



THE
BEGONIAN

May/June 2012

The Begonian

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.



Stemless - *B. acaulis* pg. 94



B. micranthera new variety from Vallegrande pg. 97



Streptocarpus 'Berries and Cream' at the Jardin Botanique de Montreal pg. 105



B. barsalouxiae pg. 112

Contents

- 84 ABS Convention 2012
- 85 President's Message
- 86 New Cultivars: *B. 'Challenger'*
- 87 Art In Gardening
- 88 Binders for The Begonian
- 88 ABS Nominations for Awards - Corrections
- 90 *B. 'Jade Elegance'*
- 91 A Word with You: Pop Quiz - Answers
- 92 Getting Ready for the Growing Season
- 93 Do You Do Micropotting?
- 94 A Word with You: Clueless on Stemless
- 96 *Begonia perakensis*
- 97 The Begonias of Vallegrande, Bolivia
- 103 Unusual Stamen Morphology Reported from Two Species of Andean Begonia
- 105 Jardin Botanique de Montreal
- 106 *B. dipetala* Graham
- 112 The Comeback Kid
- 116 Clayton M. Kelly Seed Fund
- 117 Westchester Begonia Society 53rd Annual Begonia Show & Sale

FRONT COVER: A new variant of *B. micranthera* with deeply lobed leaves from Vallegrande, Bolivia from Mark Tebbitt pg. 99

BACK COVER: *B. bipinnatifida* at the Jardin Botanique de Montreal. pg. 67



B. 'Lana' flower Photo by Kit Jeans Mouger

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ABS Convention 2012

San Diego Local 9580

Celebrating Our Local Legends

August 8 - 12 2012

*Come help us celebrate the
ABS at 80 and our Local
Begonia Legends.*



We are arranging legendary speakers for the seminars: Dr. Ching-I Peng, Mark Tebbitt, Rekha Morris, and others to be announced.

Tours on Wednesday: A and G Nursery, Kartuz Greenhouses, Chuck Ades' home for lunch, and Dean Turney's home for dessert. Tours on Thursday: Lunch at the former home of Alfred D. Robinson, KOLTZ research center at Michael Ludwig's home, and the Marston Estate near Balboa Park.

The convention plant sale on Friday evening is always legendary, and the convention will be truly legendary *with your participation!*

We will be back at the Town and Country Resort in Mission Valley next to convenient shopping, public transportation, and other activities, all at an affordable rate of \$112.00 per night.

More details will follow as we finalize the plans. We are looking forward to a great crowd.

Registration packets will be mailed at the end of April. Hope to see you here.

~Dean Turney

Well spring is here; the days are longer and everywhere people are seeing signs of new fresh growth and beautiful spring flowers. This includes begonias too. Rhizomatous begonias are in their full glory during this period and I hope all members are enjoying theirs. Some rhizomatous are fragrant such as *B. 'Joe Hayden'*. By just walking past this dark leaved rhizomatous I can smell its fragrance; of course it's not only hybrids but species too such as *B. burkillii*. *B. burkillii* has flowers that are close to the base of the plant and rhizome; they are not in your typical spike as most rhizomatous. The flowers of *B. burkillii* are quite large, about the size of a nickel, and have a light citrus scent. Check out your rhizomatous in bloom you may be surprised as to which have a fragrance. Let your editor know too, we all love hearing about everyone's begonias. Send Linda our editor an article and pictures too.

I will be seeing some of you at the upcoming Southwest Region Get-together May 16th – 20th in San Antonio. Please come up and say hi to myself and your other officers,

we really do want to get to know our members and most importantly tell us of your concerns. I hope to be able to greet everyone. There will be a Board meeting at this event, if you have something that you want to bring up be sure to send it in writing or an email to myself, the ABS Secretary Richard Macnair and Parliamentarian Linda Lawson (contact info on page 119) so it can be included on the agenda. Only board members can vote at the meeting; board members are your officers, appointed committee chairs and Branch National Directors; but remember all members can attend the Board meeting.

I hope you are also making plans to attend the ABS Convention and Show August 8th – 12th, 2012 in San Diego. This is ABS' 80th birthday and this convention and show will be a memorable one.

Have a wonderful spring and good begonia growing!

Charles Jaros, ABS President

President's Message

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For further information contact
Connie Saenz at
csaenz56@yahoo.com

New Cultivars: *B.* 'Challenger'

From Gene Salisbury,
Nomenclature Director

Official International Registration 1004

Begonia 'Challenger'

Seed parent: *B. carriearae*.

Pollen parent: *B. carolineifolia*.

Propagated more than 100 times.

Originator: Ross Bolwell,
226 Annagrove Rd., Annagrove
2156 Australia

Developed in 1988. First distributed in 1990.

First mentioned in a publication in the 2000 Annagrove, New South Wales, Australia

Registration applied for February 12, 2012; registration approved February 27, 2012.

Begonia 'Challenger' is a creeping, rhizomatous.

Leaves: Light green, acute, cordate base, reniform, kidney shaped. Dimensions 14" x 10" - 21" x 19". Margin cleft. Surface pustulate, hairy. Main veins - 7. Petioles - length 11" - 16". Color light green. Hairy. Stipules length 1 3/4"; width 1 1/2"; color light green. White hairs.

Flowers: Greenish-white with light greenish-white ovary. Tepals ovate. Diameter of flower - male 1"; female 1". Number of petals - male 2; female 2. Size of flower cluster - male 40; female 32. Amount of cluster - many. Length of flower peduncle - 26". Season of bloom - winter.

Description: Gigantic leaves. Huge plant grows easily from leaf or leaf section. Sensitive to extreme heat. An 18" pot plant is 5' wide and 2 1/2' tall.

This variety has been tested by Don Miller, Elizabeth Cassimatis, and Ross Bolwell.

Available to the trade from: Fort Worth Botanical Garden, Steve's Leaves, and Kartuz Greenhouses.

Applications to register begonia cultivars may be obtained from Gene Salisbury, PO Box 52, Tonkawa, OK 74653. Forms must be typed or printed in ink and accompanied by a \$2.00 check payable to the American Begonia Society. Clear photos for publication in *The Begonian*, drawings and dried specimens are requested. ABS is the International Registration Authority for begonia cultivar names.



Art In Gardening

Peter Sharp, Sydney, Australia

If gardening be an art - and I'm certain sure it is - then gardeners are great artists, each and every one of us!

Our canvases are the best that nature can provide: garden beds both old and new, large as paddocks or small as window-boxes, hectares or handkerchiefs, back yards or front, earthen tubs or plastic pots, and soil in all its forms and combinations - that's all that the artists require who wield rake and shovel rather than those other geniuses who flourish brush and paint.

Our art lies in the quest for knowledge and the application of it, our vision is founded on faith and hope, our common bond is love of nature, our abiding virtue is patience.

Our brushes and spatulas are spades and trowels, our palettes are filled with all the colors, shapes and forms of nature, our skill is in the use of all these attributes to produce a thing of abiding beauty - a garden.



Above: A "canvas" from the 2011 Gazebo Show in Santa Barbara. Photo by Gary Hunt

Left: Art in a bottle - *B. quadrialata* spp. *nimbaensis*, *B. prismatocarpa* and *Ficus pumila* 'Oakleaf' Photo by Ken Wachendorfer



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Letter to the Editor

Binders for *The Begonian*

In the Jan/Feb issue I saw that people were unable to get the binders. A few months ago I called Universal Business Supply - they had been listed as a source in one of the 2010 issues. I ordered and received a dozen notebooks. The item number on the label on the books is 8345101. That is a new number. I had used the old number when I ordered. I actually paid a dollar less than was listed in 2010 but maybe it was because I ordered a dozen. I hope this will help

Judy Hansen, Apple Valley, CA

ABS Nominations for Awards - Corrections

The Call for Nominations for the ABS Awards has been extended to **June 6, 2012**. Remember the Board has approved email nominations by mail or email - only one nomination per page, please! Mail all nominations to:

Anna Salisbury
Awards Chairman
P. O. Box 452
Tonkawa, Ok. 74653
Email: geneann@sbcglobal.net

The winners of the 2011 ABS awards listed on page 77 of the March/April *The Begonian* were incorrect. The editor's apologies! The awards and correct winners are listed below as follows:

Herbert P. Dyckman - **Cheryl Lenert**
Eva Kenworthy Gray - **Johanna Zinn**
Alfred D. Robinson Medal of Honor -
B. 'Taylor Anne' Plant Hybridizer
Freda Holley
Tim O'Reilly Award - **Joe Moore**
Rudolph Ziesenhenn Award -
William Claybaugh
Gene Salisbury Horticultural Award -
Michael Kartuz
Marge Lee Award -
Patricia McElderry



Achimenes, Aeschynanthus, Chirita, Columnea, Drymonia, Episcia, Kohleria, Nematanthus, Petroclosmea, Sinningia, Streptocarpus... These and many other gesneriads are excellent plants for the greenhouse hobbyist.

Purchase our 56-page manual "**How to Know and Grow Gesneriads**" for US\$10 postpaid anywhere, or **join The Gesneriad Society** for one year for US\$25 in USA, US\$30 elsewhere. Go to www.gesneriadsociety.org or send check or credit card number with expiration date and CVV code to The Gesneriad Society, Dept AVM, PMB 637, 1122 E Pike Street, Seattle, WA 98122 USA. New members receive a copy of "How to Know and Grow Gesneriads," two back issues and the next four quarterly issues of our journal *Gesneriads*, a package of mixed gesneriad seed, access to the world's largest source of gesneriad seed, and many other benefits.



Begonia perakensis

"A dainty begonia with a neat rosette habit ...grows on rocks in or beside streams."
From *Begonias of Peninsular Malaysia* by Ruth Kiew. Grower, Mary Bucholtz notes it also has a fragrant flower. Photo by Mary Bucholtz



B. 'Jade Elegance'

One of my hybrids made around 2005 that I have named *B. 'Jade Elegance'* (above). In 2007 it won Best South Australian Hybrid. It flowers for a long time with large, almost frilly, bunches of pink flowers. The leaves are beautifully marked with evenly placed silver spots on an elegant, elongated green leaf. This is me (right) showing off my certificate when I won best hybrid.

From Joe Romeo, Australia



B. burkillii pistil and ovary Photo by Jacky Duruisseau

A Word with You: Pop Quiz - Answers

By Claudia Goodridge, New Haven, CT

How did you score on the Pop Quiz in the March/April The Begonian?

Term	Answer	From the Begonian issue:
peltate	f. shield-like	January/February 2010 pg. 12
pinnate	n. feather-like	March/April 2010 pg. 73
ovate	a. egg	July/August 2010 pg. 136
palmate	m. hand	March/April 2010 pg. 73
orbicular	l. circle	July/August 2010 pg. 136
epiphytic	c. on the bark	November/December 2010 pg. 219
epilithic	i. on the rocks	November/December 2010 pg. 219
rupestral	s. among the rocks	November/December 2010 pg. 219
crenate	e. rounded tooth	January/February 2011 pg. 24
serrate	q. saw	January/February 2011 pg. 24
dentate	t. tooth	January/February 2011 pg. 24
undulate	d. wavy	March/April 2011 pg. 52
crispate	o. curly	March/April 2011 pg. 52
cleft	v. cut	May/June 2011 pg. 86
compound	r. multiple	July/August 2011 pg. 132
pistillate	j. female	September/October 2011 pg. 171; November/December 2011 pg. 220
staminate	u. male	September/October 2011 pg. 171; January/February 2012 pg. 20
monoecious	b. on the same plant	September/October 2011 pg. 172
dioecious	g. on separate plants	September/October 2011 pg. 172
style	h. connector	November/December 2011 pg. 220
indumentum	p. hair	September/October 2010 pg. 172
glabrous	k. smooth	September/October 2010 pg. 172

Getting Ready for the Growing Season

by Greg Sytch, Horticultural Correspondent

One of the most common questions I have been asked over the years is when to begin steady fertilizing and watering. During the dark, dull days of winter begonias can go somewhat dormant or stagnant. Tuberosus aside, begonias begin to wake up when the days in your area stay consistently mild and become longer. That depends on where you live.

In Tampa Bay, late February is wake up time. Even if the winter is rather mild, such as the current one, real steady growth does not begin until the last half of February. If the threat of cold has waned, fertilizing can begin in earnest. In places where you grow indoors and rely on natural light, it might not be until April that begonias

really begin growing. This also coincides with less central heating so not only are the days getting longer, and the light getting brighter, but less drying heat is being forced into the growing areas. I always recommend feeding at half strength so long as growth is occurring. For rhizomatous, this is very significant in the late winter and spring when flower spikes are rising. They do need a little help in developing.

When spring has really, really arrived and you are repotting, it is a good idea to mix in bone meal and magnesium to encourage a slow release of nutrients and vibrant color. Bone meal will aid canes in summer

In the Mailbox



The plant is *Dendrobium aggregatum*, native to Australia and blooms naturally in March after a winter rest here in Port Richey, FL. Just stays outside in a dry area for winter and - voila! The blooms only last a few weeks. Photo by Greg Sytch

Do You Do Micropotting?

by Greg Sytch, Horticultural Correspondent

What is micropotting you ask? It is a term I have coined for when you get a large batch of potting mix ready and then amend it in a smaller container for whatever the mix is needed for. For example, I have discovered that large canes, those growing in 3 gallon or larger containers, are less finicky about their soil - except that it drains well. Rhizomatous leaves that have pupped are usually in 3" pots and require repotting into a larger container.

They still need good drainage to develop their root systems. I use one of those large Christmas storage tubs to mix my main batch, then scoop and amend as needed.

My standard potting mix now is ProMix HP, for high porosity. It is finely chopped peat, so important as the quality of peat is diminishing. In a large tub I place the ProMix, then add handfuls of bone meal and magnesium sulfate powder for long-term nutrients. To this I add about 1/10th perlite and a large coffee can of charcoal bits for additional drainage. If I am potting large canes, I will do so prior to the perlite. Once the ingredients are mixed in well, I take scoops out in a small tub and add extra perlite and blood meal for the smaller plants, or sponge rock if it is a lower light plant such as *B. sizemoreae*. Then it is good to go. If I am potting gesneriads, I add handfuls of pine bark fines, which break down slowly.

This is a great way to have your potting mix ready when you need it. The tub lid keeps the soil from getting wet or contaminated and I can store it outdoors so it is not in the way. Growers in cold climates can store it in a garage and it will thaw out and warm up quickly when required. A real time saver when there is so much to get accomplished.



B. 'Dennis Franz' is a Sytch hybrid that is compact, everblooming, and very fragrant!

GETTING READY FOR THE GROWING SEASON continued

when they flower, and magnesium helps everything green up. While I have no formula, mixing in a good handful, or perhaps two, in a large tub appears to do the trick.

The Three F's Of Fertilizing

The first number is for foliage (Nitrogen), the second number is for flowers (Phosphorus), and the third number is for fruit or roots (potassium). Since I grow orchids with my begonias, I also add calcium in a small amount.

Fertilizing Terrarium Begonias

Terrarium begonias, or those grown in less light and higher humidity, may benefit from foliar feeding as a way to prevent overfertilizing. Once you have sprayed the plant, and it has been drinking in the fertilizer for a few hours, you may loosen the top to slightly dry out so the spray dries off. If you are growing under strong light bulbs, fertilizing can continue on a regular basis.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback, I am always available at gsytch@cs.com. Have a wonderful growing season!

A Word with You: Clueless on Stemless

By Claudia Goodridge, New Haven, CT

Twice. It appeared twice in the March/April issue of *The Begonian* (Vol. 79), and once again I was clueless. How could I have gone so long without knowing *acaulous* or *acaulous*; both plant descriptors, both adjectives, both meaning “having no stem or having only a very short stem” according to Mr. Webster. (Begonias having stems are *caulescent*.)



They derive from *a* (not) and *caulis* (Latin for stalk) or *kaulos* (Greek for stalk). The noun form is *acaulousness*, which sounds vaguely like some kind of geriatric disorder.

Both *B. shilendrii* (p. 63), described by Dr. Morris and *B. arnottiana* (p.73), described by E.S. Santhosh Kumar and Sam Mathew, grow in India. Mark Tebbitt includes *B. acaulis* – recognize that root? - as stemless and growing in Papua, New Guinea. He also includes *B. luzonensis* from the Phillipines. Our detail oriented and dedicated editor Linda Tambllyn alerted me to *B. phutoensis* and *B. xanthina* that are also in the *acaulous* camp. In looking for more *acaulous* types, I found an interesting and not-too-hard-to-read website - <http://ejournal.sinica.edu.tw/bbas/content/2002/4/bot434-09.html> - that outlines 9 Chinese sections, one of which, *Coelocentrum*, has 16 species that are described as “Herbs, monoecious, epipetric, rhizomatous creeping, acaulescent. Leaves mostly broadly ovate, rarely peltate, palmately veined.” For once I could read that without glazing over.



Acaulescent plants. **Opposite page, top:** *B. luzonensis* Photo by Charles Henthorne **Bottom:** *B. acaulis*
This page, top: *B. xanthina* **Bottom:** *B. phutoensis* Photos by Mary Bucholtz

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The Begonian

July/August 2012

**Deadline
May 28**

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The Begonias of Vallegrande, Bolivia

Article and photos by Dr. Mark C. Tebbitt, California University of Pennsylvania, PA

In January of this year I visited Bolivia to study and collect begonias. For two weeks during this expedition I was based in Vallegrande – an old, rugged but starkly beautiful market town. Surrounding Vallegrande are the peaks of the Andean foothills that 40 miles to the east rise abruptly from the Amazon Basin and then over a vast area form a series of parallel ridges each running from north to south. Around Vallegrande the highest of these peaks reach almost 10,000 feet and provide habitat for a bewildering range of begonias.

The valley bottoms in this region are sun-baked and covered in agricultural land interspersed by patches of seasonally dry deciduous forest. Lots of large cacti can be seen stick-

ing out from amongst the trees and are joined by the occasional passion-flower vine. This all changes once you climb above 6,500 feet. Here the climate is cooler and noticeably wetter and the slopes have gained a rich cover of Tucumano-Boliviano forest, characterized by a variety of tree species from the myrtle family. It is on the vertical cliffs that intersperse this tropical forest that the bulk of the begonias are found. Many of these species are the showy-flowered tuberous begonias that I had come to study. Some are old friends – *Begonia boliviensis* for example is

Above: Close up of the new species (*Tebbitt 720*) showing tuber and conspicuous silver hairs on the leaf undersurface.



Above: A more typical variant of *B. micranthera*. Inset: Notice the contrast with the new variant's deeply lobed leaf.

common here on damp cliffs, producing a cascade of scarlet flowers in patches next to the roadsides. Several others proved to be new to science.

It's not just tuberous begonias that are found in this area – in a few places, next to the mountain streams, familiar rhizomatous species like *B. wollnyi* and *B. leathermaniae* grow among the shaded boulders and so too does one of the parents of our wax begonias - *B. cucullata*. While these species are found in typical begonia habitat, that is moist and shady, the majority of the tuberous species favor a more unusual habitat. They grow in relatively dry locations in full sun, and often in association with bromeliads, orchids, and small cacti. Indeed, many of these tuberous begonias appeared to be thriving where the forest had long ago been cut and has since been converted into pastureland. They are often found on open rocky slopes amongst remnant patches of Tucumano-Boliviano forest obviously enjoying the lack of competition from large-leaved plants. Such open habitat likely resembles the natural cliffs upon which these plants were probably once restricted when the forest cover was more continuous.

One plant that prefers these open sunny conditions was a new pink-flowered species allied to neighboring Peru's *B. octopetala*. In fact, we only ever encountered this locally common species on pastureland. This pretty plant is indicative of how diverse yet poorly known is the flora of this region of Bolivia. The species was first spotted from our jeep as we sped along the mountain road towards the town of Pucará! It is stemless with large leaves that have

a very distinct cover of matted silver hairs on their undersurfaces, each flower has six to eight large, candy pink tepals – beautiful.

Another tuberous species of great interest to me was *B. micranthera*. I encountered several variants of this species while in Bolivia but those from Vallegrande were particularly distinct since they had deeply lobed leaves quite unlike those of the species elsewhere. *Begonia micranthera* was often found growing near *B. boliviensis* but often on wetter slopes that were less likely to dry out. Despite being very closely related these two species are unlikely to be confused since *B. micranthera* has white or pink flowers that open saucer-like in the manner of a typical begonia, quite different to the scarlet tube-like flowers of *B. boliviensis*. Both *B. micranthera* and *B. boliviensis* are tall plants, often reaching waist height in these wild populations. Unlike most begonias they are tolerant of competition from other plants and are typically found growing through a tangle of tall vegetation. Both species were introduced into cultivation in the 1800's and these long established garden populations have recently been supplemented by material collected in northern Argentina, where they are particularly common and are similarly found growing close together. Of the two, *B. micranthera* is much less frequently encountered in gardens because while it is a pretty plant it cannot rival the beauty of *B. boliviensis*, which is one of our most elegant begonias.

Since childhood I have enjoyed

continued on pg 102



Left: A new species of *Begonia* from Vallegrande (Tebbitt 720)
Top, right: *Begonia leathermaniae* growing next to a shaded stream
Bottom, right: Cliff habitat within Tucumano-Boliviano forest





Begonia boliviensis in natural habitat in Vallegrande

growing *B. boliviensis* as well as the Andean tuberous begonia hybrids (*B. tuberhybrida* group). The latter of which were first produced in the late 1800s by artificially hybridizing several of the tuberous Andean species, including Bolivia's *B. boliviensis* and *B. pearcei*. I have now grown these plants both in England and, more recently, in Pennsylvania and have learnt that they crave cool temperatures and good drainage, as well as a dryer winter resting period. My trip to the Andes has only served to reinforce this view. The nights that we camped out on the mountains were unexpectedly cold, so much so that it interrupted sleep. Similarly, excel-

lent drainage results from the steepness of the slopes upon which many of these plants grow, while ample moisture is provided (during the summer wet-season, which peaks from January to March) by thunderstorms, which soak these mountains every three or four days. I have now also learned that these plants enjoy bright sunny conditions. For those lucky enough to be able to duplicate all these conditions the Andean tuberous species, as well as their hybrids, are a particularly spectacular group of plants that are deservedly popular. Where I live in western Pennsylvania

I am fortunate to live close enough to the Appalachian Mountains that my garden experiences cool summer nights on a regular enough basis to allow me to grow these plants but even so my plants rarely reach the luxuriant proportions of plants that I have been lucky enough to witness in California and England, and now more recently in Bolivia.

Acknowledgements:

This expedition would not have been possible without the generous financial support of numerous ABS members and branches. For this I am very grateful. I also wish to thank Mr. Alexander Parada for accompanying me in the field and Drs. Michael Nee (NY) and Luzmilla Arroyo (USZ) for their sound advice and logistical support. Thank you.

Unusual stamen morphology reported from two species of Andean *Begonia*

Mark C. Tebbitt and Danielle R. Williamson, California University of Pennsylvania, PA

Begonias typically have stamens in which each anther is joined to its filament at the base of the anther's two locules and in the majority of these species the anther releases its pollen via two lateral slits (Fig. 1), although some open via two unilateral slits. Two species of tuberous *Begonia* from the Andean section *Eupetalum*: *B. weddelliana* (syn. *B. davisii*) and *B. herrerae* were discovered to have atypical stamens. In these species the anthers are attached to their filaments along the back of the locules and the anthers open unilaterally (Figure 2). This stamen structure does not appear to have been reported previously from South American begonia and is likely related to an unusual means of pollination. No field observations have been made of their pollinators but these two species

are also unusual among South American begonias in having orange or red colored tepals (most have white or pink flowers), which may serve to attract a different kind of insect than the bees and wasps that typically visit other begonia flowers.

Specimens examined:

Begonia weddelliana A. DC.

Bolivia: Rusby 679 (NY); Buchtien 634 (GH, K, Z); Badcock 72 (K); Wood 12996 (K). Cultivated: s.c. s.n. (K).

Begonia herrerae L.B. Sm. & B.G. Schub.

Peru: C. Vargas 3720 (GH, MO).

Bolivia: Lewis 40706 (MO).

Acknowledgements

We thank the curators of the following herbaria: GH, K, MO, NY, Z for allowing us to work on their collections.

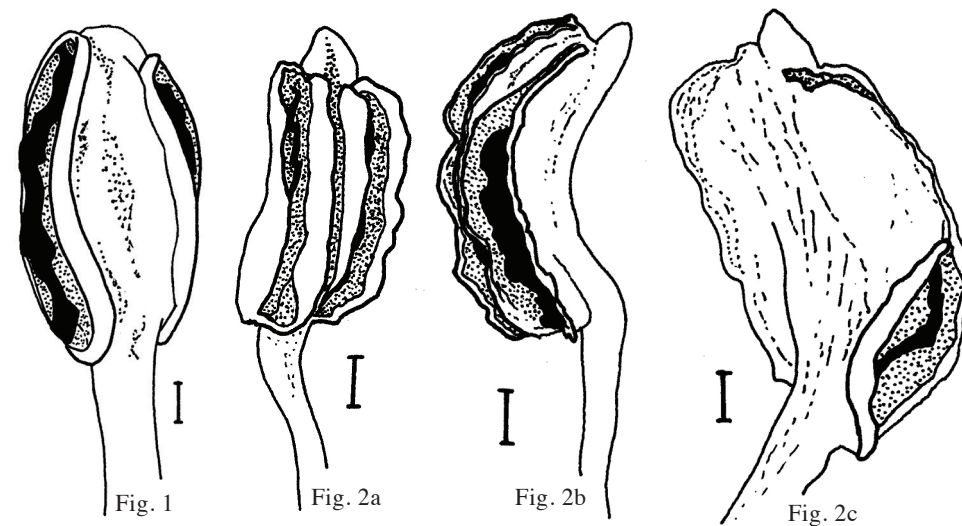


Figure 1. Typical begonia stamen with basifixed locules that open via lateral slits - *B. pleiopetala* A. DC. (scale bar = 0.1 mm; drawn from Solomon & Kuijt 11528 (MO)) **Figure 2.** Stamens of *B. weddelliana* A. DC. a) front view, b) side view, c) rear view (scale bars = 0.1 mm; drawn from Buchtein 634 (K))



Top, left: A display of begonias at the Jardin Botanique de Montreal. **Second, down:** Tillandsias **Third, down:** Janique Perrault (Begonia Curator) on the left, author on the right. **Bottom, left:** *B. breviformis* **Top, right:** *Aeschynanthus dischidioides* syn. *myrmecophilus* **Bottom, right:** *B. valida* **Opposite page:** *B. mannii*



Jardin Botanique de Montreal

Article & photos by Jessica M. Chevalier, Crown Point, NY

When you think of Montreal, you may envision fine cuisine, great people, interesting architecture, and diverse culture. But did you know about their spectacular botanical gardens? The Jardin Botanique de Montreal is a plant lover's dream come true. There are ten exhibition greenhouses to wander through, each with its own theme and thirty different outside gardens, some of which include begonias as bedding plants.

Upon arrival at the main entrance, I was greeted with baskets of *B. 'Tom Ment'*. Once through the doors, I was immediately immersed in a tropical wonderland. Begonias, orchids, bromeliads, bonsai, gesneriads, cacti, and much more promise to awaken your senses.

A true "begoniac" will be delighted with the one hundred different cultivars and two hundred different species that are continuously rotated throughout the begonia house. This greenhouse is full

of rare gems like the orange-berried *B. salaziensis* from Maurice Island and the towering giant *B. valida*. Large cascading baskets of *B. mannii* and *B. jussiaeicarpa* are also sure to impress. The many shapes, textures, and colors of the begonias at the botanical gardens create an enchanting visual experience.

The Begonia Curator, Janique Perrault, is very knowledgeable and keeps the displays fresh and interesting. When pressed about what her favorite begonia is, she admits that it is hard to choose one from within the diverse collection. If she had to choose, the bright leaves of *B. breviformis* and the dainty leaves of *B. bipinatifida* have a tendency to catch her eye.

My experience at the Montreal Botanical Gardens was nothing short of exceptional. A fabulous place to visit, no matter what time of year, I highly recommend you make it a destination of yours soon.



B. dipetala Graham

Article & photos by
Dr. Rekha Morris, Pendleton, SC

The first begonia I encountered in the Western Ghats of Karnataka in 2006 was *B. dipetala* [Haagea]. I was driving from Kodagu, Karnataka to Mangalore along the coast of Karnataka. The dirt road [which has since disappeared in the torrential monsoons of a couple of years ago] wound uphill and down, through villages, small towns, coconut groves, and patches of forests, which remained, although their continued existence is precarious. The road had been partly cut through the rocky embankments edging the forest, and it was at the top of one such embankment that I saw a small colony of upright begonias with lanceolate leaves, which I later identified as *B. dipetala*. These grew out of a narrow fissure created by two boulders lying close together.

The little I knew about begonia species from the Western Ghats had led me to conclude that *B. dipetala* grew in moisture-laden, shady habitats. This had been underscored by one of its several synonyms, *B. hydrophila* Miquel; however, here it was thriving in full sunlight with no stream, waterfall or seepage in its vicinity. The 12"-16" plants swaying downwards against the tall, sienna brown boulder were a refreshing sight in the relatively dry landscape and the heat of the sun at its zenith.

Since then I have documented small colonies of *B. dipetala* in numerous parts of southern and coastal Karnataka, most frequently in the vicinity of waterfalls,

Top, left: Closeup of capsule and flowers of *B. dipetala* **Left, center:** Detail of male and female flowers **Left, bottom:** *B. dipetala* detail

Opposite page: *B. dipetala* among ferns



streams, and the narrow irrigation canals supplying water to rice fields and plantations. In exploring the Malabar Hills [part of the Western Ghats] west of Mumbai [formerly Bombay] where according to C. B. Clarke *B. malabarica* was originally documented I saw neither *B. dipetala* nor *B. malabarica*, which derives its name

from this range of mountains.* I continue to be perplexed at not encountering *B. malabarica* in the several districts of southeastern Karnataka which I have been exploring for species begonias since 2006. The single colony of *B. malabarica* whose curiously pointed foliage has led me to name it in honor of Mr. Spock of



Star Trek, *B. malabarica* forma *spockii*, was not in Karnataka but Kerala, the long coastal state south of Karnataka.

In appropriately moist habitats *B. dipetala* forms a handsome, multi-stemmed clump some 2'-4' high. The majority of *B. dipetala* I have documented so far have leaves, which are dark green on their upper surfaces and a paler green on the undersides; however, I have recorded three variations in the foliage of this species. The most striking of these are plants whose leaves on the underside are a lustrous shade of burgundy. Most of the small colonies or groups of 3-6 plants with this foliar coloration I have encountered have a distinct preference for semi-shady to almost fully shady habitats. Generally growing amidst monochromatic somewhat somber green surroundings, the rich coloration and silken texture of the undersurfaces of these leaves are a breathtaking sight.

At the edge of a heavily forested low hillside I encountered three small groups of *B. dipetala* similarly enticing in color, but whose leaves on their upper surfaces have a matte finish smoothly brushed with silver. Growing some 2½' high through generally coarse and dull understory plants, the sumptuous combination of silver and burgundy, and the red tinged chocolate stems are reminiscent of exotic plants gracing brocaded tapestries rather than plants whose preferred habitats are mushy ditches and tangled underbrush.

The third variation in foliar color of *B. dipetala* is the result of silver maculation, which is not supposed to persist

Top: A white maculated *B. dipetala*
Bottom: Single upright all green *B. dipetala*



B. dipetala in habitat

beyond the juvenile stage. However, I have documented any number of plants which have retained the silver maculation into their mature, flower producing stage. The brightness of the white maculation varies, and in some plants it becomes so faint that the leaves acquire a silver glow tinged in a muted shade of icy blue.

B. dipetala is a fibrous rooted branching species which forms multi-stepped shrub-like clumps once it is well established. It appears to be ever blooming, although its most floriferous season is from October to December. It derives its species name from its inflorescence as both its male and female flowers have two tepals. The flowers vary in color from clear pale pink to a darker, violet tinged pink. The 4"-6" slender, lanceolate, leaves with serrate margins grow alternately on dark, maroon-red petioles. The

upper surface of the foliage of *B. dipetala* is covered in short, white hair while the underside varies from being pubescent to entirely glabrous. The flowers grow from the axils of the petioles, and are seldom fully visible. Partially hidden behind the elegantly long foliage, they sparkle like gems embedded in emerald sheaves dappled with light filtering through the trees under which they normally thrive.

As Dr. Tebbitt has pointed out in his book, *Begonias* [2005], *B. dipetala* has often been confused with *B. malabarica*. This is hardly surprising as at one time *B. dipetala* was considered a variety of *B. malabarica*. However, there are visible differences between these two species. As pointed out by Dr. Tebbitt, the foliage of *B. malabarica* is glabrous while *B. dipetala*'s leaves are villose or pubescent, and the male flowers of *B.*



Burgundy reverse foliage of *B. dipetala*

malabarica have 4 tepals, while those of *dipetala* have two.

Distinguishing these two species on the basis of the number of tepals of the male flowers becomes less assured as the two much smaller inner tepals of *B. malabarica* drop off quite early in its growth cycle. At this stage the male flowers of *B. malabarica* may well be confused with those of *B. dipetala*. For most of us, the clearest distinction between these two species is the shape of their capsules. *B. malabarica*'s capsules, unlike those of *B. dipetala*, are angular and truncate at the apex while those of *B. dipetala* are ovoid in shape with rounded ends.

Ever since A. de Candolle, who lists Sri Lanka and the Nilgiri mountains of south India as the home of *B. malabarica*, *B. falax* [now regarded as a syn. of *B. malabarica*], *B. hydrophilla* [now considered a syn. of *B. dipetala*], and *B. dipetala*, it has been supposed that

both these species share a similar distribution in Sri Lanka and the Nilgiri mountains. However, in my experience, albeit limited, there is no overlap in their habitats in Karnataka where *B. dipetala* thrives, and where I have yet to document *B. malabarica*.

Moreover, the Western Ghats of Karnataka are not to be confused with the Nilgiri mountains. Perhaps I will encounter both species in the Western Ghats of Kerala, which I begin exploring this fall, and winter.

B. dipetala is easily grown from seeds, and is possibly among the least demanding of begonia species from India. However, like most begonias from the Western Ghats, *B. dipetala* requires a moist ambience, and shelter from direct sunlight. In cultivation, the vivid wine color saturating some forms of *B. dipetala* loses its intensity, and becomes a paler shade of pinkish-maroon. Although some of the color is

diluted in cultivation, *B. dipetala* loses none of the supple grace of its form and foliage, and blooms almost as generously in cultivation as in the wild.

*** Note on the findspot of *B. dipetala***

Although *B. dipetala* is generally considered endemic to the Western Ghats, I have come across references to it having been found in 1826 in Bombay. In the June 2011 issue of *Begonia Chatter*, the article on *B. dipetala*, attributed to Mary Weinberg, describes *B. dipetala* as having been discovered in Bombay, India in 1826 by H.H. Johnstone.

Mary Weinberg's article on *B. dipetala* was originally published in the *Chicago Begonian* in December 1984, and reprinted in *The Begonian* [Volume 57 March/April 1990, pages 59 - 60] in 1990. In her opening sentence Mary Weinberg states that *B. dipetala* was "first discovered in Bombay." This may or may not be the source of the assertion that *B. dipetala* was found in Bombay, however, it makes one wonder where in Bombay of 1826 this species could

have been found [see my note in the *Journal, The Queensland Begonia Society*, no. 84, Spring 2009, pp. 31-33]. In the early 19th century, Bombay, now Mumbai, consisted of seven islands which at high tide were separated from each other by the sea, with only the tips of their hillocks above sea level.

In order to ascertain whether *B. dipetala* was indeed found in Bombay I checked the entry on this species in the *Botanical Magazine*, 55, New Series, vol. 2, 1828, # 2849, and this is what I found:

"This species flowered at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, in April, 1828, having been raised two years before from seed sent by Dr. Johnstone, from Bombay."

B. dipetala was not found in Bombay but its seeds were sent from Bombay! From dissemination of seeds to dissemination of misinformation is a short, easy step, hopefully now redirected to seek original documentation regarding species begonias and their findspots.



B. dipetala silver-leaved form

The Comeback Kid

Article and photos by Kit Jeans Mounger

When I set about rebuilding my collection last autumn, I was visiting friends in Neptune Beach, Florida and checking out all the places where I might find some begonias I didn't have. After all—Florida should be overflowing with tropical-like begonias—right? No such luck. Most all greenhouse growers we visited just shook their heads: “wrong time of year,” was the repeated litany. Then as a last chance stop, we visited, of all places, Ace Hardware. And in Florida, Ace stores do have extensive garden centers attached with glass over their plant selections. And as we walked in, I spotted a quartet of hanging basket begonias all the way from the door to the plant section.

One was a huge hanging basket of a begonia I'd never seen before. I knew it was a begonia, of course. All begoniacs recognize one of their children even if they've never seen that particular one before. It was, of course, along with another rhizomatous big grey-leaved basket beside it, unlabeled. Didn't matter. I bought the two anyway.

When I got them home to Tennessee, the first order of business was to go to the begonia online list and see if anybody recognized my purchases. Happily they identified one: *B. barsalouxiae**. The other I found in my own reference material: *B. 'Frosty Night'*.

I was quite taken with the *B. barsalouxiae** as it was certainly the more unusual of the two. Nevertheless, I wanted to hedge my bets. I took both baskets, divided the plants and put

them each into two hanging baskets. The *B. barsalouxiae** I hung on a hanger on my deck in the shade and the *B. 'Frosty Night'* was hung from the branches of an ancient maple next to the deck. The other two specimens I took to my friend, Ann, at her local commercial set of greenhouses. Ann was fast becoming a neophyte begoniac and I was helping her along as best I could. The two begonias were then suspended in her display greenhouse and, in subsequent visits, seemed to thrive there. My two plants did as well, it seemed to me, in my shady back yard. While I had a hunch the *B. barsalouxiae** liked high humidity, such is ours in the summertime that I thought it could hold its own.

But, of course, winter was fast approaching here in the Appalachians. I thought the *B. 'Frosty Night'* would be okay sitting in my SW windowed plant/computer room on one of the plant shelves and that's where I put it. I hadn't researched the background of *B. barsalouxiae** but I knew in my bones it would need a bit of care over the dryer wintertime temperatures and moisture in the air. And I certainly had no terrarium big enough to shelter it. Instead, I had my son-in-law erect a pole between kitchen cabinets over the sink in a NE facing window. There it was hung with a pair of cattleyas I had also been given by a friend in Florida.

By December when (this strange year) we had our only really cold weather, *B. barsalouxiae** went to ground. The rhizomes remained; I watered it very spar-



B. barsalouxiae

ingly and hoped. *B. 'Frosty Night'* did the same—only its rhizome turned up its toes and croaked.

Then disaster struck. When I went to Ann's greenhouse to see how her begonias were getting along, I found...nothing! Nothing but a greenhouse full of slimy meltdown. It appeared that not a single plant, begonia or otherwise, had survived. The cause was obvious: no heat. On the coldest night of the year when the thermometer plummeted to 12 degrees F., Ann's electric heaters in all her greenhouses quit functioning. Somewhere on the grid to her establishment, the power had failed.

We both felt like crying.

The electric company replaced the broken line, time passed and our strange weather continued. In February, daytime temperatures rose to the 60s and 70s, March was much the same. Nevertheless, I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. April in the mountains can be very contrary. That's when we usually get our worst, most confounding weather reverses: rain, sleet, freezing rain, snow and interspersed with days of lovely spring sunshine. But so far (it's early April now) so good. My fingers are still crossed. The redbuds and dogwood are in full flower. Daffodils and mayapple, trilliums have come and gone. I can no longer see my river not 75' down the



A few more of Kit's beautiful begonias. **Above:** *B. malachosticta*
Opposite page: *B. 'Pink Minx'*

hill in front of the house. It's hidden behind all the budding trees.

My kitchen-bound *B. barsalouxiae** has sprouted a pair of leaves and appears to be on its way back. At first, I covered them with a small clear plastic cup to help the humidity along but they now seem to be happy in the open. I've never had rhizomatous begonias come back from dormancy outside the greenhouse (which I no longer have—or any hope of having). So I was quite 'chuffed,' as my English friends would say, at this reversal of fortunes. And in this mood of hope, I went to see how things were in Ann's display house.

The five-foot *B. aconitifolia* I had given her, along with *B. 'Miss Mummy,' B. 'Lana, B. 'My Special Angel', B. 'Ricinifolia'* and several others were slowly coming back to life. I couldn't see into the basket of *B. barsalouxiae**; it was too far over my head. With "fear an' tremblin", as the old timers say, I lifted it down and peeked inside.

The basket was covered in timid green sprouts of new leaves. Tropical it may be but it had evidently decided life here in the mountains of Norte Americano wouldn't be too bad for a lovely Mexican Maid.

Made my whole day.

**B. barsalouxiae* [= *B. plebeja* Lieb. – *Nom. Ed.*]



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The Seed Fund now offers a PayPal option. This option is available through the ABS Website. Go to the Seed Fund Page and

B. xanthina Photo by Mary Bucholtz

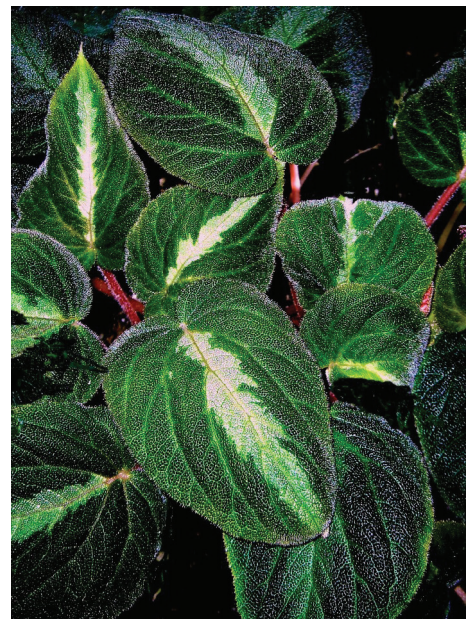
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DISCLAIMER: The seeds distributed by the seed fund are identified as received from the donors. The species names (in italics) reported here are correct based on the latest information from *BEGONIACEAE*, Ed. 2; Golding, and Wasshausen. Hybrid names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



B. imperialis

Photo by Charles Henthorne

Westchester Begonia Society 53rd Annual Begonia Show & Sale Saturday, July 14, 2012

The Westchester Branch of the American Begonia Society is proud to present its 53rd Annual Begonia Show and Sale this coming summer on Saturday, July 14, 2012. The exciting Westchester event is the only judged begonia show in Southern California and will not only showcase begonias but ferns, orchids, bromeliads, aroids and other shade loving plants.

The Show Honoree for 2012 will be lover and promoter of begonias and former President of the American Begonia Society, Ms. Janet Brown of Los Angeles – her many years of diverse and ongoing contributions to the ABS make this a well-deserved recognition for Ms. Brown.

An excellent selection of rare and beautiful begonias - species & hybrids - and other plants and gifts will be available for purchase.

Admission is free, and free parking is widely available. Everyone is welcome!

Event: Westchester Begonia Society 53rd Annual Begonia Show & Sale

Date: Saturday, July 14, 2012

Hours: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Place: Covenant Presbyterian Church

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Contact: Martin E. Delgado, Show Chairman, (562) 310-8380,
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This semp cross in a basket is one I picked up at Lowe's, unnamed of course. I cut it way back last fall, hung in my sun porch, it never stopped blooming and it's coming on again like gangbusters. I'm just glad to see the big commercial greenhouses offering such fare! Photo and comment from Kit Jeans Mouger



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