**, **B. 'Merry Christmas'**, or **B. 'Vista'**. There are a few varieties that I always keep in the greenhouse. One is **B. 'Purple Petticoats'** that has won many prizes for me. I have tried it out in the shadehouse, but after a month or so it sulks and lets me know it is unhappy. Others that need greenhouse conditions are **B. 'Glory of St. Albans'**, **B. 'Helen Lewis'**, and **B. 'American Beauty'**.



If you really want to have fun with begonias, try growing rexes from seed. The first

little leaves will be green, then for at least a year each new leaf will be different. One big advantage to growing begonias from seed is that they are acclimated to your conditions from the beginning. So, if you have been afraid to try rexes because they are supposed to be difficult, why don't you give it a try? I think you will be glad you did.



(**Mabel Corwin** is *THE* expert on growing **Rex Begonias**. This article is a reprint of an article from the early 80's. Most of the photos are just pictures of unknown or unnamed rexes. The exceptions are Mabel's seedlings growing on the opposite page and **B. 'Jackie Corwin'** to the right.)



Editor's Notes

by Brad
Thompson



Ok, so it's not the best picture, but it's all I had. Actually, considering the way I really look, maybe it's an improvement.

This issue marks the completion of one year as Editor of *The Begonian*. I hope you've enjoyed the changes I've made and I'd like to thank everyone for bearing with me during my learning process. This issue also begins another new process for laying out the magazine. At the printer's suggestion, we have started using a different program to produce the magazine. You'll probably get the opportunity to bear with me again for the next couple of issues while I learn the ins and outs of the new program. Eventually you will also get the opportunity to see some of the neat new things I'll be able to do with it. This issue was a real challenge; trying to convert to a new layout program and learning to use the new scanner at the same time. You may notice that some items have a slightly different look because I wasn't able to duplicate everything exactly the way it was before in the other program. Besides, since I had to basically start from scratch anyway, I figured I might as well play with some new layouts.

I'm pretty much settled in my new house now. I have a new shade house built and my yard landscaped. You can expect some pictures in the next issue.

I've also been planting many types of begonias in the ground, so you can expect some writing about that subject. I was so impressed with Jackie and Harry Davis' shadehouse that I bought lots of tuberous begonia tubers this year. I can't wait for them to bloom. I'm even planning on building some of those stair-stepping plant shelves they had. Those were great. I also have a new gardening companion. She is a Cairne Terrier (like *Toto* in the "*Wizard of Oz*") and her name is **Sofie**. Sofie is short for **Sofiona** because she likes to sit on-a-sofie when she isn't helping me with the garden. She really likes to help dig holes and pull weeds but we're still working on where to dig the holes and what is classified as a weed. She already knows that Begonias aren't weeds but the other plants aren't safe yet.

I'm afraid, with everything that's gone on over the past few months and falling behind on just about everything, that many of you will think that I have forgotten you or that I just don't feel like answering your letters. I love hearing from the members and I'm sorry if I'm not able to answer sometimes but there are only so many hours in the day to do everything. Also, you writers that are waiting for your contributor copies, be patient, you will get them. Even though I have been editing the magazine for a year now doesn't mean that it takes any less time to put it together. In fact, now that I'm scanning all the photos myself, it takes more time. I'm still struggling to stay healthy, care for my plants, work on my full time job, work on the Web pages and also edit *The Begonian*. There is never enough time. Ok, I'm done whining and making excuses now. I hope everyone enjoys the convention and has a good growing season.

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