



The

Begonian

July/August 2008

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

Front: **Rekha Morris** continues to bring us back beautiful begonias and beautiful photos. Here is *Begonia breedlovei* growing on a hillside in Chiapas.

Back: **Peter Sharp** continues his work in the Royal Botanic Garden of Sydney with beautiful results. Here is *Begonia megaptera*.

In This Issue

“On the Road Again”, to use **Mary Bucholtz’s** phrase, might be the subtitle of this issue as we travel with **Rekha Morris** to Mexico and with Mary Bucholtz to North Carolina and points north. Then we visit the Royal Botanic Garden with **Peter Sharp** in Sydney Australia. And we continue to learn about easy to grow begonias, this time the cane-like.

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Please!

*Send photos, stories,
reactions, letters to the editor,
about the Houston Convention
by*

July 1, 2008

*to make the
September/October issue as
full of fun and color
as was
this year’s big event!*

Presidents Message

It is hard to believe that half the year is over and our convention in Houston was 6 weeks ago. Time is really flying this year. Since the *Begonian* is written with a 2 month lead time, articles and pictures about the convention will be in the Sept/Oct issue. I hope everyone that went to the convention had a great time because I know that I did. The Texans really know how to have a good time.

The September board meeting this year is going to be in San Francisco at the Best Western Hotel right by the airport. For those of you that want to go to the board meeting, but missed the convention e-mail me and I can send you the information or wait until you get the Sept/Oct issue of the *Begonian* by the end of August and all the information will be in there. The only change from the normal meeting is that it will have to be on Friday afternoon at about 3 p.m. with a dinner after that probably around 7 p.m. This way the meeting room will be free instead of \$1000. On Saturday **Carol Notaras** will plan some fun things for us to do.

I hope everyone had a chance to look over the privacy article that was put on the inside cover of the May/June issue of the *Begonian*. It is becoming very important that every club or society have one.

Have you been to the begonia web site yet? **Julie Vanderwilt** is doing some wonderful work with it. **Howard Berg** has had Julie put some of the *Curtis Botanical Magazine* prints with **Jack Golding** providing the citations for each. They are beautiful pictures. For those of you who don't have a computer go to the library and use their computers. Believe me, it is well worth the trip.

The second in the series of DVD's of the old *Begonians* for the years 1959-

1979 is now available on the web site for purchase. Don't forget to do the puzzle that **Kingsley Langenberg** does every week for the web site too. The web site is www.begonias.org. Remember it is *begonias* and not *begonia* when typing in the web site address.

Hope that all your branch shows are doing well and I will see you at our meeting in September.

Mary Sakamoto

Holiday Greetings

By the time you receive this issue of the *Begonian*, officers, branch presidents and national directors should have received a request for donations for this year's holiday greetings. Last year you were very generous and we had more individual donations. There are four categories of giving, and some donors were extremely generous. Those categories are: Bronze, \$1-\$25; Silver, \$26-\$50; Gold, \$51-\$100; and Platinum, over \$100.

In order for Freda to keep to her deadlines for sending in copy, please send your branch or individual checks made out to ABS with a notation "Holiday Greetings", by September 1, to:

Wanda Macnair,
Holiday Greetings Chair, ABS
59 Walker St.
Cambridge, MA 02138.

We ask that individual donors please let us know if you wish an acknowledgement for this tax-deductible gift. In the holiday issue, the magazine will devote its pages to *begonias* with a special notation that the issue comes through the greetings and support of holiday donors, and they will be listed. Thank you so much for your generous support.

Wanda Macnair,
Holiday Greetings Chair

Letters to the Editor

Easy to Grow Begonias

The last issue of the *Begonian* was just great. I particularly enjoyed the "Easy to Grow" article; very informative. I don't know if it would have been possible to include a listing of where the various *begonias* might be had, as plants, as cuttings or seeds. Along the same vein, would it be practical for the *Begonian* to act as a conduit for members who have an overabundance of certain plants. I understand there's a lag time between issues, & that would be a complicating factor,

I noticed with interest (naturally) your observation about the colder than usual winter in northern Louisiana: New Orleans, too. My sense is that the canes are flowering as much as a month behind schedule.

I shall not be able to attend the Houston convention, though I'd like to. I hope it goes well.

Best regards,

Michael Higson

michaelhigson@gmail.com

Michael, I'm glad you enjoyed this article. We tried at one time to list sources for the begonias mentioned in the Begonian, but many growers want to be sure they have the plants available and the lag time between when the begonias to be mentioned were known and we could get responses from the growers was simply too long. However, with email it is now fairly simple to check our advertisers for availability and I continue to be impressed with how many plants including begonias are now to be found on E-Bay at very reasonable prices. Finally, for the more difficult to find varieties, the Begonian does have a feature where readers can list what they have and what they want; it's

just that readers have not been sending their requests to the editor. If you really want a begonia and cannot find it, write a letter to the editor and we'll be happy to run it.

Begonia 'Selph's Mahogany'

I so enjoyed the articles in the latest issue of the *Begonian*. I was especially interested in your information regarding *B. 'Selph's Mahogany'*. I have many begonias, but there are a few such as this one that just don't seem to do well. May I ask you some questions about growing this begonia. You might know it is one of my favorites. (1) What type lighting does it enjoy? (2) Would overwatering really affect this begonia? (3) How often do you fertilize and with what type fertilizer? I have had mine a while. Part of it died, but I have a good rhizome left. Your assistance in helping me with this begonia is appreciated.

Val J Classey

classey380@centurytel.net

*Val, as most of my begonias, B. 'Selph's Mahogany' receives little care! I forget to water it, feed it, and the light is reduced even in winter because I must use heavy sun shading. I suspect one reason it grows so well here is the proximity to where it originated in East Texas. I do have it in a deep pot contrary to the usual recommendation for rhizomes; I find the upright rhizomatous do well with deeper potting and that it is needed to support the upright growth. It is a supremely easy plant around here. And from one leaf I have gotten as many as 25 new plants (cone cutting in a 5 inch azalea pot). It grows very much for me like *B. sericoneura* and I suspect it prefers warmer climates.*

A Winter Delight: The Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden

by Mary Bucholtz,
Jacksonville, Florida

It isn't often one has the opportunity to see a real work of art in progress, especially one that calls to your heart. A botanical garden is an intimate oasis for a gardener, but to see one from almost the beginning is like seeing the breath of life. The garden of which I am writing is the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, located in Belmont, North Carolina, just outside of Charlotte. It covers a ground space of approximately 400 acres of rolling meadows, woodlands and lakefront property.

The garden opened to the public in 1999, exhibiting 110 acres of manicured gardens, lawns, fountains and a woodland trail. The Visitor Pavilion, named for Daniel Stowe, a gardening enthusiast and life long nature lover who envisioned and reserved this site, also opened in 1999. Other gardens were opened in 2003 and 2004, including a White Garden and Azalea Garden.

Jamie Burghardt, a former member of the Begonia Society of the Palm

**...*B. soli-mutata* (Brazil)
sat regally on a throne
of rocks...**

Beaches, is a new member of the staff. He is the Conservatory Manager and earned his master's degree in public horticulture from the Longwood Graduate Program at the University of Delaware. Jamie was most gracious to give us a guided tour of

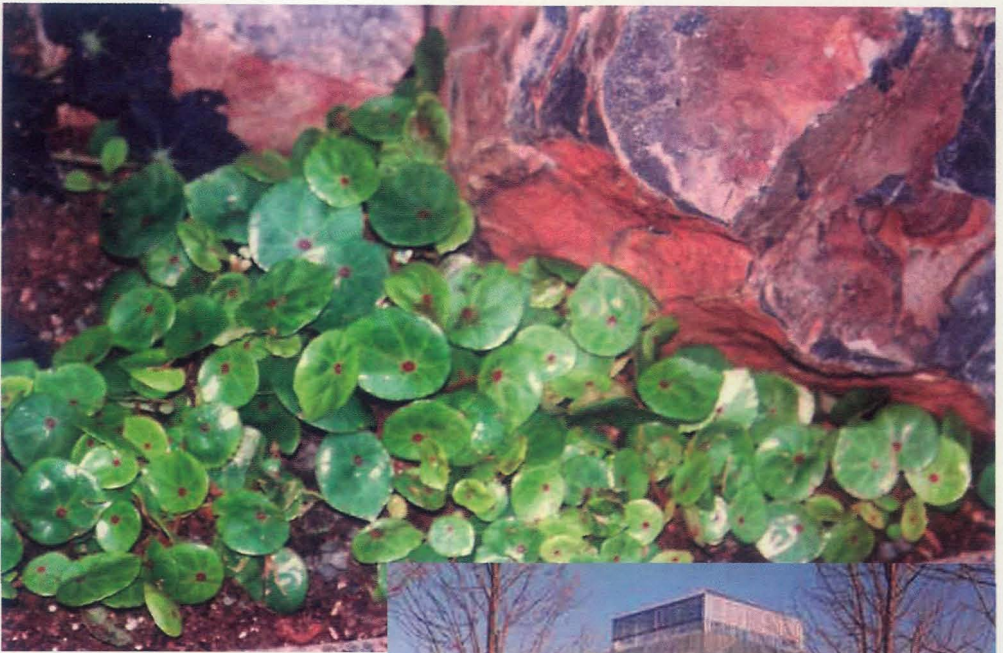
the grounds and the Orchid Conservatory which opened to the public January 19, 2008. If you should find yourself anywhere in the area of Charlotte, I don't think you would be disappointed with a visit to this "newcomer". The garden is a beauty.

In the Conservatory, nestled under the plantings which filled the building was a large, varied collection of begonias. This collection includes representation from

**...Hanging against a post was
a marvelous *B. loranthoides*
subsp. *rhopalocarpa* (Africa),
just waiting for her many
buds to burst into bloom...**

almost every begonia classification. Not often seen, was a beautiful specimen of *B. conchifolia* var. *rubrimacula* (Costa Rica), just coming into bloom and a noble *B. thiemei* (Honduras, Mexico) which anyone would covet. *B. soli-mutata* (Brazil) with lovely blossoms, sat regally on a throne of rocks and there was *B. 'Morocco'* (Kartuz) peeping out from under a row of blooming orchids. Nestled in a group of ferns was a personal favorite, *B. chloroneura* (Phillippines). Hanging against a post was a marvelous *B. loranthoides* subsp. *rhopalocarpa* (Africa), just waiting for her many buds to burst into bloom. And oh, so many more, both species and hybrids.

How was I so fortunate to have seen this garden? I was on the road again,



B. conchifolia var. *rubrimacula* above
and *B. chloroneura* below grow in the
Conservatory.



traveling with **Charles Jaros**. We were returning from a New Year's Eve Party in Virginia, which was given by **Maxine Zinman** and her most thoughtful and indulgent husband **Jay**. Also celebrating the New Year with us, were **Janet** and **Lou Welsh** and **Johanna** and **Jeff Zinn**. Somehow, we managed to turn an evening's event into ten days. Imagine that!

Yes, there were begonias during those ten days, both living and found in botanical prints, as well as depicted in

**...We even saw a bench,
on which sat a variety of
lovely, happy begonias for
sale in the Greenhouse of
The Washington National
Cathedral...**

majolica. Once again the U.S. Botanical Garden didn't disappoint us. There were quite a few large specimens of our favorite plants on display. We even saw a bench, on which sat a variety of lovely, happy begonias for sale in the Greenhouse of The Washington National Cathedral.

Editor's Notes

You will not doubt be receiving this issue late and for the first time ever this is my fault! I came back from the convention ill and it then turned into pneumonia and I have been pretty much out of commission until today, May 30, and still not doing too well. Apologies to all.

We had a wonderful convention and I urge everyone who attended to send in their photos, stories, and letters by the next deadline of July 1. Last year, I received a few letters to the editor from those attend-

And did I forget to mention Maxine's delightful collection of species and hybrids. They are housed and on display in a garden room which covers the front

...And did I forget to mention Maxine's delightful collection of species and hybrids. They are housed and on display in a garden room which covers the front of their home...

of their home. A visit to Johanna Zinn's was "the trip" for any terrarium grower. It was especially nice to see her walk-in terrarium, which she described in the July/August 2007 issue of the *Begonian*. And, yes, she does have a very large and varied collection of species.

Even a few begonias turned up at local nurseries, and as we were driving there was room for our purchases. How nice not to have to satisfy the airline requirements, which are becoming less and less friendly to those of us who travel with plants.

ing a convention for the first time. If you attended the Houston show, I hope you will be moved to write one of even a paragraph telling readers your impressions or what you most enjoyed. Other readers really seem to enjoy those letters!

And why not making a resolution to write at least one item for the *Begonian* next year. Letters such as in this issue which express your enjoyment of a particular article especially gladden writer's and editor's hearts!

Growing in a 'Conventional' Way

by Nancy Cohen,

Begonia Society of the Palm Beaches, FL

When the Begonia Society of the Palm Beaches undertook hosting the American Begonia Society Convention in 2000, our chapter was really small. **Johanna Kitson** (our President) and I (our Vice President) had spent a lot of time after we were elected to our respective offices brainstorming different ways to get the chapter to grow. We managed (with a lot of help from ABS and others) to get great speakers and programs; we started featuring plants for sale at the meetings, introducing a monthly raffle table, an Exchange Table raffle, and a monthly Badge Plant door prize; and began plans for a begonia display garden in our local botanical garden. We upgraded the newsletter and the food served at meetings. And we blossomed. We doubled our size (from about 12 in 1998 to maybe 25-30 in 1999.) The Begonia Society began to be a meeting to attend.

But there was another factor which made a huge difference: our Potting Parties. Our fearless Convention leader, **Virginia Jens**, charged us with having 4,000 begonias to sell at the Convention. How to get 4,000 begonias? Nobody in our chapter was propagating begonias at that time (or if they were, they weren't talking about it.) We read **Mildred Thompson's** *Begonias* and took a U002 (a k a B. '*Manaus*'), cut it to pieces, made about 75 cuttings, left them in 4" pots under sprinklers under my coconut trees for the summer, and voila! we had 75 little begonias in October. Wow! This was fun!

We asked the whole membership to come to a 'Potting Party'. We went through our gardens and took cuttings. Many more

little cuttings took root. Johanna went out to ABS and appealed for cuttings. Another 'Potting Party', more cuttings. Repeat a lot. The cuttings got fancier, the parties were more and more fun, we taught more people how to start begonias from leaf cuttings, more people showed up, we got to know each other better, we had more friends, and everyone got really excited about the Convention. By Convention time we were at least 45 strong.

Today these parties have morphed into almost-monthly 'Propagation Parties.' We urge new members to attend, and make sure everyone goes home with a tray or two of desirable cuttings. Many of our members have started their garden from cuttings from these parties. We also do garden tours of members' and other private gardens. It is such fun to find begonias that were started at our 'Propagation Parties' in these gardens.

The Begonia Society of the Palm Beaches is sponsoring the 2009 ABS Convention (April 29-May 3.) This time professional growers will propagate most of the begonias at our sale. But there will be some beauties started at these parties from our private collections. Our members of the Palm Beaches Branch look forward to welcoming you to our begonia paradise.

**Florida
in
2009!**

A CHIAPAN CHALLENGE

by Rekha Morris, Pendleton, SC

During the past 5 years of documenting species begonias in Mexico there have been several frustrating trips, and the three unsuccessful ones in search of *B. imperialis* and *B. lynceorum* in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec were decidedly the worst. The worst, that is, until November 2006 when I made my first trip to Chiapas in search of begonias. The unrest and violence in Oaxaca City last November militated against our going there, and since our regular route to southeastern Oaxaca went through the outskirts of Oaxaca City, we decided to enter Chiapas from the north via Tabasco, a route which would take us not through begonia rich habitats but through miles and miles of cultivated land and Minatitlan, the center of the Mexican oil refinery district.

Grim as this was I had planned this route in such a way that we would be driving to San Cristobal de Las Casas, our base, during the day as begonias had been documented in this mountainous section in northern Chiapas. This was not to be as just as we reached the edge of Tabasco the clutch on our small rental SUV collapsed. Luckily this occurred within yards of a roadside car repair facility. Several young mechanics pushed our car back to their work area, and helpfully found a friend to drive Michael to the nearest phone some 25-30 km away so he could contact Avis for a replacement car. The nearest Avis agency

was in the Yucatan, and they suggested getting the local mechanics to replace the clutch. This was not as easy or simple as it appeared, as there was no appropriate clutch available in the nearest town some 50 km away, so the same helpful owner of the pickup truck spent the entire day driving Michael back to Minatitlan to purchase a clutch and return while I spent the long, hot, miserable day with the car. It was not until about 8:00 p.m. that we were finally able to resume our trip south, and the mountainous stretch I had planned on driving though during daylight hours had to be slowly negotiated in the dark. As we discovered, this section of the mountains had been cleared of vegetation to make way for ranches, and all I saw in the headlights were long stretches of fencing on top of the fairly high embankments edging the road.

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Since we reached San Cristobal situated at an elevation of about 7000' well after 2.00 a.m., I decided to spend the afternoon of our first day at the local herbarium. Early the following day we headed for an area just north of

San Cristobal towards Tenejapa where *B. hispadivillosa* had been recorded. We left the main road and taking a narrow dirt track entered a fairly isolated stretch of mountainous terrain enveloped in mist. This moisture laden environment, the moss and fern covered limestone outcrops, and the myriads of bromeliads on trees were hopeful indicators for begonia habitats.

However, I saw not a single begonia during the four hours we spent searching the area.

Cold, wet and disappointed we headed back as Michael had begun to encounter difficulty with the new clutch which increased

as we drove back to San Cristobal. By the time we got there it appeared that this second clutch was about to give way as well. This time we insisted that Avis send us a replacement from their Yucatan office, and arrange for us to rent a car locally. By the time a local agency sent us a car I had lost 2 days of exploration time.

Knowing the condition of the roads which led into the mountains and not having a SUV, I decided to head for Palenque in whose vicinity begonias had been recorded, and most of the drive to this northern section of Chiapas would be on major roads. Although I knew that some 200,000 acres of forests in this part of Mexico, Guatemala and Belize were being destroyed annually, it was nevertheless shocking to see the endless stretches of ranches throughout the central and northern part of Chiapas. Along a short stretch where the road skirted some steep cliffs, I was pleasantly surprised to see *B. heracleifolia* among the vegetation. Knowing that where there was one begonia species there were likely to be others, I got off to look more closely. Sprinkled among the rock crevices were small plants of *B. pinetorum*, and a bit further along in a few moist pockets were small clumps

of *B. nelumbifolia*. Not having seen a single begonia during our first three days

in Chiapas, seeing these three familiar species was, if not wildly exciting, certainly encouraging. An hour or so later we were still driving through areas either under cultivation or

fenced in as cattle ranches.

Feeling increasingly dejected at the loss of so much natural habitat and convinced I would not see another begonia, I was startled into alertness as I caught sight of foliage along a particularly lush embankment which looked as though it might belong to begonias. And indeed what I found were small plants of *B. sarcophylla* beginning their growth cycle. Noticing a group of women with baskets heading up a dirt path going up this hillside, I decided to follow to see if there might be begonias further into the hills. Within minutes I saw tall floral stalks further uphill which were unmistakably those of some begonia species. This one was a large leaved species with prominent veins which looked familiar. I wondered if I had found a form of *B. sericoneura* midway between the Mexican form of this species and the Central American form. It has since been identified as *B. breedlovei* by Dr. **Patrick McMillan**.

We got within 80 km of Palenque only to find that there was a road block which had cars and trucks backed up for about half a km. Wary of any road blocks in Mexico, I suggested we turn back as it was late in the afternoon, and

...Wary of any road blocks in Mexico, I suggested we turn back as it was late in the afternoon, and we would never reach Palenque while there was sufficient light to look around the waterfalls in its vicinity. A day later we were to discover that this road block was a precursor of more serious problems in the region...



Above left is B. plebeja, right is a B. plebeja with different coloring. Below left is B. sarcophylla and below right is B. pinetorum.



we would never reach Palenque while there was sufficient light to look around the waterfalls in its vicinity. A day later we were to discover that this road block was a precursor of more serious problems in the region.

Early the following morning a brand new replacement SUV arrived, and we lost no time setting off to explore around the Ocozocoautla Forest Preserve to the west of Tuxtla Gutierrez. Several hours later we were finally out of the urban sprawl of Tuxtla Gutierrez and heading north off the main road into the Ocozocoautla protected biosphere. Protected though it was, there were clear signs of deforestation and human encroachment. Despite this there were long stretches where we found ourselves in isolated forest terrain, and in one such section I noticed large, glabrous begonia foliage among the thick undergrowth. Taking a machete that I had learned to carry, I hacked a narrow path to this clump of begonias which were none other than *B. pinetorum* albeit in a slightly different form than those I had recorded for Veracruz. The leaves of this form were larger and had shallow lobes. While all the *B. pinetorum* I had recorded until now grew on somewhat exposed and bare rock surfaces, these grew not only amongst thick brush but as I peered further in, I noticed them growing in deep shade in what looked like a narrow ravine or fairly deep water channel littered with boulders.

A few miles further along in a section where the road led through near vertical cliffs, there was a magnificent stand of *B. nelumbifolia* and the cliff side above was covered with the thickest cascade of *B. pinetorum* I have ever seen. While documenting begonias in Veracruz I had to search for this species, and when I finally located my first group they grew singly or in scattered groups of two or

three plants. Here they grew in profusion, their large, shallow lobed, lustrous foliage entirely cloaking the surface of the hillside. Similar stands of *B. pinetorum* recurred within the next four or five miles along this stretch of the biosphere. Further along where the limestone cliffs were more exposed and sparsely covered with vegetation, and where I had expected to see more *B. pinetorum* as in Veracruz, there were none. Instead *B. heracleifolia* with its many variations in size, color and foliar form were precariously perched where nothing else besides lichen and moss wanted to or could find a foothold. Although we drove in and out among the hills in this section of Chiapas well into the early evening, often on tracks where a regular car would long have ceased to function, I saw no other species except for a single plant of an unidentified species with small, peltate leaves with shallow acuminate lobes. With dusk and thick fog beginning to shroud the hills we headed for the main road leading back east to San Cristobal.

Tired from the long day, we decided on a more leisurely pace for the following morning. Arriving at the main building slightly late for breakfast around 10:30 a.m., we were surprised by the bustle and activity around the several courtyards slowly filling with groups of Indians from nearby villages. The unrest in Oaxaca City was spreading into Chiapas, and we were alerted that if we wanted to get out of the city we had better leave at once or we would find ourselves trapped in San Cristobal as protesters planned to shut down the city as a gesture of solidarity with those who had shut down Oaxaca City and prompted the government to send military troops to restore order. We hurriedly packed and left for southern Chiapas, and as we drove I studied maps of the area in an effort to rethink my

plans for further exploration. Despite the numerous begonias recorded in Chiapas which supposedly has the largest number [approximately 45] recorded for any state in Mexico, locating begonias in Chiapas was becoming more of a challenge than I had foreseen.

The southern arm of the Sierra Madre mountains in Chiapas runs parallel to the Pacific coast, and since quite a number of species had been recorded in these hills I decided that we should find a town with a hotel as quickly as possible and explore as much as we could in the two remaining days. On the first day in southern Chiapas I decided to head north from Arriaga across the narrow width of the Sierras here, and then eastwards on their north flank towards Villa Corso in whose environs begonias had been recorded by Breedlove. I congratulated myself on this choice as some 12 km north of Arriaga I found a small leaved species scattered on a bare cliff side in a habitat which looked uncomfortably dry for begonias. However, there was a mid size stream in the vicinity and the plants no doubt received moisture from the nightly mists which rose up from the valley below. In exploring the stream banks I was surprised by the absence of any begonias on the boulders lining the stream. However, the same species grew in the crevices of the rough and massive rock pylons supporting a bridge, and a few scattered plants were visible on some boulders set back from the water's edge on the other side of the stream. Collecting some of the more mature but still green seed capsules, we continued north and then east on the northern flank of these mountains.

Although we drove through the mountains all day, several times detouring to follow narrow dirt tracks which cut into the mountains, all we encountered were endless stretches of ranches and

forest clearings where tall grasses grew. This disappointing and dreary landscape continued up to Villa Corso, and these northern slopes of the Sierras were far too dry and scrubby to induce begonias to survive. Just north of Villa Corso was yet another dirt road which according to my map cut through all the way to Tonala, our base on the southern slopes. Aware that this would be a more demanding route, we nevertheless opted for it both as it wound through the mountains where I hoped to find begonias, and as it would considerably shorten the long drive back to our hotel.

Hour after hour we drove slowly southwards in a landscape denuded of its forests which had been replaced by dry, scrubby ranches. Around dusk we reached Sierra Morena, a settlement comprising about a dozen small houses and barns on either side of the road. On the far side the road continued over a small wooden bridge across a stream. After walking up and down the bridge to make sure that the wooden boards were strong and stable, we warily drove across and found ourselves on a track barely visible in the nearly knee high grass. Quite suddenly there were dark storm clouds and fierce wind to add to our consternation as we drove on what appeared to be a pasture rather than a road. Luckily we were inching our way through the thick grass, dejected at the increasing likelihood of having to turn back, because suddenly we found ourselves within a dozen yards of an enormous, precipitous chasm dropping down to a valley far below us. In the gathering storm these desolate mountains seemed to pulsate with fearful possibilities, so wordlessly we headed back, and to my horror I realized that the wooden bridge we had crossed was now leaning to one side. Michael was so preoccupied in following a dirt track all but hidden under the knee high grass that



Above left is a B. heracleifolia. At right is another B. pinetorum while below we see the cover plant, B. breedlovei, up close with flower detail.



he did not notice this precarious tilt, and as he started to drive across I shut my eyes and prayed.

Despite yet another fruitless search we set off towards the east early the following morning.

In studying my maps I found that some hundred km in this direction was one of the few dirt roads which cut into these mountains from the south rather than the north, and I intended to explore along this section of the mountains on our final day in Chiapas. While the endless stretches of deforested ranch land in Chiapas had left me feeling hopelessly dispirited, it was the constant bracing against the strong wind in this part of Chiapas which posed immediate physical discomfort and danger. Not only did it hamper photography but broken branches were hurled across the road creating hazardous driving conditions, and in the hills a tree would come crashing down in a mini avalanche of rocks and debris. Within a few kilometers of turning off the main highway at Escuintal, we found our way blocked by a fallen tree which had brought down electrical wires. Despite several such delays we slowly penetrated deeper into the mountains towards El Triunfo. Along one stretch where massive boulders lined both sides of the road I encountered my first substantial colony of begonias since the Ocozocoautla biosphere. This large leaved species with white flowers and clusters of green seed capsules growing on and around the boulders and on nearby trees drooped in the bright noon day light and dry ambient air. This species, which has been identified with the help of Dr. Patrick McMillan as *B. plebeja*, formed substantial colonies

...Here in this section of the southern Sierras of Chiapas I found more *B. plebeja* than I had expected or hoped for...

on several hillsides, and in one section just above El Triunfo the all green leaved form was interspersed with the more familiar red blotched foliage of this species. In another section of these hills the all green leaved form of *B. plebeja* was interspersed with a form with striking red petioles and peduncles.

I had hunted in vain for *B. plebeja* on the borders of Oaxaca and Veracruz, several times tramping through sugar cane plantations to reach the low limestone hills where they had been recorded. Here in this section of the southern Sierras of Chiapas I found more *B. plebeja* than I had expected or hoped for. In examining the flowers and seed capsules later with Dr. McMillan we had to conclude that not only were all these large leaved begonias forms of *B. plebeja*, but the small leaved form I had found on bare rocks north of Arriaga was also a variant form of *B. plebeja*, its stunted growth probably the result of this relatively more inhospitable habitat. The identification of this small leaved form of *B. plebeja* is supported by Dr. Breedlove who documented *B. plebeja* 13 km north of Arriaga along Mexican highway 195, the exact spot where I found the scattered colony of small leaved *B. plebeja* growing on bare rocks [K. Burt-Utley, *A Revision of Central American Species of Begonia Section Gireoudia (Begoniaceae)*, 1985, p.106]. Footnotes on the same page also list other find spots where Breedlove documented *B. plebeja* in Chiapas. One of these find spots, 10 miles NE of Escuintla, is also where I documented both the all green leaved form and the one with maroon markings.

Having experienced several immensely fecund rain forest habitats

in Veracruz and Oaxaca, I had looked forward to more extensive stretches of the same in Chiapas. Some of the conditions which are hospitable to begonias are also conducive to agricultural pursuits, which have destroyed vast sections of Chiapas. Although the sweeping deforestation in Chiapas has been a deeply disturbing experience it has nonetheless impressed a greater sense of urgency with regard to documenting begonias before more of their habitat is swept away by the irreversible and unstoppable onslaught of human depredation.

Acknowledgement

Access to herbarium collections in Veracruz and Oaxaca has been invaluable in enabling me to locate begonias, and it was no less so in San Cristobal de Las Casas. I am indebted to Dr. Mario Ishiki, curator of the herbarium, ECOSUR [Center for Ecological Research of the Southeast] at The University of the Southern Border for allowing me free access to the begonia specimens in the herbarium. Both Dr. Ishiki and his wife, Erica, accompanied me to the herbarium and thoughtfully kept it open late in the evening till I finished. Despite this encroachment on their busy professional lives they remained unwaveringly cordial and interested in talking to me about begonias and their find spots before, during and after my visit to the herbarium.

I also extend my appreciation to Cheryl Lenert, Chairperson of the Grants Committee, and the board of the ABS for the financial support I received for this preliminary survey of Chiapas to document begonias.

Fall ABS Board Meeting

September Board meeting Sept. 4-7 2008. It is being held at the El Rancho Inn & Suites in Millbrae Calif. Phone number 1-800-826-5500. Ask for one of the rooms in the back. This is for a larger room. It is also a Best Western Inn. It is across the freeway from the S. F. Airport & they have 24-7 shuttle busses to the airport. The cost is \$95.50 per night. The board meeting will be on FRIDAY afternoon at 3:00 p.m. and the dinner will be that night at 7:00 p.m. Saturday we will go to Annie's Annuals and the Sacramento flower show and plant sale. Sat. night at Carol's home for a Greek dinner .[See also page 158]

Carol Notaras

ABS Conservation and Research Fund Grant Applications by Johanna Zinn

At the Houston Convention Board Meeting, Conservation and Research Funds were awarded to **Rekha Morris** and **Hieu Nguyen** for their collecting expeditions in the year 2009. Grant applications for the year 2010 need to reach me by November 1, 2008. If anyone wishes to apply for a grant, please contact me before November 1, 2008 so that I can e-mail or mail an application form to you, or answer any of your questions concerning the grant application process..

Thank you,

Johanna Zinn

jazinn@cox.net

4407 Jensen Place

Fairfax, VA 22032

Ft. Worth Botanical Garden Species Bank

Following up on concerns of Southwest Region members and at the request of the SWR Director, **Charles Henthorne** has made contact with the Botanic Garden's staff including the Director of the Botanic Garden itself. We are pleased to report that the Garden remains fully in support of begonias, the Species Bank, and the Research Collection under the leadership of new Begonia Curator, **Debbie Garrett**. The display greenhouse is open and when construction problems are overcome, a new propagation greenhouse will be opened.

Southwest Region has established a Botanic Garden Fund administered by the SWR Liaison to be appointed which the garden can call on for needs unmet by the City of Ft. Worth Budget. Donations from Branches and individuals are solicited to make this fund viable. We encourage members wishing to contribute to the FWBG financially to do so through the SWR fund. Checks should be made out to the SWR with the notation at the bottom left of the check to read "for the FWBG fund."

In the meantime, Debbie asks that all growers take a look at the species currently in their collection and then send plants or cuttings of any additional species they may be growing so that the collection may be enhanced. This list follows:

Fort Worth Species Bank Listing

(edited by Jack Golding, May 23, 2008)

Begonia

acetosa

acida
aconitifolia
aconitifolia 'Hildegard Schneider'
acutifolia
admirabilis
affinis
albopicta
albopicta 'Rosea'
angularis
arborescens var. *oxyphylla*
barkeri
beddomei
boisiana
boliviensis
bowerae
brevirimsa
bufoderma
carolineifolia
castaneifolia
chitoensis
compta
conchifolia
conchifolia var. *rubrimacula*
convolvulacea
coriacea
coriacea x *rajah*
crassicaulis
cubensis
cucullata
deliciosa
dichotoma
dichroa
dietrichiana
dipetala
domingensis
dominicalis
dregei
echinosepala

<i>egregia</i>	<i>meridensis</i>	<i>taiwaniana</i>
<i>emeiensis</i>	<i>metallica</i>	<i>tayabensis</i>
<i>eminii</i>	<i>minor</i>	<i>teuscheri</i>
<i>epipsila</i>	<i>multinervia</i>	<i>thiemei</i>
<i>fagifolia</i>	<i>nelumbiifolia</i>	<i>tomentosa</i>
<i>fernando-costae</i>	<i>obliqua</i>	<i>tonduzii</i>
<i>foliosa</i>	<i>obscura</i>	<i>ulmifolia</i>
<i>foliosa</i> var. <i>miniata</i>	<i>odeteiantha</i>	<i>undulata</i>
<i>friburgensis</i>	<i>odorata</i>	<i>undulata</i> Schott
<i>glabra</i>	<i>odorata</i> var. <i>rosea</i>	<i>valida</i>
<i>goegoensis</i>	<i>oxyphylla</i>	<i>venosa</i>
<i>grandis</i> subsp. <i>grandis</i>	<i>paleata</i>	<i>versicolor</i>
<i>guadeuensis</i>	<i>parilis</i>	<i>vitifolia</i>
<i>hatacoa</i>	<i>parva</i>	<i>wollnyi</i>
<i>heracleifolia</i>	<i>paulensis</i>	
<i>herbacea</i>	<i>peltata</i>	
<i>hernandioides</i>	<i>peperomioides</i>	U006
<i>hispida</i>	<i>petasitifolia</i>	U007
<i>holtonis</i>	<i>platanifolia</i>	U008
<i>hookeriana</i>	<i>plebeja</i>	U010
<i>humbertii</i>	<i>polygonoides</i>	U025
<i>hydrocotylifolia</i>	<i>popenoei</i>	U031
<i>incarnata</i>	<i>prismatocarpa</i>	U043
<i>involutate</i>	<i>pseudolubbersii</i>	U067
<i>juliana</i>	<i>radicans</i>	U125
<i>kellermanii</i>	<i>reniformis</i>	
<i>kenworthyae</i>	<i>robusta</i>	
<i>leathermaniae</i>	<i>roxburghii</i> [(male and	
<i>leptoptera</i>	<i>female)</i>	
<i>limmingheana</i>	<i>salicifolia</i>	
<i>lindleyana</i>	<i>sanguine</i>	
<i>listada</i>	<i>scabrida</i>	
<i>longipetiolata</i>	<i>scharffiana</i>	
<i>loranthoides</i>	<i>scharffii</i>	
<i>ludwigii</i>	<i>sericoneura</i>	
<i>luxurians</i>	<i>serratipetala</i>	
<i>macduffiana</i>	<i>solananthera</i>	
<i>malabarica</i>	<i>solimutata</i>	
<i>manicata</i>	<i>squamulosa</i>	
<i>manicata</i> var. <i>aureo-</i>	<i>strigillosa</i>	
<i>maculata</i>	<i>subvillosa</i>	
<i>masoniana</i>	<i>sulcata</i>	

Attention Begonia Terrarium Growers

by *Wanda Macnair, Buxton Branch*

Have you ever been elbowed out of a convention plant sale at the terrarium plant table? Although the chairmen are thinking of assigning places in the plant sales line according to registration number, (and you can get a good start by watching the website) next year some of these special plants requiring an enclosed atmosphere may be held back to be placed on the table 10 or 15 minutes into the sale. This is to help make it fair for everyone.

Now, if you have a very humid greenhouse, you already have your enclosed atmosphere, but these plants are always very desirable and in short supply. One way we could solve this problem is for anyone who grows terrarium plants to attempt to grow 5-10 plants to bring to a convention or get-together.

They are really very easy to grow if you use long-fibered sphagnum, mixed with a bit of perlite, as in the Thompson book, or even live sphagnum moss. With this medium it would be difficult to grow in the open. The main factors to remember are that terrarium plants do NOT need wet feet. They enjoy the extra humidity around their foliage. You also need to keep them out of any direct sun's rays.

If you are a member-at-large or from a branch that isn't likely to have a convention, this is an excellent way to offer your help at someone else's convention. It all aids ABS in the long run, and it helps all of us to keep these very special species, or cultivars growing.

Years ago at the Eastern Region Convention in Boston, I was impressed with how **Charles Jaros** and his mother, **Helene**, obtained boxes of a certain size to fit under the airline seats, to donate plants for the plant sale. That inspired me and I

have tried to continue that pattern.

Leora and **Charles Henthorne** and **Johanna Zinn** are especially known for spreading terrarium plants around the country and for bringing a large number of plants to convention sales.

We hope they will be able to continue this.

Although you might start your babies in clear plastic cylinders, it is still best to place them in Ziploc type bags for transit. That way they don't pose as great a problem for the buyers to transport them home. Before packing, open up the bags a little and blow extra air into the bags. We usually take an extra suitcase each (for now) with some sturdy smaller boxes inside. We also use carry-on cases. Then we have more room for transporting other plants home.

If you have questions about this subject, you could contact me at 617-876-1356, (no answering machine) or at wmacnair@msn.com. Let's see if we can spread more of these plants around the country.

**Do you
know the different
funds that ABS maintains
to which Branches and
Members
can contribute
to promote and
preserve
begonias?
See page 156.**

Cane Begonias: Pinching and Pruning

by Dorothy Patrick

In later pages you will find the feature on 'Easy to Grow Canes' so it seems appropriate to use the extra pages available issue to quote from Dorothy Patrick on their care. Dorothy's booklet Tips for Begonia Beginners, which is a collection of her articles from the Begonian, continues to be one of the best resources around. These are excerpts from that booklet.

Particularly with the canes, it is easy to point out why a begonia should, from early in its life, be pinched regularly and pruned occasionally. Have you ever seen an "angel wing" begonia that is 3 to 4 feet tall, has maybe 2 or 3 stems in the pot, and a cluster of 4 to 6 leaves on top of each tall stem? That means you are looking at maybe 1 1/2 to 3 feet of bare stem. This begonia is crying out to be pruned. Here is how I would do it:

Today I would water the plant thoroughly. Then tomorrow I would go down each stem to the point where there are 3 or 4 nodes above the soil level, and cut off each stem at that point. The stems should be firm from the recent watering, and - although this is changing the subject - I would set up about 6 small pots (maybe 3" pots) with moist soil. Keeping the down end down, I would sink at least 1 node into the rooting pot, leaving 2 to 3 nodes above the soil. I would probably sink 2 or 3 cuttings per pot, depending on how large the stems are. I would go on cutting this stem until it was used up. I would have 2 or 3 tops with leaves, and I would use those also, trimming the foliage so that each cutting had no more than 2 or 3 leaves. Cane cuttings do not have to have leaves on them. All of the pots need to be placed

in good light, not sunlight, and covered with a clear covering (such as a produce bag) to provide a mini-greenhouse effect. I would like to add one point on rooting cuttings: I use 1/2 vermiculite, 1/2 perlite for starting cuttings, not soil, and I water the pots from the bottom, setting them in a pan of water until they are moist clear to the top, then they go back into the plastic bag enclosures.

Now, back to the parent plant. It is going to do two things, send up shoots from the roots (called basal growth) and send out side shoots, or branches. From now on you should try to pinch out regularly (with your fingernails or manicure scissors) the growth point on the end of each branch or stem. Look closely at the end of each branch and stem, and you will see a small dagger-shaped, tightly furled new leaf. Take it out. Pinching this growing point causes the plant to send hormones back down the stem or branch, and that brings about more basal shoots and branches.

Begonias thrive on being cut or pinched, it only makes them fuller and more beautiful. Don't ever hesitate to cut back a branch that keeps your begonia from being symmetrical or rounded.

Cutting out selective stems also creates better air circulation. This applies not only to canes, even though I used a cane as an example, it holds true in varying degrees for all the different groups. Any time you cut a piece of the plant out, put that piece down to root. If you don't have room for another plant of the same variety, give it to a friend, make a new friend with it, or trade it for a begonia you don't have.

When I had a greenhouse I had a set way of doing this. I put all my begonias out

Continued on page 152.

In Memory: John Howell

He was born in Camden, Arkansas on January 1, 1931. He was named John Lincoln Howell.

After receiving his BS and MS in Geophysics from the California Institute of Technology, John came to San Antonio, Texas to join in *Howell Drilling Company* in 1954. He successfully developed oil properties throughout South Texas, and rose to President of the company.

After his retirement in 1987, he turned his attention to his long-time love of plants. He was in the first class of Master Gardeners in Bexar County. He joined the Alamo Begonia Branch, and became our friend and fellow grower.

John tackled everything he did with passion and great energy. He served as President of the *Men's Garden Club*, President of the *Alamo Begonia Branch* of the *American Begonia Society*, and attended many ABS board meetings as our National Director.

With his background in engineering, he created a unique growing area for his begonias with a high domed cover over his swimming pool and the surrounding area. He installed a misting system and grew hundreds of large begonias. He propagated by cuttings, leaf wedges, and seeds. Everyone in the begonia world of collecting and conservation shared seeds with John, because he could grow them successfully. He was known for his generosity. At the end of a plant show his large plants were sold by silent auction, with the proceeds going to the ABS or the Southwest Region of the ABS.

In 1990 John, and his wife Mary Carolyn, hosted a tour and luncheon in their home and garden area for the *American Begonia Society* convention held in San Antonio that spring. On two occasions in later years, they did the same

for the Southwest Region of the ABS Get-Togethers.

He hybridized Rex begonias to be heat tolerant and fragrant. He named several of his cane hybrids after his friends in the Alamo club

John had been inactive for several years because of health problems. He died on March 17, 2008. He will always be remembered as an enthusiastic and prolific grower, and a wonderful friend.

Alamo Branch ABS

John Howell was the ideal ABS member giving us more than we could ever return. I cannot remember attending a convention where John did not auction off his exhibit plants with the funds from this always given to the conservation fund. He was a quiet hybridizer who never sought recognition for his plants although many of them were beautiful and hardy. He grew Rexes where few dared to try. John also introduced us to a number of new species especially the beautiful Venezuelan species now known as B. U402. Every SWR Get-Together and ABS Convention in that region was resplendent with plants grown by John Howell. His garden was always on the tours and a visit to his backyard where begonias grew in a lush setting provided by a swimming pool enclosed in a greenhouse was a very special treat. John was a rare begoniac and we will miss him.

Freda Holley

In the Public Eye

by Peter Sharp, Australia

The Royal Botanic Garden (RBG) in Sydney is, so far as I know, the only Australian Botanic Garden which actively grows and displays the *Begoniaceae* as landscape plants. This may also be a uniquely world-wide phenomenon. The RBG has two large garden beds, each 100 feet by 30, containing the full range of non-tuberous begonias used in a normal garden setting. Also, a number of begonias are now being grown throughout the RBG to complement most beautifully the plants to which particular garden beds are dedicated.

This story began in 1990 when the RBG obtained a number of begonias from the quarantine service (these having been sent here illegally), and not having staff trained or skilled in the care of this

wonderful plant family, an appeal to the New South Wales (NSW) Begonia Society was answered by my wife, Shirley, and me being 'volunteered' for the job of advising and helping. Since then what began as a fortnightly visit by the two of us has developed to become a team of seven volunteers giving time three days each week. Sadly, Shirley passed away in 2005, but I have continued with the task which for me, due to rapidly advancing years, has now become one mainly of advising, but helping where I possibly can with such things as garden design and propagation. As the volunteer effort has increased so has the begonia collection grown, from a few plants sharing a small glasshouse with some African violets to a collection of some 160 species and 65 cultivars. To



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support the outdoor use of begonias a large glass house has been made available for propagation and growing-on purposes, and this also gives us the opportunity to provide a window display of potted begonias for public enjoyment.

Our primary objective has always been to establish a species bank of begonias, but parallel with that, we wanted to help popularize begonias as landscape plants. The species bank is a reality, albeit at an early stage; the opportunity to grow begonias as landscape plants came in 1994 when we were given approval for some experimental plantings. These were most successful,

and we went on, over the next 18 months, to develop our first large scale planting of begonias in the open garden and Bed

30 became a begonia haven, solely begonias, save for the trees providing the all important canopy. They thrived, and we had made our point - begonias are very hardy and most beautiful outdoor garden plants, here in Sydney at least.

However, we wanted more – we dreamt of using begonias as part of a broad garden scheme to complement other popular garden plants in a variety of situations. Bed 31, adjacent to our established begonia garden, was allocated to us and the realization of our dream began.

Bed 31 is home to some beautiful trees which provide various densities of shade, a situation of which we took advantage when planning the garden layout and plantings. The oldest of these,

reportedly the oldest planted tree in the Gardens, is a flowering ash, *Fraxinus ornus*, which we thought was nearly dead, but which has now taken a new lease on life and is playing a full part in providing shade for our garden. A huge Chilean wine palm, *Jubea Chilensis*, is a source of great interest to all our visitors, soaring many metres upwards on its vast trunk which resembles the foreleg of some gigantic elephant; it stands adjacent to one of the most popular of the Garden's trees, *Backhousia citridora*, whilst several *Crepe Myrtles* make interesting patterns with their fascinating trunks and branches.

Our concept became a reality, and bed 31 now comprises a number of gardens.

First we have a Shrubbery in full and part sun planted with

cane-like including *Begonia aconitifolia*, *angularis*, *coccinea*, *diadema*, *undulata* and 'Sophie Cecile', together with such beautiful garden gems as *canna lilies*, *tree dahlias*, *vireya rhododendrons*, 'Red Tower' gingers and *philodendrons*. All these are closely mass planted, a system which we use for all our outdoor plantings when available quantities allow and which we find gives great results. The begonias seem to thrive on close company and the growth in the first ten months of the garden has been spectacular. *B. convolvulaceae* is used as a ground cover in the shrubbery and is growing rampantly, requiring frequent pruning to keep it from climbing every shrub in sight! The provision of a ration of controlled release fertilizer in each planting hole has no doubt helped

...Our primary objective has always been to establish a species bank of begonias, but parallel with that, we wanted to help popularize begonias as landscape plants...

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Above, a section of the Cottage Garden with B. 'Oyster Leaf' in flower and hedge of B. arborescens var oxyphylla in background. Below is B. 'Concord' sprawling over a rock in the Foliage Garden. Photos by Peter Sharp.



with the very strong growth of everything we have planted.

Next to the Shrubbery is our version of the Cottage Garden – a delightful collection of this and that including *Begonia polyantha*, *lobata* (climbing on a frame), ‘Coral West’, ‘Yorke’s Delight’, ‘Hitomi’, ‘Shirayuki’, ‘Island Gem’ and many more, together with *violets*, *pansies* and *rosemary* and lots of other old favourites. There is also a garden seat dedicated to

**...We continue to increase
our holding of species and
welcome any contributions
of seed, cuttings or plants...**

me courtesy of the RBG – a gesture very much appreciated. The Cottage Garden is divided from the Foliage Garden by a hedge of *B. arborescence* var *oxyphylla* which is doing very well indeed, frequent pruning being the order of the day.

The Foliage Garden stretches for some twelve metres along the eastern edge from the Cottage Garden to the Full Sun Garden and is filled with many plants having unusual, interesting or colourful leaves. The begonias in this garden include such eye catchers as *Begonia carolineifolia*, *crassicaulis*, *luxurians*, *megaptera*, *scharffiana*, *metallica*, *fernando costae*, *manicata aureo-maculata*, ‘Silver Sal’, ‘Purly Wurly’, ‘Green Luxury’ and ‘Caloundra Coast’ together with bromeliads around the base of the *Chilean wine palm*, and *fruticosa*, *acornis*, and *hosta* providing interesting contrasts. *Umbillifera variegata* and several *coleus* with a group of *B.* ‘Charm’ make a most effective planting.

A central walk runs from the Shrubbery and traverses the Shade Garden which also takes in the western edge of

the bed. The walk is bordered by spring flowering rhizomatous: *Bs. manicata*, U054, ‘Erythrophylla’, ‘Oyster Leaf’, and ‘Immense’; with a large planting of *impatiens niarmi amensis* beneath a *brunfelsia australis* providing a beautiful contrast. This walk leads to the Full Sun Garden. Others in the Shade Garden include *Bs. acutifolia*, *scharffii*, *parilis*, *paranaensis*, *sanguinea* and *listada*, with ‘Silver Jewel’ looking quite stunning set amongst *maidenhair fern*. Other plants such as *cycads*, *blechnums*, *Amazon lilies* and many, many more shade lovers complete this spectacular gathering of plants which grow in the depths of the forests and on the cooler heights.

Finally we have the Full Sun Garden across the southern end of the bed where there’s a massed border of *B.* ‘Island Gem’, with plantings of *Bs. acutifolia*,

**...Bed 31 is the realisation
of a dream and it is most
satisfying...**

coccinea, *minor*, *venosa* and ‘Titan’ complemented by *wisterias*, *agapanthus*, a large *lonicera fragrantissima* and a somewhat straggly *poinsettia*. A newly planted *poinsiana*, making heavy weather of it at the moment, will hopefully provide a mottled shade in the summer months although all our plantings here are full-sun lovers.

Bed 31 is the realisation of a dream and it is most satisfying that it has now taken its place amongst the many wonders of the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney. We continue to increase our holding of species and welcome any contributions of seed, cuttings or plants.

Conservation Comments

by Bill Claybaugh
Conservation Chairman, ABS

B. brevirimosa culture and propagation

One of the more desirable begonias in many private collections is the species from Paupa New Guinea, *B. brevirimosa*. Everyone is immediately attracted to its vividly red and green leaves which often exceeds nine inches in length. This plant is considered "shrub-like" for show purposes, but really behaves more like a trailing scandent when left to its own desires. The species is well described by **Mark Tebbitt** in his new book "Begonias, Cultivation, Identification and Natural History", as are other variations which are commonly referred to as *B. exotica*, *B. brevirimosa* subsp. *exotica*, and *B. brevirimosa* 'Edinburgh'. Rather than repeat this information or get into a discussion of the taxonomy of this variety, I will concentrate on cultural requirements and propagation techniques.

Cultural requirements.

First and foremost, the plant likes a warm and humid environment. I grow my parent plant in the house in a covered 35 gallon fish tank with a 40 watt florescent light in a north window. The tank has one inch of wet perlite in the bottom and the plant is in a six inch plastic pot. Three other begonias of different varieties (*B. amphioxus*, *coriacea*, and *goegoensis*) are also kept in the same tank. Left to its own desires, the *B. brevirimosa* grows several feet in length and meanders about. In this humid and warm environment, many of the nodes put on aerial roots. When these roots contact the bottom perlite, additional roots

develop and the plant is re-established with a new root system. This goes on and on with some branching occurring. This growth habit is exactly what I would expect from a trailing scandent type begonia. This makes me wonder if perhaps the ABS has this plant misplaced in it's show classifications and maybe it should be grown and shown as a trailer.

I also grow this plant out of a terrarium but only where I can keep the humidity fairly high. All of my cuttings, after becoming established, are kept in my shade house in open plastic boxes containing wet perlite and/or a perlite-peatmoss in the bottom. This environment is less humid than described above and has greater temperature fluctuations. Regardless, the young plants seem to develop well and grow. It is only when the humidity falls too low, probably below 50 percent, and cold weather sets in, that the plants suffer and decline.

Propagation by stem cuttings

B. brevirimosa, like all begonias can be propagated by stem cuttings. The usual technique is to cut off a long piece of stem then divide it into pieces containing four to five nodes. These stem cuttings are then placed into potting medium, one end up, the other end down and with medium covering two nodes. Almost any combination of perlite and peatmoss will work as a potting medium. I personally like a 50/50 mix of the two which gives both good aeration and good water retention. The cuttings are then put into a terrarium environment such as a plastic "shoe box" covered with Saran wrap, under florescent lights or in a window, and kept at 65 to 75 degrees F. Within two months the cutting will root and new growth will show.

Another technique that seems to work well is to divide the plant stem into



Bill Claybaugh says of his photos: One is on multiple plants (below) made by stem cuttings, in their "humid house". One is of a stem cutting laid on its side and rooting at both nodes. One is of multiple leaf wedges rooting on paper.



pieces containing only two nodes. These small pieces are then just laid on the potting medium without any effort to cover any part of the stem. The cuttings are then treated as described above. After about two months, roots and small plantlets are formed at both nodes on the cutting. With time the original stem disappears leaving two well established plants in the pot. This method gives one plant per node, a very economical method of propagation.

Propagation by leaf cuttings

B. brevirimosa is one of those unique begonias that are not rhizomatous but can still be propagated by leaf cuttings. All the common techniques used for rhizomatous leaves can be applied to the leaves of this variety too. I commonly root a leaf stem in perlite/peatmoss mixtures being sure the cutting is in a humid environment. I also find the "propagation on paper" technique earlier described in the *Begonian* (Sept-Oct 2007, May-June 2008) to be very effective. From a single stem cutting of four or five nodes with leaves, I typically get one rooted stem, one or two rooted leaves, and 10 -20 small plantlets from leaf pieces.

Overall, this begonia variety is a challenge to grow and maintain. It's large size, sprawling growth habit, and demand-

ing cultural requirements makes it difficult to grow outside of a greenhouse. However, with some ingenuity and by frequent propagation, I always seem to have several plants around the house.

Is there a plant you want and cannot find?

If there is a plant that you want and cannot find, why not write a letter to the editor about it? Readers are good sources for plants not grown commercially.

Be sure to express your willingness to pay for shipping. If you have anything you can trade, list that as well.

Most importantly, remember to follow up, let the person who responds know that you received the plant and how it is doing. That grower will usually be a good source of information on that plant if you have any problem growing it.

If all else fails, try the internet as well. I'm amazed at the number of the more unusual begonias now on sale through E-bay.

While you are online, be sure to visit our new, ever changing email site on which **Julie Vanderwilt** has done such a marvelous, amazing job - its beautiful!

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IN THE MAILBOX

by Greg Sytch, Horticultural
Correspondent

POTTING MIXES - What to use?

Lately I have done some programs at garden clubs, and the number one question that always comes up is what to use when potting begonias. Now, this question does not have a definite answer as different mixes are needed in various parts of the country depending on the local climate.

Here in Florida, we use a fast-draining potting mix due to our higher humidity and excessive summer rainfall. Nothing kills a begonia faster than sitting in heavy, wet soil. There are numerous brands available, both in retail and through a supply house. Whatever you choose, make sure it is lightweight. If not, add perlite to help with the porosity of the mix.

I use either ProMix HD or Fafard Custom Mix, both of which have added perlite. The mixes drain well and can be used straight from the bag for larger plants. However, smaller plants have more delicate roots. For begonias in pots under 6" / 1 gallon, I add an extra scoop of perlite. I have previously mentioned the recipe I use for cuttings, but allow me to clarify this

based on seasons:

Because of the lower light of winter, lower temperatures and lengthier time needed to root cuttings during winter, it is essential that a mix be well-drained. I have been using two parts perlite, one part fluffy peat moss and a scoop of vermiculite from Nov-Feb. Once days lengthen here, and begin to warm up, I make my propagation mix half and half so it holds a little more moisture. Heat zaps moisture quickly.

Yes, I use Rootone on my cuttings, but it is only added insurance. There are different gels that you can use, also aiding in rooting. The most important aspect is a light soil, that is never wet. Spraying frequently with my hose in the shadehouse increases humidity. The cuttings are also placed on the floor near the edge of the benches so light is filtered, and in winter the ground stays a little warmer for rooting. I grow in open shadehouses with no cold protection here in Tampa Bay.

Always feel free to send in your questions, or just check in for a little advice. Gregory Sytch, 6329 Alaska Avenue, New Port Richey, FL 34653-4301; Ph: 727-841-9618; gsytych@cs.com

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Begonia Books:

**Know Your Begonias* by Jack Krempin --\$47.
**Growing Begonias* by Peter Sharp -- \$29.50
(book prices include U.S. shipping. International
ship is extra.)

*Begonias *Gesneriads *Tropicals

under the trees in the spring and let them vacation out of doors. They were so big and lusty when fall arrived that the same plants wouldn't fit back into the space they had come out of - so every begonia was pruned, and repotted if need be.

Canes were handled in this manner: if the plant was very full, I first cut out any "old wood" (brown stems), right at the soil level. This stimulates the basal growth of new canes. Then I started around the outside of the plant, pruning all outer canes down to 3-4 nodes above the soil (when you cut, by the way, you cut just about 1/4 to 1/2 inch above the top node you want to save.). I worked in toward the center then, leaving the inner canes taller than the outer ones, and not all the center canes the exact same height.

This is the perfect time to look your pruned plant over thoroughly: you don't want to carry a summertime critter into the house! Clean all the debris off the top soil level. It is easy then to lift the plant out of the pot and see if it is rootbound. Kathlynn Calvert, champion Oklahoma grower, told us once in the Southwest Region newsletter that she not only cut the foliage of her begonias back but "root-pruned" them if needed. I never got brave enough to try that; I just moved the plant up into the next pot size if it was rootbound. If it wasn't, I repotted it in the same pot, adding top soil if needed. I am a firm believer in another of Kathlynn's recommendations: watering a pruned plant with a Super Thrive solution - 1 drop to a gallon of water.

Three of My Favorite Canes

by Johanna Kitson,
Begonia Society of Palm Beaches, FL

Over the years I have grown mostly rhizomatous begonias, however, there are a few canes that have caught my eye. Species begonias are especially attractive to me with *Begonia maculata* var. *wightii* being my very favorite cane. There is just something about the maroon backside of the slightly wavy leaf contrasting with the darker green top and those elegant white spots. Large white blossoms compose a striking inflorescence.

While the Thompson book considers *Begonia albo-picta* to be a low growing plant, in South Florida it does not stop at two feet. It certainly does not grow to be ten or twelve feet tall as the canes often mistakenly called "pink and white *coccineas*" sometimes do, but a four-foot

high plant is not unusual. While it has better color growing in more shade than sun, I have seen it growing pretty well in very bright light. The profuse whitish-pink flowers are quite angelic looking peaking out amongst the tiny spotted and dainty medium green leaves.

And, for my third favorite cane I must pick *Begonia* 'Little Miss Mummy,' one of a plethora of **Brad Thompson** hybrids in this world! The wavy dark leaf, the large profuse heads of pale-pink flowers, those raised spots!! Need I say more? 'Little Miss Mummy' is a 1992 cross between *Begonia* 'Jumbo Jet' and *Begonia* 'Amelia' and was registered in 2000 as #979. Everyone should have this one in his or her collection.

Easy to Grow Canes

by Freda Holley

This article is a bit different. Because it was convention time and I knew everyone was preparing for that I did not press fir articles, but decided to interview some of those attending the convention from various locations about the easiest to grow canes for them in their area. Although I could not get everyone, of course, those below did not have to think long before they could tell me about their favorites in this category.

Brenda Andrews from Freeport, Texas which is a windy, bay area location says she finds *Begonia* 'Lucerne', 'Hazel's Front Porch', 'Pink Diana', and 'Sophie Cecile' all easy to grow.

From San Antonio, **Lucille Dyess** chose *B.* 'Audrey Brenda', *B.* 'Sophie Cecile' and *B.* 'Joy Porter'. **June Shawver** adds that *B.* 'Cracklin' Rosie', *B.* 'Looking Glass', and *B.* 'Argento Guttata' have all grown well for her. **Johnnie Shepherd** says she also finds *B.* 'Looking Glass' to be an easy grower.

From Spring, TX, **Mildred Love** chose *B.* 'Lucerne' and *B.* 'Sophie Cecile', but added *B.* 'Torch' to her list.

Jane Anderson of Kingwood, TX also finds *B.* 'Torch' and 'Lucerne' to be easy growers, but her favorite choice was *B. dichroa*, a plant she grows that was

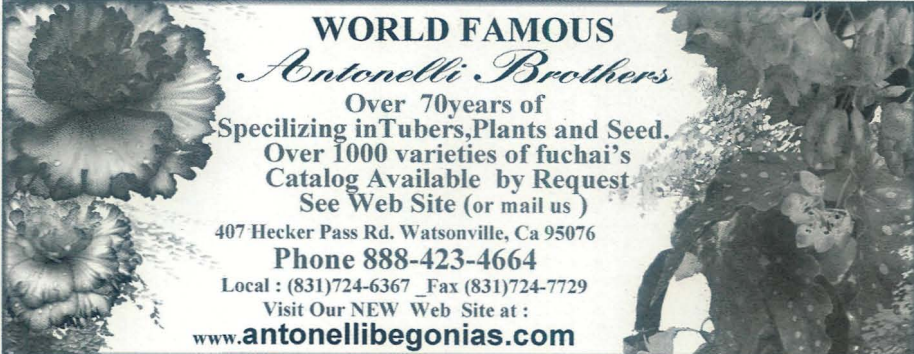
handed down from her grandmother - yes, the same plant! Now that one deserves to be on the list.

From California, **Margaret Fisher** and **Mary Sakamoto** agree that easy growers in their area are *B.* 'Sophie Cecile', *B.* 'Irene Nuss', and *B.* 'Jumbo Jet'.

As you can see, the begonias that keep coming up on the list are *B.* 'Lucerne' and *B.* 'Sophie Cecile'. This confirms my feeling that when a begonia has been around a very long time as has *B.* 'Lucerne', a major reason has to be that it is both easy to grow and easy to propagate. It is odd to me that all the **Belva Kusler** canes that I have grown including *B.* 'Sophie Cecile' are always supremely easy to grow in any location; this despite the fact that they were developed in the far north midwest.

I was surprised that the **Irene Nuss** hybrids such as *B.* 'Irene Nuss', *B.* 'Jumbo Jet', and all her other canes did not appear on more lists since these, like the Belva Kusler hybrids, I have observed to be growing well in every location I have lived or visited.

I have found only one of my favorite hybrid canes that didn't grow well in any of the various locations I have lived except



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Earning the title easy to grow: Clockwise from above left, B. 'Irene Nuss', B. 'Sophie Cecille', B. 'Audrey Brenda', and B. 'Looking Glass'. Mary Bucholtz took the photos of all of these



except of B. 'Audrey Brenda' which is a file photo without a photographer identified.

Oklahoma where it originated. That is the Caviness hybrid, *B. 'Kathlynn Calvert'* which for some reason thrives in the heat and dryer climate there. Some canes such as *B. lubbersii* and, I suspect, its offspring will not like heat and humidity. There are so few examples, however, of canes that will not grow almost everywhere, I urge all new growers to try them all to find the

ones that particularly like the climate and growing conditions that they can provide. I can almost guarantee you that you will find a lot of these! And although I find it difficult to get good bloom because plants have to be shielded so much from the sun, some will bloom and I will always enjoy the leaves. Many have such beautiful leaves that you will not miss the flowers!

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The seed fund is a service to members only. It is a privilege of your membership.

Please self pollinate your species begonias, collect the seeds and send them to the seed fund. We depend on your contributions of seed to make a wider variety of species available to the members.

The following species' are now available thru the Seed Fund. Please see **Rekha Morris'** article in the May/June 2008 issue of the *Begonian*. Page 86. It contains descriptions of the listed species. Thank you Rekha Morris for providing this seed from India.

Rarely listed: \$2.00/ packet

RM-AR-415 *B. aborensis*

**RM-AR-550 *B. acetosella* var.
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RM-AR-515 *B. U544 = B. palmata*

**RM-AR-488 *B. silletensis* subsp.
*silletensis***

**RM-SI-310 *B. dipetala* [with red
veins] ***

**RM-SI-301 *B. dipetala* [with bur-
gundy reverse foliage] ***

RM-SI-525 *B. U525*

RM-SI-316 *B. U549*

*These temporary descriptive phrases will be replaced by a Cultivar Epithet after these characters are proven stable in the plants grown from these seed.

Also, we have the following species from **Anne and Gene Salisbury:**

B. karwinskyana (Please see Rekha's article in the Jan/February 2004 issue of the *Begonian*. Page 6.) Rarely listed: \$2.00/ packet.

Remember you can always request seed from past listings. The January/February issue lists all species we have available at the beginning of the year. If you have seed not listed, please send us some to share with others.

Packets of seeds of species and U numbers are \$1.50. All packets of cultivars (including open pollinated) seeds are 50¢ per packet. Very rare seeds and newly collected seeds will be \$2.00 or more per packet. California residents please

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All other international mail: 1-12 packets, \$1.85; 13-24, \$2.68; 25-36, \$3.68; 37-48, \$4.68; 49-60, \$5.68.

DISCLAIMER: The seeds distributed by the seed fund are identified as received from the donors. The species names (in italics) reported here are correct based on the latest information from *BEGONIACEAE*, Ed. 2; Golding, and Wasshausen. Hybrid names are made consistent with the "ABS Check List of Begonia Hybrids" edited by **Howard Berg** dated 9/13/2005.

ABS Funds that Support Begonias

ABS has a number of different funds for the purpose of supporting begonias from their discovery to their description. Donations from Branches and members are encouraged. Some members may choose to remember the ABS funds in their wills. These funds are:

Conservation Fund: This is the fund from which research or collection trips are funded. Each donation is credited in full to this account. Currently it is very low because of the number of new collection efforts that have emerged in the last few years. As rain forest destruction continues unabated, the rush to try and preserve begonias yet undiscovered races on.

Millie Thompson Publication Fund: This fund assists in the publication of new writings on begonias. It is named for Mildred Thompson whose writing we all know and love and which was such a great contribution to the begonia world. She shared with me how difficult it was for her and Ed to put together the funds to get their work in print. She was pleased to have this fund named in her honor.

Thelma O'Reilly Reprint Fund: This fund assists in the publication of out-of-print materials that are deemed to assist in the study of begonias. It is of course named for Thelma O'Reilly famous for her writings and her work on the unidentified species.

Contributions to any fund may be sent to Treasurer Carol Notaras made out to ABS with a notation that it is for one of these funds.

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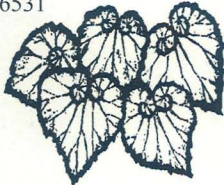
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August 15-16, 2008, Gazebo, Santa Barbara, California. Annual Gazebo Show - its going to be spectacular. Contact: Mike Flaherty at 805-969-4367 or mikeflaherty@cox.net.

August 24, 2008 from 9-4 p.m Palos Verdes Begonia Show and Sale at the South Coast Botanic Gardens, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula 90274, We are having a judged show and fabulous plant sale. For information contact Carol Knight, cknight@lausd.net

September 4-7, 2008, ABS Annual Meeting, Rate: \$95.50 for a double. Ask for back rooms at Best Western El Rancho Motel, 1100 El Camino Real. Millbrae, CA 650-742-5597. ABS meeting will be on Friday with a bus trip to Sacramento or Napa/Sonoma on Saturday. Contact: Carol Notaras: cnotaras@sbcglobal.net, 415-931-4912.

April 29-May 3, 2009, Palm Beach, Florida, 2009 ABS Convention. More exciting info to come!

The Begonian

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