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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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Cover

Front: B. 'Silvermist', an Irene Nuss hybrid and winner of the Alfred D. Robinson Medal in 1995 (see featured articles). Photo by **Charles Jaros**.

Back: A vote for **Tamsin Boardman**'s "Growing Organic," says **Johanna Zinn** of her pet chinchilla Ricochet as he nibbles at her plant of B. 'Freddie' (the 1946 Ziesenhenn hybrid of B. *manicata* var. *aureo-maculata* x *barkeri*).

In This Issue

Featured in this issue is ABS' great hybridizer Irene Nuss. Our begonia hybridizers are to be appreciated not only for the beauty and joy in growing they give us, but because they too contribute to our efforts to preserve the genetic heritage of begonias. Although only by growing the species can we preserve the specific forms, the hybrids nonetheless also serve this end. As huge wildfires destroy countless acres of begonia habitat and with it untold species in Malaysia and now Brazil and other Latin American areas, this ABS mission grows ever more important.

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Quick

Check your mailing label. If it reads **7/ 98 or 8/98**, your membership is about to expire. Please renew! We don't want to lose you.

Notes from the President ...

The annual reports of various branches bemoan the loss of members; the difficulty of finding a suitable meeting time and place; and an inability to persuade visitors to return.

Our January "Priorities" meeting discovered that growing branches are "user friendly."

Name tags, intentional socializing with the unfamiliar faces, and giving the newcomer a "do-able" chore were successful strategies. Also, giving of plants (not the touchy ones that no one can grow); literature for beginners; hooking interest to 'remote facts about various families' to present geography and habitat differences; lots of hands on teaching with the seasoned members serving as mentors, are all challenges that invite deepening interest.

Try initiating study groups on days that are good for newly interested gardeners—with the intent of starting a new branch when the recruits are sufficient to sustain monthly activities. (Southern California has cross memberships in their many branches. Houston is growing and accommodating a fourth branch!) And the general opinion was that a once-a-month meeting was necessary for camaraderie to develop. Be inclusive and not exclusive!

Our "Priorities" group said to the *Begonian* editor, give us: More pictures of plants (and better ones!); Beginners' stuff; Initiate articles using a Zone Concept (which shall require writers from our widespread membership that can condense season happenings in their area to readable and usable

content); and New "U-numbers," with photos, to tantalize hybridizers and our species researchers.

For our meeting, I copied an article from a 1988 *Begonian* (Jan/Feb) in which Bob Hamm asked what should happen to ABS in the next decade. His comments are worth reviewing on your own but one paragraph about *Shows* needs immediate discourse: "...it has to be remembered that shows, whether branch, regional, or national are a way of promoting ABS. The main purpose of a show is not so that ABS members can get together to win ribbons; it's for bringing the *public* in, showing them what begonias are, and getting them interested in growing begonias."

Therefore, public-ity should be directed where the newly interested can interact with the experienced. Highly visible outdoor signage for meetings, and notices on bulletin boards of local nurseries can attract attention. And our Board has suggested matching writers and photographers so that we can keep a barrage of begonia articles on the desk of the local paper's gardening editor; editors are people who depend upon constant news sources, so let us be consistent and constant.

And let us be Creative: stand back and look at your methods of attraction. Are they really persuasive? Would you, if a novice, be impelled to come to your meeting or show? And if you were a visitor, what would you expect to get from a meeting or show? Are you "user friendly?"

What worked 40 years ago may need updating: lifestyles are different although our needs may be the same.

~Bruce C. Boardman

Bring Them Back Alive, And Life After Arrival

by

Don Miller,

Horticultural Correspondent

It is always exciting to find a new begonia on your travels or to find an old begonia friend that you have lost. But what is really disappointing is to bring them home only to see them die. I have had good results using the following tips to bring my begonias home alive and to keep them growing.

First let's suppose you are flying home. It's very important that the soil moisture of your plants not be too damp; they should be moist, but not wet. If the soil is too wet and the stem is bruised, it can easily rot. If they are in clay pots, slip them out and put in a plastic pot or bag which is lighter and won't shift. I take some crumpled paper or plastic and cover the soil surface and use a rubber band or tape to hold it in place. If it is a variety that prefers more humidity, place it *inside* a plastic bag. Unfold some more newspaper and lay your plant six to eight inches from one corner. Now adjust the foliage so the leaves are turned up. Then roll the newspaper around them. Fold up the bottom and the top being careful not to damage the foliage.

I pack a row of plants pot to pot with the pots to the outside of the suitcase (a hard-sided one) or box. Then do another row with the bottom of the pots next to the opposite side of the shipping container. The foliage will overlap. You want to pack enough plants to fill up the shipping container. If you don't have enough begonias to fit it tight, the rest of the space can be filled with

crumpled up newspaper such that an empty space remains for the plants to shift around. If you use a box, make sure it is sturdy and put extra tape around the joints and lid. You know they will be throwing the baggage around! Be sure to put your name and telephone number on it. The plants will survive the rough handling so long as they are packed tight. If you want to carry it on, make sure the box is carry-on size. If you really did overbuy, you can even take cuttings and leave the roots and soil ball behind.

If you are driving, you can pack your plants in an open box but make sure you don't close them up in an unvented car while the sun is shining. This will heat up and cook them really fast. If you must lock the car on a sunny day and can't find shade, put them in the trunk which doesn't heat up as much.

When I arrive at home, I unpack the plants immediately. If they are very small or require more humidity I put them in a terrarium so they can recuperate from the trip. Remember many plants you buy will have come from a greenhouse and to place them immediately in lower humidity may lead to their demise. If they show signs of fading, you can cover them with a clear drink bottle, bottom removed, and place them in full shade. Leave the cap on for a few days, then remove. After a few more days, you can begin removing the cover a few hours at a time until they are hardened off. Sometimes when a new plant has been shipped there may be some moss wrapped around the base. Remove this because it can cause rot. After a few weeks of such special care, they should begin to adjust to your environment.

Branch Tribute to Irene Nuss Hybrids

by Jeanne Jones

years I have loved these plants. I joined the Westchester Branch and, of course, I became addicted. In 1990 after a Sunday presentation at the South Coast Botanic Garden (part of the Los Angeles County Arboretum system) we began the Palos Verdes Branch with twelve members. Through the years meeting Rudy Ziesenhenné, Mabel & Ralph Corwin, Thelma O'Reilly, Michael Kartuz, Goldie Frost, and, of course, Irene Nuss, I have wished we had tapes of some of their knowledge. I truly feel more appreciation should be shown to some of these giants of the begonia world who have done so much to enhance our pleasure in these plants.

So Westchester planned to honor Irene at our annual Show in July of 1997. She's a tough lady to surprise, but we gathered 40 of her hybrids from Janet Brown, Elda Regimbal, Bob Lindgren, Patricia McElderry, Ramona Parker, Solveig Helmdahl, Katsuko Nakagawa, Mary Sakamoto, and myself. We set the plants

up on a stage in the church social room where our Show was held. Each plant had its own label and a large banner was hung on the stage proclaiming "Irene Nuss Hybrids". At about 5:30 p.m. Irene arrived with the many, many plants she had been collecting for the plant sale the next day. She was surprised! It was such fun to see her face when she saw her babies grown up and together.

List of the Irene Nuss hybrids displayed included: B. 'Alice N', 'Allegro', 'Bonanza', 'Catherine N', 'Concerto', 'Croydon', 'Kenilu', 'Pink Jade', 'Kent Brandon', 'Ross', 'Marion Lindgren', 'Minuet', 'Symphony', 'Eunice Gray', 'Dolly', 'Dunfield', 'Elda Regimbal', 'Elsie Manahan', 'Ethel Albertson', 'Flor Lei', 'Ken Lau Ren', 'Kenlo', 'Rhapsody', 'Madam Butterfly', 'Snowflakes', 'Staccato', 'Peaches & Cream', 'Hal Nuss', 'Hannah Serr', 'Irene Nuss', 'Jackie Brookshire', 'Jona Ross', 'Jumbo Jet', 'Petaloons', 'Regis Way', 'Kentwood', 'Silvermist', 'Minuet', 'Pat McElderry', and 'Donna Marie'.



Irene Nuss In The Golden Age of Begonias

by Janet Brown

It is a gift of the gods to find an overwhelming interest in a field of endeavor that will light a fire that cannot be extinguished through the years. Irene Nuss found that interest and that fire and has enriched and enlightened begonia lovers all over the world with the beauty of her creations.

Beginnings: Forget Fuchsias

Irene Nuss first approached begonias through fuchsias when a few appeared on the plant table at Fuchsia Society meetings. She saw that these begonias were completely different from the bedding type she had grown before, and her interest was piqued. In charge of the plant table was John Thieben, a master grower and horticulturist who was the founder of the Westchester Branch of the American Begonia Society. He encouraged Irene to try some of his begonias. John Thieben saw something very special in Irene from the first, and he took this exceptional lady under his wing. He sensed her great potential, encouraged her at every setback, and gloried in every success. John Thieben would be very proud of his protege.

Things did not go well at first. "When John questioned me about my begonia plants, I told him they weren't doing very well and I was taking very good care to water them just like my fuchsias. He shook his head in disbelief!" Irene kept trying with a new watering schedule, and soon after (1959) John Thieben suggested organizing a Westchester Branch of ABS. He asked Irene to write the Constitution and By-Laws. "I agreed. If this is what it took to grow these little darlings, I would

do it! I hated to admit failure, which was all I had up until then in growing begonias."

But Irene persevered and before long she was growing beautiful begonias from cuttings. One of her first successes was *B. parilis* Brade which she obtained from Sylvia Leatherman. Sylvia had picked up the seed on a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Sao Paulo, Brazil. *B. parilis* is listed in the Thompsons' book as a thick-stemmed, but at that time it was thought to be a cane type. When Irene got the plant, it was about seven inches tall and, "It grew like a weed. This plant gave me courage to grow begonias."

Irene talks a lot about all the people who helped her get started. "People couldn't do enough for me. 'Do you need this, do you need that?' I'd ask John, 'Do you think this is good enough?' And he'd answer, 'It's good enough, Irene.'" By the 1962 ABS National Show *B. parilis*, wrapped in a sheet in a 16 inch pot and over five feet tall, was placed in the family station wagon by Irene's son, Kent Brand Nuss, and driven to the National. It took Best in Show.

Early on Irene Nuss found her favorite begonia and her love for the cane types has never wavered. "It was Edna Korts who came with the canes. I had been listening to all these speakers telling about this kind of a begonia and that one, but when I saw all those canes with all the beautiful blooms, I decided I was going to concentrate on only one type because I couldn't begin to learn all of it. It just overwhelmed me."

After winning Best in Show four times with her canes at the National, the trophy



*Irene Nuss, Eunice Gray,
and B. Eunice Gray*

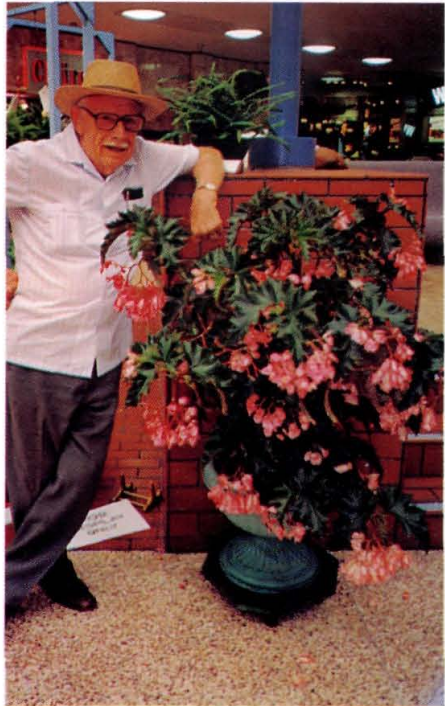
was retired to her and she never entered competitively again, preferring to let others have a chance. She still has the trophy, “And whenever I look at it, I remember all the wonderful people who helped me. People are just being so good to me now, I just don’t understand it. I was doing something that I enjoyed and I was glad that others enjoyed it too.”

Hybridizing--High Noon in Westchester

And then Irene Nuss turned to hybridizing. Seed growing proved a challenge and success did not come overnight. At one point she was almost convinced that begonias would not start from seed! But hybridizing was another story and through hybridizing came a proficiency with seed that cannot be surpassed. The inspiration for this lifelong pursuit came from a speaker at a Westchester meeting, Louise Scherdtfeger. (Her article on hybridizing appeared in the June 1962 *Begonian*.) “I

didn’t even know a male from a female flower at that time. Louise showed us how to take the pollen and put it on the female flowers and told us to do it at high noon when the pollen is dry. “I was captivated and after the meeting I told everyone, ‘Don’t bother to call me at high noon; I’m going to be very busy!’”

Next morning I ran outside to see if I had a female flower and found one on B. ‘Elizabeth Lockhart’. But I couldn’t find any male blooms until at last I discovered some tiny male flowers on B. *sceptrum**. ‘Elizabeth Lockhart’ had a big cluster of female bloom, but I pollinated only one with the *sceptrum* pollen. Louise had told us that by nightfall the flowers will close. In the morning if that pollinated flower is still closed it has taken. If it’s wide open then you do it again! I was so excited and



Westchester’s beloved Bob Lindgren with his B. ‘Irene Nuss’ which took Best in Show at Culver City Garden Club in 1995.

did not believe it would work. This was my first try, and it worked!"

The result of that fortuitous cross was the noble B. 'Kentwood'. 'Kentwood' began its life in a rather unusual crib--in fact, a Pyrex casserole dish. Previous methods of growing seed in large pickle and mayonnaise jars were cumbersome, and invariably the little seedlings suffered from being transferred from these awkward containers. "It was a little Pyrex dish with a lid on it. I had two and only needed one for cooking so I put the sterilized mix in there and in went my hybrid seed and oh! they came up like grass. The leaves were so beautiful. Each one had a little silver marking on it, and they were just like little eyes looking at me. It was exciting."

Irene was going to name it after her mother, Hannah Serr, but these seedlings were getting bigger and taller each day. "My mother was a little short lady and they just didn't look like her. I thought I'd better name it Sequoia or something like that because it was like a huge redwood, but then I decided on Kentwood because we lived in the Kentwood area of Westchester. And that's how it got its name."

And so it all began and B. 'Kentwood' was the start of the dynasty. Irene immediately recognized the exceptional strength and vigor of her giant baby and the hybrids that followed were not by chance, but rather by planned parenthood. Her choices of pollen were made considering the attributes of the plant and, if a hybrid, it's parents. And she seemed to have an instinct for what would work and prosper as well. The most famous child of 'Kentwood' must surely be B. 'Irene Nuss' known and loved everywhere. Irene had seen a Belva Kusler hybrid, B. 'Lenore Olivier', at Mabel Corwin's and fallen in love with it. She was able to

order a plant from Florence Dillard in Kansas. It was a long time before she had flowers to use for pollen but the wait was well worth it. From that cross came B. 'Irene Nuss', 'Alice N', 'Kent Brandon', 'Madame Butterfly', 'Hannah Serr', and 'Hal Nuss', nine in all.

While Irene was waiting for Kentwood to grow up she was not idle and turned her deft hand to a cross between two species she admired. "I crossed B. *echinosepela* Regal with B. *venosa*. I thought I was going to get a nice felty long leaf instead of the round one on *venosa*. Well, I didn't get it. I got shiny patent leather leaves on all of them, and that was B. 'Eunice Gray', named for my sister. I could not get over how fast 'Eunice Gray' grew, blooming with those white fragrant flowers by the time it was eight inches high; and it was putting up basal growth, growing out. So I thought why not put it on a trellis." B. 'Eunice Gray' took Best in Show at the National in 1967 on that trellis and was registered in July of 1968. The Alfred D. Robinson Medal for this one was presented to a very surprised Irene Nuss at the 1972 National.

But another lesson was learned when Irene tried to cross 'Eunice Gray'. Nothing happened. She mentioned the trouble she was having to another of her very important mentors, Rudy Ziesenhenne. Rudy told her he had had the same problem with his B. 'Freddie' and that sometimes when you cross two species you get a "mule" that cannot reproduce. Rudy encouraged Irene to try new crosses and, of course, he was a great source for newly discovered species that were sent to him for identification from all over the world.

Besides not being able to cross B. 'Eunice Gray' all the offspring of the cross looked exactly alike. "What is good is if you can take a species onto a hybrid." (B. 'Elizabeth Lockhart' x *sceptrum* =

B. 'Kentwood'; B. 'Kentwood' x *lubbersii* = 'Pink Jade', B. 'Hannah Serr' x *lubbersii* = 'Symphony'; B. 'Irene Nuss' x *lubbersii* = 'Elsie Manahan', B. 'Kentwood' x *dichroa* = 'Silvermist' which was awarded the Alfred D. Robinson Medal in 1995.) "And of course putting a hybrid onto a hybrid gives you great variation and interesting children. Regardless of the parents the original plant seems to be the strongest. I don't take cuttings of a cutting when I give someone a plant. It comes from the original 'Eunice Gray' or 'Kentwood' or 'Irene Nuss'."

Methods

Irene Nuss' genius does not stop at hybridizing. In the early days it was not always easy to find just what tool was needed by picking up a garden catalog and ordering it. She was able to improvise and utilize and recycle to accomplish what she wanted from growing containers to plant lights. At first the windowsill in the kitchen provided a perfect spot for growing seedlings. That was soon filled and a desk lamp took over, but there was never enough room. Irene's son, Kent, a junior high student at the time, had a great idea. 'He said, 'I can build you a light fixture under the dining room table.' So I got a board from the lumber yard and Kent got the light fixture. We only had one tube. He set it up under the table and I put all my little plants under there, put my big lace cloth over it and it just looked gorgeous and the plants loved it. In the summertime we entertained on the patio, but when Thanksgiving and Christmas came all the plants had to come out, go into the bedroom. We'd open the table, take the light fixture out and leave it out till after Christmas. New Year's Day it was put back."

For hybridizing she uses a wonderfully

simple yet effective method for collecting the pollen which she still does at pretty close to high noon. "You can't do it first thing in the morning. If I feel like I'm going to lose the male bloom I pick the flower and bring it into the house to the plant room and I use a regular egg carton to store it. Each section has a cup for the particular pollen and I put the name on the section. So if I had a good female flower I'd look to see what pollens I had and then decide what to cross."

Through all these years when Irene was hybridizing and introducing new plants, Rudy Ziesenhenne was there with his support. "I can't begin to tell you how much help and encouragement he has given me. He started me on growing species and taught me how to grow rare begonias in terrariums. No problem was too large or too small -- he was always willing to help. He insisted on registering my hybrids and encouraged me in every way. His many articles in the *Begonian* are treasures."

All that help and encouragement Irene Nuss had received through the years she has returned a thousandfold to all those who ask for assistance in growing, hybridizing, propagating. She is always willing to speak at the Southern California Branches of ABS and will answer any question with unflagging enthusiasm. She shares her talent and love of begonias with everyone and her joy is infectious. She inspires everyone to make the most of their talent especially in producing new hybrids. Her plant room, the West Room, is filled with seedlings, new hybrids, plants for the plant table and the Westchester Show and also filled with her spirit of sharing her love of begonias with all.

**B. sceptrum* is now recognized as a synonym for *B. aconitifolia*.

The Irene Nuss Hybrids:

The Proof is in the Growing!

Some beautiful hybrid begonias are so finicky they can be grown only in select locations and by expert growers, but the hybrids that have endured are the ones that we all can grow whatever our skills or location such as B. 'Erythrophylla', B. 'Lucerna', or B. 'Thurstonii'. Will some of the Irene Nuss hybrids join this select group? We know they grow well in California and Charles Jaros' cover photo shows how beautifully they grow in Florida, but listen to other reports from around the country and then you decide.

In the Southwest

Begonia growers in Texas, especially in the Houston area, enjoy growing Irene Nuss hybrids. They can be grown in a pot or planted in the garden in our climate. Planted in the garden they grow tall and stately and drip with blooms all summer into late fall, sometimes into December. Before our first hard frost they should be cut back and mulched where they rest until spring. Of all the Nuss' hybrids only a hand full need to be removed from the garden before winter.

Grown in a pot the Irene Nuss hybrids are unsurpassed in performance. They grow easily and reward the grower or

collector with lush, full plants that are constantly in bloom.

Some of the most popular hybrids here are B. 'Kent Brandon', 'Croyden', 'Dolly', 'Jumbo Jet', 'Irene Nuss', 'Silvermist', 'Pink Jade', 'Hannah Serr', 'Symphony', 'Ken Lau Ren', 'Elda Regimbal' and B. 'Ross' to name just a few, and the list goes on and on.

We thank Irene Nuss for creating such a variety of hybrids that are easy to grow and that reward you with lots of blooms, some of which are even fragrant. They are great growers.

~Tom Keepin, Houston

In the Pacific Northwest

Most of the Nuss hybrids are fun and easy to grow in the northwest. I have had great luck growing B. 'Allegro', 'Elda Regimbal', 'Hanna Serr', 'Silvermist', 'Chet Nave', and 'Donna Marie'. All of these plants thrive in my greenhouse. B. 'Silvermist' and 'Hanna Serr' are great bloomers that never fail to put on a beautiful show of blossoms. B. 'Donna Marie' also blooms regularly for me although the flowers are not as spectacular as those of B. 'Silvermist' and 'Hanna Serr'.

Temperatures in my greenhouse drop into the middle 40s during cold winter nights and can go into the high 90s on hot summer afternoons. These hybrids do not seem to object to this wide range of temperature although I am sure they would appreciate a slightly more controlled environment. They grow best for me in fairly high light and lots of fertilizer. Mine grow on the top shelves of my greenhouse which is shaded with 45% shade cloth during the summer months.

I feed with both commercial fertilizers and some organics, specifically blood meal and epsom salt. I also add coarse charcoal and sponge rock to my mix to sweeten and lighten it. The plants have responded to this by putting up new, healthy growth this spring.

Here in the northwest, all begonias except *B. grandis ssp. evansiana* are indoor plants. We may summer them outdoors on a covered deck or patio, but they must come inside for the winter. The Nuss

hybrids seem to be happy with this indoor life. The only difficulty I have experienced with them is that some seem to be susceptible to mildew, a constant problem with canes in this climate. I find they must be sprayed regularly with a good fungicide or they are quickly overcome with this pest. These are really lovely begonias that I would recommend to anyone who enjoys growing canes.

~Kathy Goetz, Lebanon, OR

In the Northeast

I have grown and enjoyed several of the beautiful Irene Nuss hybrids over the years: *B. 'Eunice Gay'*, '*Kentwood*', '*Silvermist*', '*Jumbo Jet*', '*Hal Nuss*', '*Kenilu*', '*Ken Lau Ren*', '*Irene Nuss*', and '*Alice N.*' They are all wonderful in their different ways, but somehow I guess my favorite is *B. 'Kentwood.'*

I first saw a picture of *B. 'Kentwood'* in the *Begonian* of March 1972 illustrating an article written by Irene. Its eight foot magnificence really knocked my socks off and got the acquisitive juices flowing. I finally found a plant at the national convention in Boston in 1988. I brought it home, potted it up, fed it, and stood back. I knew it would not equal the California grown plant, but it came close.

It makes a very healthy and vigorous background specimen plant which, I hope, distracts visitors from noticing any spindly non-growing runts down in front. *B. 'Kentwood'* blooms rather late in the

summer season here and has usually just reached full bloom when the nights start to get cool and those bottom leaves start to fall. Every fall I have to cut all my cane begonias back to two inch stubs in order to cram them under the benches in my greenhouse for the winter. This is not such a hardship as it may seem. It spares me the sight of cane begonia leaves forlornly dropping one by one all winter long. Canes shoot up so fast after the turn of the year that it is well worth the wait.

I have tested some of Walter Dworkin's hybrids and one thing I have learned for sure, if *B. 'Kentwood'* is in the parentage, the seedlings will be big!

B. 'Alice N.', '*Silvermist*', and '*Hal Nuss*' have prettier foliage than '*Kentwood*' and *B. 'Jumbo Jet'* has more gorgeous flowers, but all in all I'll stick with '*Kentwood.*' Thank you, Irene.

~Annette Boree, Great Neck, NY

And In the Ozarks

I was overwhelmed when I saw my first Nuss hybrids exhibited at a SWR Get-Together and was overjoyed when I found a small *B. 'Irene Nuss'* and *B. 'Eunice Gray'* in the plant sale. I was used to fall-

ing in love with beautiful hybrids, however, and then bringing them home to watch them fade away in the tough environment I and the Ozarks have to offer plants: hot, dry summers and long, cold,

dark winters. I had no greenhouse at that time.

Imagine my surprise to find that these two could survive winters in a north window in our living room. Despite the low light and drying central heat, they not only lived but continued growing. Now and then a bloom even popped out on 'Irene Nuss.' Now that I have a greenhouse, many of the Nuss Hybrids have some bloom all winter.

I soon added others including B. 'Pink Jade', 'Dolly', 'Madame Butterfly', 'Symphony', and 'Jumbo Jet.' You can see I was attracted by the names as well as the plants.

If I had to choose three significant criteria to judge hybrids, they would be: beauty, vigor, and ease of propagation. These hybrids have met all three criteria. They propagate so easily in fact that I cannot give away plants fast enough. I have found most of these hybrids, except B. 'Eunice Gray' of course, to be superb mothers too that yield great seedlings.

Only B. 'Flor Lei' whose gorgeous bloom clusters cannot fail to enchant and B. 'Silvermist' have not prospered for me. The first is such a bloomer that it cannot seem to add stems and the latter succumbed one hot, dry summer.

~Freda Holley, *Ozone, AR.*

Pronunciation of Begonia Epithets for The Begonian, 65: May/June 1998

by Jack Golding

aconitifolia	uh-kon-i-ti-FOH-li-uh, syn. <i>sceptrum</i> SKEP-trum
barkeri	BARK-er-eye
crassicaulis	kras-si-KAW-liz
dichroa	DEYE-kroh-uh
dregei	DREG-e-eye
syn. <i>suffruticosa</i>	suf-fryew-ti-KOH-suh
echinosepala	ek-in-oh-SEP-a-luh
foliosa	foh-li-OH-suh
glabra	GLAYB-ruh
glandulosa	gland-yew-LOH-suh
grandis subsp.	GRAND-iz,
evansiana	e-van-si-AY-nuh
herbacea	her-BAY-se-uh
lubbersii	LEWY-ber-si-eye, (com- memorative name for Louis Lubbers)*
ludwigii	LEWD-vig-i-eye (com- memorative name for Ludwig Diels)*
manicata	man-i-KAY-tuh

manicata var.	man-i-KAY-tuh
aureo-maculata	AW-re-oh [OW-re-oh], mak-yew-LAY-tuh
masoniana	MAY-son-i-ay-nuh (commemorative name for M.L. Mason)*
parilis	pay-REYEL-iz, pay-REEL-iz
parviflora	par-vi-FLOH-ruh
reneformis	ren-i-FORM-is, syn. <i>vitifolia</i> veye-ti-FOH-li-uh
sanguinea	san-gwin-EE-uh
schmidtiana	schmidt-i-AY-nuh
velloziana	vel-loh-zi-AY-nuh
venosa	ven-OH-suh
versicolor	ver-si-KOH-lor

Section Name

Gireoudia	JEER-ow-di-uh, (Commemorative name for Gireoud)*
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*Note! Names used to commemorate a person or places are the exceptions to rule five, "Do not accent before the third-from-the-last syllable." They should be pronounced, as nearly as possible, as in their native language.

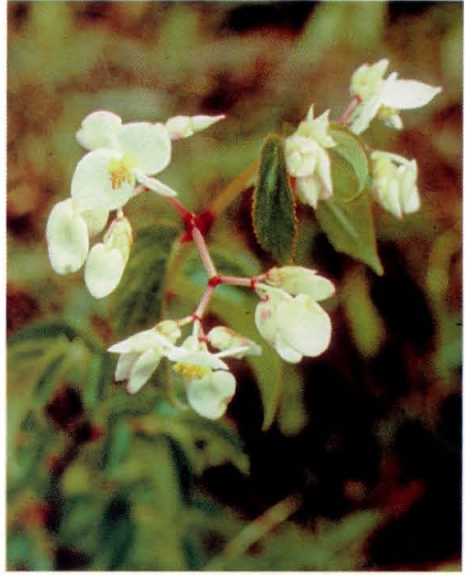
Unidentified Begonia Species List

Thelma O'Reilly, Project Director

B. U257 El Valle, Panama. Seed collected in a private garden by Roberto Brin, 1990. (*Begonian*, SF (Seed Fund) 1990: pp. 68-70) Semperflorens. Leaf blades green, round. Flowers deep pink.

B. U258 Mexico. Seed imported to Seed Fund Director, 1990. (*Begonian*, SF 1990, pp. 109-110) Rhizomatous. Leaf blades green. Identified as *B. manicata* by Thelma O'Reilly.

B. U259 Morona, Santiago Province, Ecuador. Seed and plant material collected by Don Miller on a road from Mendez to Morona, July 1989. Habitat: Growing in rocks on a vertical cliff in a sunny location. *B. parviflora* and *B.*



B. U260. Photo by Don Miller.

glabra grow nearby. Elevation 3000 Ft.. Shrub-like. Mature stem 30 cm. Leaf blades green, cordate, 3 cm. x 3 cm., glabrous with 6 nerves. Petioles red in sun, green in shade, glabrous. Flowers white, few with 4 male tepals.



B. U. 265 Photo by Jack Golding.

B. U260 Morona, Santiago Province, Ecuador. Plant material collected by Don Miller on a new road from Mendez to Morona, July, 1989. Habitat: Growing in grass covered soil on side of road in full sun. Elevation 2000 ft. Shrub-like. Leaf blades bare, green, elliptic with acuminate apices, basally oblique, marginally serrulate. Flowers many, white with 4 male tepals. Collector noted resemblance to *B. foliosa* but flowers larger.

B. U261 Morona, Santiago Province, Ecuador. Plant material collected by Padre Angel M. Andretta, 1988-89. For

the complete story and description of this remarkably beautiful begonia species discovered by well-known Ecuadorian collector and guide, Padre Andretta, read "A Black Beauty from the Dark Jungles of Ecuador" by Don Miller in the *Begonian*, January/February 1991.

B. U262 Peru. No information available about this seed. (*Begonian*, SF 1990, pp. 109-110)

B. U263 Chiapas, Mexico. (*Begonian*, SF 1990: 108-110.) Seed collected by Steven Wells, 1990. The Seed Fund habitat information is incorrect. Listed information applies to B. U253. Read article in the November/December *Begonian* 1989, pp. 224-225.

B. U264 Northern Thailand. Seed collected by Scott Hoover at Huai Sai Lieng waterfall at Doi Inthanon National Park in Chiang Mai Province, 1990. Habitat: SW slope above main falls under large rock outcrop.

B. U265 Northern Thailand. Seed collected by Scott Hoover in Doi Inthanon National Park, Chiang Mai Province, 1990. Habitat: Shady, dry embankment in forested area 100 m. along trail from parking area to Mai Pan waterfall. Elevation 4000 ft. (*Begonian* SF 1990: pp. 189-190) Rhizomatous. Collector notes that this species resembles rhizomatous type from Neotropics with habit lacking secondary branching above the ground. Few flowered inflorescences.

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Basic Genetics for Begonia Hybridizing

by Tracy McLellan

This article introduces a series that Tracy McLellan has agreed to write for us on this important topic.

We received half of our genes from our mothers, half from our fathers (actually a tiny bit more from Mom, but we will ignore that), and therefore have two copies of each of the approximately 21,000 functional genes that make up the plant. A lot of what we see when we cross plants depends on whether: (1) those two copies are the same or different from each other and (2) how many genes, of the possible 21,000, are involved in the traits

for which we are looking. In this article, I will discuss the issue of genetic variation within parents of crosses, and in a subsequent article, will explore the issue of the number of genes involved in plant characteristics.

Hybrids are plants that originated as seedlings with two different parents, which could have been species or hybrids themselves. What we see in hybrids is a product of what was in the two parents. If one of the parents was itself a hybrid, then we can expect that the offspring will differ greatly from each other, because that hybrid parent had different versions of some of its genes from its two parents, and the one it passes on to its offspring will be various combinations of those. Just which combinations occur depends on chance. In many way, genetics is like a

lottery: we can predict the probability of various combinations occurring; however, we can say very little about what will happen in any one plant and the chance of getting exactly the combination we want is not very likely.



B. dregei, with and without spots.

Hybrid plants with desirable characteristics can be propagated by cuttings to make new plants similar to the original hybrid. But what if those interesting traits occur only in seedlings? For example, some hybrids between plants in the *B. dregei* group would make great cultivated plants, but the caudex, or swollen stem base,

that characterizes this group occurs in its large and attractive form only in plants grown from seed. Begonias have both male and female flowers, and usually will set seed with their own pollen, making self-pollination possible. Can I self-pollinate one of my hybrids and expect that the offspring will be the same as their parent, and then name a new cultivar? The answer to this is NO--the hybrid had two different copies of many genes, and the combinations passed on to the next generation will differ between individuals, just as brothers and sisters with the same parents are not identical to each other.

I have heard begonia growers say things such as, "If I can tell two plants apart, then they are different species." And "We are not growing pure species because

when I self a plant not all of the seedlings are exactly the same.” We seem to assume that species will have no variation when they are selfed, and that species should be completely uniform, but species are not inbred strains which are genetically homogeneous. Certainly species should have less variation in their selfed offspring than hybrids will. But there are few “pure” species in the world, in the sense that they are genetically homogeneous. Perhaps begonia growers are so accustomed to producing clones (genetically identical copies) of begonia plants, which we do when we propagate from cuttings and leaves, that we expect genetic uniformity within species. My favorite example in talking about genetic purity in species is domestic cats. I can certainly tell my cats apart from each other, and (had they not been sterilized) a cross between them would result in a wide variety of kittens, most of which would not look like either parent. However, there is no question that they are from a single species.

Normally there is variation between individuals within a species, and begonias are no exception. In many of the African begonias, spots appear on the leaves of seedlings, but not the later leaves. In *Begonia dregei*, there is often variation between individuals in the presence of spots on seedling leaves in plants at a single place. They are undoubtedly of a single species, and plants, when selfed, will produce a mixture of offspring with respect to spotted leaves. There is a single gene for spotting, and each plant has two copies of the gene, but the copies can be different from each other. Some seeds receive two copies of the gene for no spots, some receive two copies of the gene for spots, and some receive one copy of each version and their leaves are green, but 25% of selfed seedlings will be spotted.

A species name applies to all plants within the range of variation described for that species. On the other hand, the name of a hybrid or cultivated variety (cultivar) refers to only a single plant and the plants that have been propagated vegetatively from it so that they are all genetically identical.

Would it be possible to recreate an old hybrid by repeating the original cross between the two parent species? There are times that this might seem desirable, since some of the older hybrids seem to get “worn out” from repeated propagation. A cross between the same two species could certainly be tried, but given what was just said about variation within species, it is very unlikely that any of the resulting plants would be identical to the old hybrid. This is because there was probably some variation in those original parent species, and there was something of a lottery determining which versions of genes went into the original hybrid. If the cross was repeated with species that have been in cultivation for a long time, there might well be less variation in them than in wild plants, because the repeated selfing that we do to propagate species by seed results in a loss of some of that variation. Then there is also the problem that mutations, or changes in genes, occur over time, and we might have additional variation that was not present in the original parents. So go ahead, repeat the cross, but do not expect an exact copy of the original. If distinct enough, a new hybrid could be named. However, it certainly should not be given the old hybrid name because the chances of being the same are vanishingly small.

There is a similar problem when hybrid offspring from a cross appear very similar to other hybrids. If they are not distinct from another hybrid, do you give them a name that is already in use?

Brothers or sisters can look very similar to each other, but unless they are identical twins, they are not exactly the same at all of their genes. If the new hybrid looks a lot like another, it is not distinctive enough to merit a new name. But giving it an old name when it had a different origin, could lead to great confusion because not everything will be the same. Do they have the same susceptibility to powdery mildew? Is the structure of the flowers the same? Do they tolerate high or low temperatures in the same way? These are among many traits as well as size and color of flowers that can be determined by genes and may not be obvious until the plants have been grown for a long time under a lot of conditions.

Understanding genetics can give us a lot of power to produce the hybrids with combinations of characteristics we would like to see. How about combining leaves the shape of *B. suffruticosa* (now considered to be a form of *B. dregei*) and the leaf surface of *B. masoniana*? If the parents were willing to cross with each other, we could design a program that would result in such a plant. It might take several generations and a lot of little plants, and just how many depends on the

number of genes that are involved in determining the traits we want to see. That will be the subject of the next article on genetics for hybridizing.

Begonia Bytes

by **Kathy Goetz,**
Internet Editor

Great news, the begonia discussion list is back on-line. There are currently 61 subscribers, ranging from complete beginners to very experienced growers. The discussions have ranged over a wide variety of subjects from how to grow specific varieties to more general begonia topics. If you would like to join us it is easy. Just send e-mail to majordomo@scraps.dnc.net with the words subscribe begonias in the body of the message. This will add you to the list of subscribers. The address for posting messages is begonias@dnc.net. I hope many of you will join us. We are having a great time chattering about begonias on-line.

You can reach Kathy at *her* e-mail address goetzk@dnc.net.



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Conservation News

by Tamsin Boardman,
Conservation Chair

Kelton Resigns

On February 10 **Kelton Parker** resigned as Curator of Begonias at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, taking early retirement. He had been scheduled to retire at the end of August.

Starting in 1980 with a small number of begonias, Kelton had built an outstanding collection of over a thousand species and cultivars and was instrumental in starting the world's first begonia species bank. He was also assembling a research library and, with the help of volunteer Eve Fox, setting up a computer database listing locations of begonia literature worldwide.

Kelton corresponded with many ABS members and with begonia lovers and botanic gardens all over the world. He was generous in sending out begonia literature, cuttings, and plants, and especially in sharing his knowledge and giving of his time—he was always willing to talk begonias despite his many other duties at the Garden.

ABS owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Kelton and his dedication. We hope his interest in begonias will continue, that we haven't lost him. If you would like to send him a note of appreciation, Kelton's home address is: 4525 N. Hwy. 171, Cleburne, TX 76031.

The Fort Worth Botanic Garden remains committed to the collection, and hiring of a new Curator is expected this spring. He or she will have to fill some mighty big shoes.

From Sumatera

Scott Hoover reports in a letter to Ann and Gene Salisbury dated February 1 that his collecting started a bit later than expected because of delays in the paperwork.

However, he and his associate, Dr. Harry Wirandata, had collected seed of ten species from four mountains, including a rhizomatous type from Mt. Kerenci that resembled Latin American begonias in the section *Gireoudia*. Four or five were species he had not encountered before, and may be new; these were present in large number. After a difficult hike up a stream on Mt. Pateh he found about twenty-four species, two new, at 4,000 ft. elevation. He was excited about a small begonia with orange-red flowers and oblong, slightly winged fruit; plants in bloom covered a cliff above the stream, but unfortunately Scott was only able to find one young seed pod. As expected, most species have been found by waterfalls and along the sides of streams.

Seed collected will be sent to the Salisburys for testing and then distributed to donors and to the ABS Seed Fund.

1998 Nominating Committee

Bruce Boardman leads us in thanking the 1998 ABS Nominating Committee. In his letter to Chair Tom Keepin, he says: "I'm delighted with the hard work and results obtained by your committee. It speaks well for our organization to have so many qualified persons willing to run for offices. It also speaks well of you and your committee to have contacted and gotten commitments from them. So a Big ABS 'Thank You' to you and to your committee members Ramona Parker and Beth Castellon.

American Begonia Society Election 1998

About the Candidates

For President:

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

Charles Jaros has held numerous offices within the local Branches and ABS. He is Past President of the Miami and Palm Beaches Branches, has been 3rd Vice President of ABS, and was 1985 and 1993 ABS Convention Chairman. He is currently ABS Slide Librarian and has served on the Nominating Committee and Awards Committee for ABS. He received the ABS' Herbert P. Dyckman Service Award in 1993.

For 1st Vice President:

Gene Salisbury is serving this year as 1st Vice President. He is well-known to everyone after two years as ABS President. He continues to serve ABS as a Judge and he is a National Director for the Southwest Region.

Morris Mueller is a member of the Sacramento Branch of ABS which he

has served as President, Vice President, and National Director. He is also an associate member of the San Francisco Branch and a member of the Southwest Region. He loves growing begonias, attending the national conventions, and being active in ABS.

For 2nd Vice President:

Don Miller is currently serving as 2nd Vice President. He is a winner of the Eva Kenworthy Gray award and has performed many duties for ABS. He writes a regular column for the *SWR Begonia Leaflet* of which he has also been editor and has written many articles for the *Begonian*. He has gone on collecting expeditions to search for new begonia varieties. He has been very active with the SWR including holding several offices.

Helen Spiers has been a driving force in organizing the three Houston area Branches. She has served as an officer and/or National Representative for all three branches. She has served on the ABS board for six years and was Vice Director of the Southwest Region for two years. She co-hosted the ABS Convention in 1997 and the Southwest Region Get-Together in 1992.

For 3rd Vice President:

Mary Bucholtz is currently serving as 3rd Vice President. She is also Chairperson of Branch Relations and has held other offices as well as being an ABS Senior Judge. Her writings and photos have appeared frequently in the *Begonian*. She keeps Branch communications going and assists those trying to organize new branches.

Official 1998 ABS Ballot

Howard G. Berg joined ABS in 1966 and has been a member of the Knickerbocker Branch since 1968. He was one of the founding members of the Chicago Branch and served as its initial president. He has served the Knickerbocker Branch as president for four terms over the years and is currently the treasurer. He has served ABS and 3rd Vice President in the past.

For Secretary:

Richard McNair is currently serving as ABS Secretary. He has been very active in the Buxton Branch of ABS and has been a diligent behind the scenes worker for ABS. He never fails to support both the annual conventions and the ABS Board by attending and contributing to each meeting.

Andrew (Andy) Conely joined the San Miguel Branch of ABS in 1959 and was active there for some years. Now, he has been instrumental in organizing the new Rocky Mountain Branch of ABS which already has 18 active members.

For Treasurer:

Carol Notaras has been our Treasurer for the past five years besides having served two terms as President before that. She is an active member of the San Francisco and Sacramento Branches, is a volunteer with the tuberous begonias at Golden Gate Conservatory, and was Convention chair in 1989.

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 - Election 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 may be made on a separate sheet of paper.

OFFICIAL BALLOT AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY ELECTION 1998

For President:

- Bruce C. Boardman**
- Charles Jaros**

Continued on Reverse

For 1st Vice President:

☐ **Gene Salisbury**

☐ **Morris Mueller**

2nd Vice President:

☐ **Don Miller**

☐ **Helen Spiers**

For 3rd Vice President:

☐ **Mary Bucholtz**

☐ **Howard G. Berg**

For Secretary:

☐ **Richard Macnair**

☐ **Andrew Conely**

For Treasurer:

☐ **Carol Notaras**

Mail to:

**Ballot Counting Chair
Ingeborg A. Foo
1050 Melrose Way
Vista, CA 92083
USA**

Clip & Mail: Must be received by July 21.

This article taken from the May 1942 issue of the Begonian concludes the 3 part series on Water by Rudolph Ziesenhenné.

**WATER, Part III
by Rudolph Ziesenhenné**

Having discussed the role of water in its scientific relation to plant growth, now let us consider the more practical subject of when and how one should water.

Other things being equal, experiments tend to prove that it is best to water plants in the late afternoon, next best to water in early morning, and least desirable to water in the middle of the day. A logical reason for the midday watering giving the poorest results is that at that time there is the greatest variation between the temperature of the soil and the water which is applied, and the sudden lowering of the temperature results in a lessening of the water intake of the plant as well as a checking of the growth of soil bacteria.

How often one should water depends on various physical conditions. Plants in various positions will require water at different intervals. For this reason, especially if preparing soil for tuberous begonias, it is advantageous to prepare at one time sufficient soil for the potting job at hand, so that uniform growth will result.

One point of interest to remember is that a plant which has been in a pot for quite a while will have a very well-developed root system and will need more water than a newly transplanted one. For this reason, if you are going on a trip or vacation for a few days, and are not sure your plants will be watered sufficiently, repot the plant and water well before leaving.

It is possible to tell the moisture content of a pot by tapping it gently with the hose nozzle; if it makes a ringing sound,

Continued on page 109.

Growing Organic

or,
Just What Do We Mean?

by **Tamsin Boardman**

Recently I was challenged to answer three questions about growing begonias organically. The first two involved showing, the third one is more complicated:

1. *Why is there an organically grown division in begonia shows?*

To show that it's possible to grow great begonias without chemicals. Ideally, I'd like to see all begonias grown that way, for their own sake, yes, but more especially for their grower's health. Then we wouldn't need an organic division.

2. *How do we know entries are organically grown?*

This is an easy one. In any show, how do we know that entrants abide by the rules? How can we know, for certain, that each entry has been owned and grown by the entrant for the required six months (or three, or nine, depending on the show schedule)? The only answer is trust. All our shows are founded on trust: that the entrants abide by the rules, that the placement committee shows each plant to its best advantage, that the judges are edu-

cated and impartial, that the placement clerks put the right ribbons by the right plants, that no one pinches or takes from someone else's plant. If it's any comfort organic growers tend to be idealists, and truthful.

3. *What exactly is organic growing anyway?*

This is the hard one. There is general agreement that engineered pesticide would be excluded in an organic growing program. But does this include alcohol on a Q-tip? soap? pyrethrum and tobacco potent poisons of plant origin?

For fungicides there's baking soda and sulphur. Is there anything else?

For real confusion, what do you use for potting soil? The oldies like oak leaf mold and hoof-and-horn meal are hard to find but blood meal and bone meal are organic all right, but both are now suspected as possible carriers of "mad cow" disease. Perlite and vermiculite are natural substances, but physically altered; both can cause lung problems. There are few organic mixes on the market, and most are aimed at vegetable growers.

Fortunately, fertilizers are easy. Some are available in your kitchen: sugar, molasses, apple cider vinegar. Others can be found in garden centers: kelp, vitamins, lava rock, and soft rock phosphates. Also at garden centers are soil additives like earthworm castings and various compost



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and vitamin/mineral supplements like Superthrive.

The USDA has entered the picture and will be setting standards for certifying organic growers. Unfortunately, they consider irradiated food, milk from cows on hormones, and genetically engineered plants "organic", which certainly does away with the idea that natural is the way to go. The proposed regulations would also permit chemical additives as "inert" ingredients--these would not have to appear on the label, so you wouldn't know what you'd be using.

Even among dedicated organicists, there's room for disagreement on specifics. Here's what I do, which may or may not meet everyone's criteria; I: 1. try to meet each plant's cultural requirements for light, water, temperature range (this is the hardest part); 2. keep dead leaves and spent flowers removed; 3. don't grow the mildew-susceptible begonias and depend on warmth and light to protect the rest; 4. avoid all pesticides--a plant whose needs are being met doesn't need them but I do have spiders in my greenhouse, and use soap if an infestation gets out of hand; 5. use a mixture of 1 cup liquid seaweed, 1 cup fish emulsion, 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar to 4 gallons of water (ideally, twice a month; in real life, when time allows). Occasionally, I add 10 drops of Superthrive and/or use 1/4 cup molasses.

There are problems I haven't solved. It's 65 miles to the nearest feed store that carries organic fertilizers and an organic soil; that soil is peat-based, and I prefer bark. It's also great for six months or so, when tends to cake. Finding time for repotting (or anything else) is difficult.

Despite good intentions, things get out of hand. In January after the Board meeting, **Wanda** and **Dick Macnair** came down and spent their holiday repotting

(Wanda estimates I have two and a half months of repotting left to do), taking and setting cuttings. We also treated a dozen or more plants, with soap, for mealybugs, scale, and mildew--the mildew was a brand-new variety that even Wanda hadn't ever seen, a distinction of sorts.

Even with the problems, I feel good about going organic. I'm learning, and it's getting easier. My begonias are happier than they were in the bad old days. At the 1996 SWR Get-Together in Dallas, I received two Cultural Awards for organically grown begonias! I don't get rashes or breathing problems after working with my begonias, I feel safe having my granddaughters in the greenhouse, and (except after feeding with fish emulsion) my greenhouse smells great.

*NOTE: These products were safe in the past. Unfortunately, someone came up with the idea of using slaughterhouse remains as a cheap additive for cattle feed. No one considered that (1) cattle are herbivores, not carnivores and (2) this was an outstanding way to spread bacteria, pathogens, disease. The contamination extends to gardening products like bone meal and blood meal (the USDA has recently issued warnings on these) and manure (no warning yet). Know your sources, or don't use these products.

Sweet Tip for Flower Beds: Everyone knows sugar is generally bad for you, so here's an unusual suggestion: buy sugar. Not only refined white sugar but any form will do: brown, honey, molasses, syrups, even hard candy. No harm will come to you; just don't put it in your mouth. Add it, believe it or not, to your garden beds. Microbes love the stuff. All those tiny creatures that work the soil and break it down into a fluffy friable growing medium go ape for sweets. They've even been known to break down tree stumps sprinkled with sugar or doused with gummy molasses and yes, its grand for your compost pile too.

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**AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY
CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND
Eleanor M. Calkins, Coordinator
910 Fern Street
Escondido, CA 92027-1708**

Species Seeds

- MJ98-1 *B. crassicaulis*
- MJ98-2 *B. dregei* syn. *suffruticosa*
- MJ98-3 *B. glandulosa*
- MJ98-4 *B. herbacea*
- MJ98-5 *B. lubbersii*
- MJ98-6 *B. ludwigii*
- MJ98-7 *B. reniformis* syn. *vitifolia*
- MJ98-8 *B. sanguinea*
- MJ98-9 *B. schmidtiana*

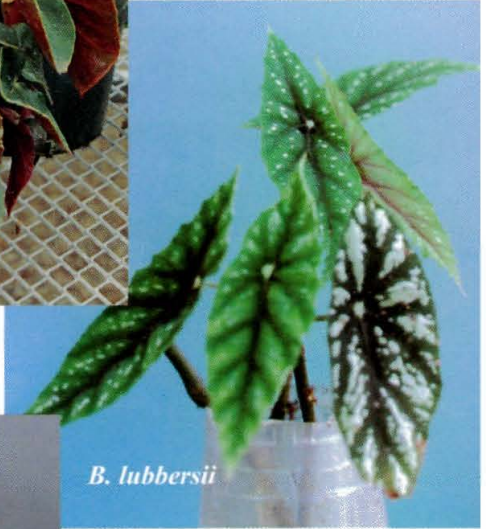
Cultivar Seeds

- B. 'Lana'
- B. 'Texas Star'
- B. 'Joy Porter' hybrids

MJ98-1 *B. crassicaulis* Lindley (Guatemala) Rhizomatous, loses all leaves; then, before new leaves appear, puts on a great shower of flowers held



B. sanguinea



B. lubbersii



The leaves of *B. ludwigii*, below are dramatic, but you are unlikely to see the lovely juvenile leaves, left, with their white spots unless you grow its plants from seed.



high above the rhizome. the leaves are deeply incised, large, glossy. This begonia is not temperamental.

MJ98-2: *B. dregei* syn *suffruticosa*

Otto & Dietrich (South Africa) A highly variable species characterized by a large caudex at the base of the stem, an erect stem with swollen nodes and a profusion of small dark green leaves. This begonia is often called a “maple leaf” begonia. There are many white blossoms in late winter and summer. The caudex can be exposed so that the plant is grown as a bonsai.

MJ98-3: *B. glandulosa* W. J. Hooker (Mexico) Rhizomatous, medium size green leaves with prominent slightly depressed palmate veins, white flowers. See *Begonian*, Aug. 1981, p. 178.

MJ98-4: *B. herbacea* Vellozo (Brazil) an epiphytic rhizomatous plant with lance like leaves with no petiole. The fragrant white blossoms arise directly from the rhizome deep amongst the foliage. (Note this seed is very short lived and testing is not complete; specify a substitute if ordering in case his seed is not viable.)

MJ98-5: *B. lubbersii* Morren (Brazil) imported on a tree fern to Brussels, Belgium in 1880. Cane like, spreading, rather difficult species with very large greenish white fragrant flowers and narrow, double pointed deep green leaves.

MJ98-6 *B. ludwigii* Irmscher (Ecuador) Trunk like, non-ramified with creamish white flowers in spring and summer, striking deeply lobed leaves tipped with white.

MJ98-7 *B. reniformis* Dryander syn. *vitifolia* (Brazil) A large begonia with thick stalk, large bright green leaves and white flowers.

MJ98-8: *B. sanguinea* Raddi (Brazil) Thick leathery medium-sized bare green leaves with red undersides, stems and petioles; flowers are white.

MJ98-9: *B. schmidtiana* Regel (Brazil) About 1 ft. tall, small, slightly ruffled and velvety leaves, olive green on top and red beneath, flowers pinkish. Allow to dry out between waterings.

The CLAYTON M. KELLY SEED FUND is a project of the San Miguel Branch of the ABS in San Diego County, California. Donors of seeds in this issue are: Dot & Barry Mann, Irene Nuss, and Freda Holley.

A Note About Cultivar or Hybrid Seedlings

When planting cultivar or hybrid seed, it is important to label them as “Hybrid NameX” (as B. ‘Lana’X) or “Hybrid Name Cross”. **Never** simply put the parent name on the seedlings or on an individual plant from the seed (See the Tracy McLellan article on page 96). Of course, you have the right to name any new or interesting plant that emerges from these seeds although the plant should be unique and different enough to warrant this. Also, even when given a new name the parentage record should be kept. I always try to label all my new plants with an ‘S:’ if grown from seed or ‘C:’ if grown from a cutting.

~FH

the soil is dry; if a dull sound results the soil is wet.

The soil should be kept uniformly moist, but not wet, for a soil kept continually wet will lack air and become sour. In sour soil, begonia roots are destroyed. If you believe your soil has been kept too moist, it will be beneficial to allow the soil to become reasonably dry occasionally. Do not, however, allow the soil to get so dry that the plant wilts. No plant will grow as well after having been allowed to wilt. The "Calla Begonia" is best handled by giving it a good watering and then allow it to get quite dry before watering again. This method of watering prevents the plant from rotting. After a good rain it is well to check over your pots of Rex Begonia for their leaves are arranged in such a manner that they prevent any water from reaching the pot. Though everything else is wet, your plant may be wilting.

Often Rexes in a well watered bed are seen to wilt and usually the cause is the lack of water at the root zone due to the leaves directing the water away.

Begonias which shed their leaves or stems during the dormant period should only be watered sufficiently to prevent the soil from becoming "bone dry." If a plant is not doing well, and no other ailment is found, try to keep the soil a little drier and the plant may recover.

In caring for plants in a greenhouse or glasshouse, it is well to remember to use water which has been warmed to the air temperature. Do not water so late in the day that the plants do not dry off for if fungus spores are present, they will attack the leaves and cause rot.

Now let us consider the methods of watering. Although the watering can is used throughout the world it has been supplanted in America by the rubber hose.

The standard 1/2"-3/4" diameter is usually used in watering lath-house and greer house plants as well as gardens under trees. For a small lath-house or glasshouse the standard air hose, as used in the gas stations, fitted with a 3/4" diameter spray makes a handy and efficient hose for an elderly person or woman. A light hose of this type is very handy in watering pots on shelves or hanging baskets. Under trees or in large lathhouses, a sprinkler attached to the hose will apply the water much better than one can by hand. Tuberosus begonias are best staked if a revolving sprinkler is used so that the plants will not be broken off.

In applying water, it is customary in Southern California to wet the foliage as well as the soil. Burning usually results if droplets get on the leaves and magnify the sun rays on a particular spot. To prevent this, it is customary to wet the entire leaf and thus leave no droplets. This method has also proven successful on other plants out of doors in the full sun. In other sections of the country, where the air is more humid or where excessive amounts of chlorine occasionally occur, it is wise not to wet the leaves. If the leaves remain wet and fungus spores are present, they will develop, the disease causing the leaves to rot. Excessive amounts of chlorine will cause the leaves to fall from the plant.

In applying water, give a sufficient amount to wet the soil in a pot thoroughly, but do not add so much that a quantity runs out the bottom, as it will carry out the valuable fertilizer that you have put into the soil. If you have been using liquid fertilizer made from a complete chemical fertilizer, it is wise to flush out the chemicals not utilized by the plant by watering heavily or soaking the pot in a pan of water.

Continued on Page 116.

Minutes of Board Meeting, American Begonia Society Ft. Worth, TX, January 17, 1998

1. **President Bruce Boardman** presided over the meeting which was held at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden. There were 21 attendees and 28 board member votes represented. 2. **Morris Mueller** read the aims and purposes of the Society. 3. The minutes of the Annual Business Meeting held in Sacramento in September 1997 were read by **Secretary Richard Macnair**. They were accepted as read. 4. **Treasurer Carol Notaras** reported on fiscal activity for the period August 1-December 31, 1997. Income was \$24,307 while disbursements were \$33,795. The beginning balance was \$69,323 and the ending balance was \$55,602 which reflected the heavy disbursements. The major expenses were for the *Begonian*, the convention advance and **Scott Hoover's** collecting trip. The report was accepted. 5. The need for standardization and improvement of the show classification schedule was discussed at the last board meeting. Although no committee was officially appointed, Classification Chair **Leora Fuentes** prepared some revisions. President Boardman will contact Leora and take action on the revisions. 6. The recently published Members-at-Large (MAL) newsletter was discussed. It is considered a good publication with a nominal cost of 80 cents per copy. President Boardman indicated his intention to write comments on it for publication in the *Begonian*. A motion was made to send the first two issues by bulk mail to the 400 plus members at ABS expense and indicated that future issues would be provided at a subscription rate of \$5 per year for four issues. The reason for the charge is

that the cost is not included in ABS dues. The motion was seconded and passed. A second motion was made that the MAL newsletter be sent to all National Directors with a request that it be shown to all branch members and that all members be invited to subscribe at the rate of \$5 per year. This motion also was seconded and approved. 7. The proposal to copy and distribute the article on begonias by **Alan W. Nero** which had been tabled at a prior board meeting was discussed...A motion to reject the proposal and drop further discussion or consideration was seconded and passed. 8. **Membership Chair John Ingles, Jr.**, sent a report to the board showing that ABS is having difficulty keeping first year members. 9. **Public Relations Chair Russ Richardson** made a written request for ABS to renew advertising in gardening magazines. There was a discussion of the purpose, cost and effectiveness of such advertising. The board concluded that advertising alone does not meet the society's aims and purposes satisfactorily, but that combining advertising with a feature article in a gardening magazine might be more effective. 10. **Business Manager John Ingles, Jr.** prepared a report on the cost of the *Begonian* in recent months going back to 1996. Printing costs have been reduced from a high of \$4100 to \$3500 per issue. The savings over 12 months will be \$4200. 11. For the record it was announced that Orange County Branch has changed its by-laws to increase honoraria for speakers from \$50 to \$100. 12. **Seed Fund Chair Eleanor Calkins** requested a change of allocation of seed fund proceeds from the present 10% to 30% retained for fund expenses. The request was approved. 13. A question was raised about the format of the Treasurer's report conforming to that expected of a nonprofit organization. The financial officers will study the

matter and make appropriate changes if necessary. **14.** A request for contributions was received from the New England Tropical Conservatory to help finance their exhibit at the New England Spring Flower Show in Boston and the Tropical Flower Show in Bennington, Vermont--both of which will feature begonias. The amounts requested were \$500 for the Boston exhibit and \$150 for the Bennington show. A motion to sponsor the exhibit and show at the levels requested passed and the treasurer was instructed to send the money. **15.** **Scott Hoover's** collecting trip was discussed. He will collect begonia seed and send it all to **Ann Salisbury.** Ann will divide it and send it first to test growers. After testing, portions of the seed will be sent to those who contibuted money for the trip through ABS. The remainder will go to the seed fund, but if seeds are in very short supply they may not be distributed after testing. **16.** The Greater Chicago Branch asked about setting up an international seed bank. The board agreed that this might be a useful project, but recognized that ground rules would be necessary to make it work. This will be an area for future work. **17.** **President Boardman** informed the board members that **Dr. Barkley's** research notes and personal papers were donated to a library and subsequently sold or otherwise disbursed or thrown away. Considering this waste, the board recognized that setting up and maintaining archives for personal papers of begonia growers and researchers would be worthwhile and is an area for future work. **18.** Before this board meeting began, two ad hoc working groups were formed by **President Boardman** to generate ideas on how to improve ABS. **Morris Mueller** and Bruce Boardman chaired the groups. They will follow up on the results together and report to the board.

Initial results of these sessions were encouraging and more sessions will be planned. **19.** **Branch Relations Chair Mary Bucholtz** reported sending information about ABS branches to groups in Sweden, Wisconsin, and Louisiana. The Branch Relations Newsletter was mailed in September. **20.** **Internet Editor Kathy Goetz** reported that a re-designed home page for ABs is nearly complete. **21.** **Bob Hamm** published an article several years ago which included the subject of long range planning. There was no time for discussion so this will be placed on the agenda for the next board meeting.

These minutes have been slightly abbreviated for reasons of space. Full copies of the minutes are available upon request from Secretary Richard McNair, 177 Hancock Street, Cambridge, MA 02139.

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ABS & Branch News

Already following our President and Board's advice, ABS members are taking begonias to the public!

Beyond the Branches

The Florida State Fair was held in Tampa, FL on February 5-16, 1998. **Florida West Coast Branch** members walked away with blue ribbons and Best of Show. Members receiving blue ribbons at the State Fair were **Dale Sena, Bob Koehler, Charles Jaros, and Helene Jaros**. Helene Jaros won Best of Show with a beautiful variegated ivy, *Hedera 'Calico'*. Bob Koehler was runner-up to Best of Show with his B. 'Cowardly Lion'. Congratulations to all.

The **Palm Beaches Branch (FL)** put in a Begonia Display at the Palm Beach Tropical Flower and Garden Show, February 20-22, 1998. The Branch Display created quite an interest among the thousands of visitors to the show. Congratulations to display chairman Virginia Jens. Members of the Palm Beaches Branch also did quite well in the competitive horticulture classes. Members receiving blue ribbons were **Virginia Jens, Donna Bailey, Sylvia Ben, Laurie Guepet, Frances Hunter and Charles Jaros**. B. 'Palmgarten' won Best of Show and beat out orchids, ferns, cactus, aroids, bromeliads and a host of other plants for this coveted award. Best Begonia was B. 'Tequesta'. Both plants were exhibited by Charles Jaros.

The New England Spring Flower Show is the third largest in the world, after the Chelsea and Philadelphia, and goes on for

9 days, and the **Buxton Branch (MA)** made sure begonias were well represented in 1998. **Norman Dufresne** won the coveted Thompson Award for the best plant in the Begonia Classes with his B. *velloziana* and **Wanda Macnair won the Cunningham Award** for horticultural and artistic achievement with B. *versicolor*. **Timmy Shapiro** won several blues and cultural certificates for her great begonias and her B. 'Erythrophylla' which won the Thompson Award last year was even more magnificent this year. Normand, Wanda, **Althea Phillips** and **Betsy McBratney** also won other ribbons for begonias and other entries.

A fantastic halfpage feature article in the Ponca City News (OK) served to advertise the coming SWR Get-Together, the National Convention in Atlanta, and begonia growing in general. The writeup covered begonias, their history and care, complete with color photos of **Ann Salisbury** showing off a giant B. 'Anaconda' and **Gene Salisbury** a delightful B. 'Sparrow'.

The **Whittier Branch (CA)** newsletter tells about the use of the local Cable Channel 6 for a color ad on planting begonias in sun, shade and *moonlight!*

Lou Dyess of the **Alamo Branch (TX)** gave a program March 12 on begonias at the Schultz house, downtown in the La Villita area of San Antonio. And on April 4th and 5th, the Alamo Branch participated in Viva botanica at the Botanical Gardens. They will also have plants sales on May 2nd at the South Park Mall and on June 6th at the Rolling Oaks Mall.

And the Branches have been Pruning and...

The February *Shade House*, newsletter of the **Doug Frost Branch (CA)** covered pruning in detail with quotes from many experts and even with sketches to show how it was done.

The **Westchester Branch (CA)** had **Elda Regimbal** speak on pruning and general culture on April 8.

The **Houston Satellites Branch (TX)** is trying an experiment. They believe they might be able to grow tuberous begonias in their climate if they can keep the root system cool. The plants are being double potted with Dallas Fern or other companion plants. Some will be located under trees nestled among Japanese Painted Fern while others will be tried under lights inside. Keep us posted, Houston!



The **New South Wales Begonia Society (Australia)** had a visit by the President of the **Scottish Begonia Society, Andrew Todd** and wife **Margaret**. The visitors were impressed by the Australians' ability to grow so many begonias out-of-doors in Sydney.

Above Best of Show, B. 'Palmgarten' at the Palm Beach Tropical Flower and Garden Show, exhibited by Charles Jaros. Below, Runnerup for Best of Show B. 'Cowardly Lion' at the Florida State Fair exhibited by Bob Koehler. Photos by Charles Jaros.



Editor's Notes...

Thank you to all the contributors of articles and photos this month, but a big special thanks to Jan Brown for her big contribution of the in-depth article about Irene Nuss and, of course, to Irene Nuss!

A word About the Deadline Date

The due date listed for items for the next issue, and it is May 20 for the July/August issue by the way, applies to regular columns such as the Seed Fund Listing, business items such as the ballot info in this issue, or any meeting or other time sensitive announcements to be carried.

For feature items, I will usually be working several issues in advance trying to put together a balance of articles and photos. Thus, if you submit an article--and I hope you are writing one this minute, it may take me several issues before I work it in. I will always acknowledge submissions so you know they are in the works. Every submission is appreciated and needed. Remember, I always need short articles on specific begonias, species or hybrids, and your experience in growing them. If you have a plant you haven't seen written up, chances are others will be interested in it.

September 1997 Survey Requests

Several written requests on returned surveys bear consideration. Some wanted a "Letters to the Editor" column. I always enjoy the letters column in the magazines I read and would be delighted to have one in the *Begonian*. So write me letters! If they are for publication, keep them short and pithy. If you don't want something published, please note it is not for publication. I want you to feel free to write me on or off the record.

Another request was for a column where photos of plants could be submitted for identification. I certainly know how much I've wanted some way to identify my mystery plants, but unfortunately plants are so difficult to identify--sometimes even when you are holding the plant itself, I don't think I could find anyone who would take on the identification task. Misidentification is perhaps a bigger problem than lack of identification and attempts to identify plants from photos might lead to this. This emphasizes again the importance of correct labeling. I once bought a plant labeled 'Immense' and grew it for years before discovering what I probably have is 'Cachuma'. I hope I never passed this one along. Particularly with species, I now try to be absolutely sure of what I have before passing it on with a proper label.

A third request was for listing sources of begonias shown or described. Of course our plant sales (Come to Atlanta!) are always the greatest source, but I herewith issue a call to begonia suppliers to send me their latest listings, and I'll start trying to provide a source list where readers may purchase featured begonias in future issues.

Finally, people wanted photos of seed fund offerings. As you may note, I've begun trying to do this, but I really need species photos. When you send seed to the seed fund if you have a photo, I would really appreciate receiving one.

Correction:

On page 164 of the September/October 1997 issue of the *Begonian* we inadvertently erred in reporting that Bill Ash received a Gold Medal at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1996. This should have read a Silver Medal. Our apologies to Bill Ash and the Royal Horticultural Society.

~Freda Holley

Last Call for Atlanta!

The quilt is pieced and Kit Jeans Mounger almost has the quilting finished. See how grand it looks! You don't want to miss seeing this one.

The speakers are preparing. The plants are growing for the show and for the sale! The tour buses are booked.

You have the registration forms. Now all you have to do is complete and mail them, get your travel plans made, and be sure to make your hotel reservations. Don't forget to take supplies to bring your plants home from the sale!



Begonias Southern Style

Atlanta, Georgia

June 18-21, 1998

For more information, contact:

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New Slide and Video Programs Available

- A30** "Begonia Species from A to D": An outstanding slide program of Begonia Species, alphabetically arranged. This program is from the slide library of Millie and Ed Thompson and was graciously donated by them. 81 quality slides with a typed commentary.
- B11** "Art in the Making, Bonsai Begonias": A professionally made video for Public Access TV. the 55 minute video demonstrates how to create bonsai from begonias. Choosing a plant, trimming, training, and the final results are all shown in this interesting video donated by Charles McGough.

These and many other slide and video programs are available from the ABS Slide Library. To obtain a complete list and information on borrowing them, contact:

**Charles Jaros,
200 Maureen Drive
Sanford, FL 32771**

Water, Continued from Page 109.

In watering small begonia seedlings, it is best to allow the soil to take up moisture by standing the pots or flats in a pan of water. The water must not be allowed to creep over the rim of the pot or flat, or the plants may be knocked over. The excess water which runs out when the pot or flat is removed takes some fertilizer with it, but small plants do not require much.

If you water large pots or flats by standing them in a pan of water, use just enough water so that it is thoroughly absorbed. In this way you will preserve what fertilizer there is in the pot. Should some water remain, save it to use later or water other plants with it for it contains valuable fertilizer elements. Some experimental work is being carried on in sub-irrigation of potted plants. These are stood in leakproof benches into which water is run and removed when the watering is finished. The method has not been too successful since all pots do not need water at the same time.

Another method of watering is proving more successful. A spun glass braided wick is put into the bottom of a regular flat or pot (not smaller than the 3" diameter--when smaller pots are used the soil becomes water-logged and sour, and the plants die). The wick is unraveled and spread out like the spokes of a wheel. The potting soil is placed in the pot or flat, and the plants set in place. A thorough watering is given, and then the flat or pot is supported above a jar or pot of water to the bottom of which the wick dangles. The soil absorbs the water from the glass wick by capillary action. Should the water in the receptacle become dry, it must be watered thoroughly again before capillary action will draw water up the wick. Other wicking will work, but because fungus and rot destroys it, it must be replaced, whereas the glass wicking will last indefinitely. Should you have to leave your plants for a considerable time, this wick method will keep your plants well watered.

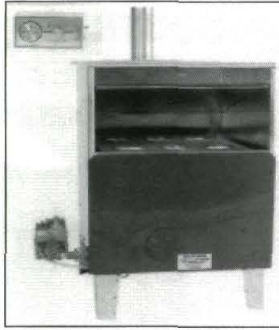
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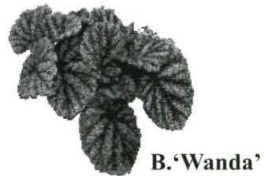
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COMING EVENTS

- June 20, 1998 Tour of Pam Hantgin's Garden, Noon to 4 PM, at 94 North Santa Rosa Street, Ventura, CA 93001 sponsored by the American Fuchsia Society, Gold Coast Branch, and by the Theodosia Burr Shepherd Branch (Celebrating its 61st year) of the American Begonia Society. For information call 805-648-1530 or E-mail BUBBA@CALWEST.NET.
- June 18-21, 1988 ABS Convention in Atlanta, GA hosted by the Greater Atlanta Branch at the Atlanta-Decatur Holiday Inn. Contact Show Chairperson Mary Elizabeth Moultrie at 3710 Cochise Drive, Atlanta, GA 30339 or call 770-436-5932.
- July 18/19, 1998 Westchester Branch 17th Annual Show and Plant Sale, Westchester Christian Church, 8740 La Tijera Boulevard, Los Angeles, California. Sat: 9 AM to 5 PM; Sun: 12 Noon to 4 PM. For information call 310-670-4471 or 310-324-8803.
- July 25/26, 1998 Doug Frost Branch show and Sale, UCI Arboretum, Irvine, CA. Call 714-898-2362 for information.
- August 23, 1998 Sixth Annual Begonia show and Sale, Bewitching Begonias will be presented by the Palos Verdes Begonia Society at the South Coast Botanic Garden, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula, on Sunday from 9 AM to 4 PM. Admission to the Garden is \$5. Seniors 62 and over admitted for \$3. For more information call 310-830-4707.
- August 29, 1998 The Long Beach Parent Chapter Begonia Show & Sale, Paramount Methodist Church, 16635 Paramount Blvd., Paramount, CA. For information, call 563-866-6053.

The Begonian

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**Next issue will carry the
Directory of Begonia Societies
and Branches. If you have
not already provided up to
date information, please be
sure to do so by May 20.**

**Remember, due date
for July/August issue is
May 20.**



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