



THE
BEGONIAN

September/October 2014

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.



Artsy begonia leaves. Photo by Kingsley Langenberg

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Paypal accepted.

Editor, Art Direction and Design:

Linda Tamblyn, 5635 Woodward St., Merriam, KS 66202; 913-231-1020; begoniaskc@yahoo.com

Consulting Editor: Jan Brown, begoniabrown@yahoo.com

Nomenclature Editor:

Kingsley Langenberg, 3293 Country Lane, Waukegan, IL; 847-336-9104, kingsley.langenberg@gmail.com

Quick Tips: Dianna Wilkerson, 15356 Pheasant Run, Choctaw, OK 73020; b2writer@cox.net

Editorial and Identification Assistance:

Charles Jaros, Tom Keepin, Jem Wiseman

Advertising Staff:

Display Ads:

Linda Tamblyn, begoniaskc@yahoo.com

Holiday Greetings:

Frances Drescher, 11529 Riverchase Run West Palm Beach, FL 33412; (561)625-5404; fkdrescher1@comcast.net



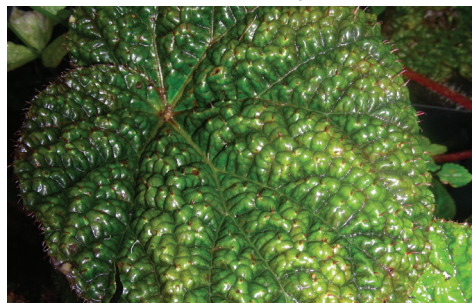
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Front cover: *B. chlorosticta* dark variety. Photo by Kit Jeans Mounger. Related article pg. 195

Back cover: *Begonia clarkei* from Bolivia. Photo Mark Tebbitt Story on pg. 172

The big day has arrived! *The Begonian* is now available for viewing online. If you did not receive an email giving access instructions, you should contact Paul Rothstein, Membership Chair, parolan2001@yahoo.com, with your current email address. He will verify your membership and you will receive the blast for the Nov/Dec issue. *The Begonian* will be available online as well as in the traditional paper version for the next year, so everyone should have an opportunity to view both. The traditional paper version will always be available to those members who desire to receive it. Some of you may decide to save a tree and go green, receiving only the online version. You have a year to make that decision and nothing is cast in stone – you can change your mind in the future.

We're pleased to offer this step forward to our members. There are many options that are available to us with this online version (the "bells and whistles"), which we may be adding as we go forward. For now, we have a very basic version. The opportunity to add advertising is available and would help to offset the cost. After a few issues, we will be seeking your opinions about what to change, add, and in general how it is working for you.

As an ABS member, you have many electronic resources available now: the ABS webpage (<http://begonias.org>), our Facebook page (American Begonia Society), the National Directors Group (ABS-ND), and the Member-at-Large Group (ABS-MAL).

All National Directors should be writing their annual reports and sending them to Tom Keepin, Branch Relations Chair; to Connie Saenz, Secretary; and to me as President. This will cover activity during the last year (Aug 1st through July 30th), such as speak-

President's Message

ers, field trips, shows hosted/entered, fundraisers, etc.

And, lastly, remember to mark your calendar for next year's Begonia Revolution, hosted by the Buxton Branch!

Virginia Jens, President

Share Your Begonia Legends

by Lee Sinoff, Miami, FL

I need your memories, your histories, your scrapbooks, your stories, and your photos. So if you have any information or material which can be used for future articles, please let me know. That can include individual chapter histories, information on people who have made meaningful contributions to the world of begonias and/or to the ABS, personal and special memories worth sharing with others who also relish reading about those special moments and events in begonia history, stories and 'over-the-shoulder' accounts which will surprise and inspire, photos, etc.

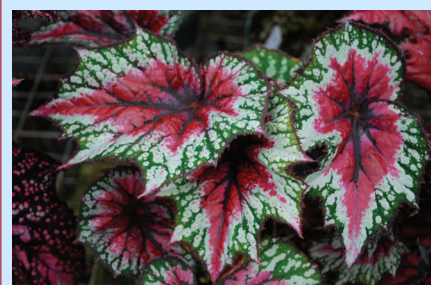
Please take a few minutes to go through your own Begonia and Legends' memories, histories, scrapbooks, stories and experiences, and gather up information and other resources I can use to write about.

You can communicate directly with me at Miami-Begonia-Soc@att.net and, any materials or resources you can share or provide for future articles will be returned. I'm also interested in hearing any suggestions you may have, or topics you may want to recommend.

Holiday Greetings Donation Request 2014

First of all, a big THANK YOU to those who have already responded (individuals as well as branches) with a donation to Holiday Greetings for 2014. The **deadline for donations is September 15, so HURRY** to offer your holiday greetings and support ABS and *The Begonian* at the same time. Please help spread the word about this annual program by requesting that it be added to the agenda of your next meeting.

Donors will be listed on one page of the November/December issue of *The Begonian* by category of donation. The categories are: Bronze, \$1-\$50; Silver, \$51-100; Gold, \$101-\$150; and Platinum, \$151, plus. The contributions, which are tax-deductible, should be made out to ABS Holiday Greetings. Please send to Frances Drescher, 11529 Riverchase Run, West Palm Beach, FL 33412. If you have any questions, you may contact Frances by email at fkdrescher1@comcast.net.



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**Proceedings of the Board Meeting
American Begonia Society
Shreveport, Louisiana
May 24, 2014**

President, Virginia Jens called the meeting to order.

The Aims and Purposes of the Society were read by Johanna Zinn.

The proceedings of the board meeting in Tampa, Florida were approved as published in *The Begonian* and thus were upgraded to minutes.

Treasurer, Carol Notaras submitted the financial statement for March 1, 2014 to April 30, 2014. During this period, income was \$5,336.00 and disbursements totaled \$6,962.59. The General Fund beginning balance was \$12,629.92. Ending balance totaled \$11,003.33. The combined totals of checking and savings accounts had a beginning balance of \$271,230.84 and an ending balance of \$269,863.19

Seed fund managers did not submit a report for this period. They are in the process of transferring the account from Dean Turney to Michael Ludwig. Accounting information has not been received from the Tampa convention. The reports are filed for auditory review.

**Reports of Officers and
Branch Directors:**

The General Manager, Public Relations and Historian positions are still vacant.

The ABS Annual Board Meeting will be held on August 22–23, 2014 in Fort Worth Texas. The meeting will be held at the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens and includes a tour to Steve's Leaves.

Past President, Charles Jaros, reported

that during his tenure as ABS President, he created a scholarship fund from the Morris Mueller endowment fund. The fund started with \$15,000 and gave \$1,000.00 each to three students. Two recipients were from the California University of Pennsylvania and one was from Ohio State University. Dr. Pablo Jourdan, from Ohio State University, presented information on this issue at the Tampa Convention. ABS branches are urged to support the Morris Mueller Scholarship Fund.

Standing Committee Reports:

Bookstore Chair, Janet Brown, stated that she is hoping to obtain copies of the Peter Sharp begonia book and the DVD's from the Austin convention to add to the Bookstore inventory. She reported that *The Begonias of Peninsular Malaysia* by Ruth Kiew is currently out of print.

Branch Relations Director, Tom Keepin, reported that the Miami branch is now meeting regularly. He hopes to charter another branch from Tampa, Florida at the August meeting.

Conservation Chair, Johanna Zinn, reported that she has developed a program outlining conservation measures that is available to ABS branches. Contact Johanna if you want to adopt a species or want information on the branch program on species. Future plans are to have a small library of information on species provided by growers and to have a list of adopted species on the ABS website.

Continued

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Announcements:

Kenny Wilkerson presented a status report on the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, He stated that upcoming leadership changes may possibly affect the begonia species collection. A motion was made to recommend a minimum of a \$2,000.00 yearly grant in support of the begonia collection at the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens. The motion passed.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, the May 2014 Board Meeting of the American Begonia Society stood adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Saenz, ABS Secretary

New Cultivar: *B.* 'Cracklin Rosie'

From Priscilla Purinton, Hybrid Registrar

Official International Registration 1007

Begonia 'Cracklin Rosie'



Seed parent: *B.* 'Silver Mist'
Pollen parent: *B.* 'Salmon Rubra'
Propagated more than 100 times.

Originator: Walter Dworkin, 8 Rugby Rd., Westbury, NY 11590

Developed: 1990. First

multiple silvery-pink spots. Fluted, wavy angel-wing type leaves measure 9" x 3.5" with a maroon reverse. Margin is undulate and the surface is smooth. Stipules green with pink blush. Tepals are pink and white. Males have 4 tepals, females 5. Diameter of male tepals is 1.5" females are 1.75" with 16 to 18 in a cluster.

Description: This vigorous grower can reach 3' or more with a superb-type growth habit. It is an infrequent bloomer with clusters of large pink flowers that hang well outside the foliage. The natural waviness of the leaves shows off the rich maroon underside.

This variety has been tested by Byron Martin of Logee's Greenhouses of N. Danielson, CT. It is also available from Peace Tree Farm, Kintnersville, PA and Steve's Leaves of Lewisville, TX.

distributed in 1992.

First mentioned in a publication in the May/June 1998 *The Begonian*, vol. 65.

Registration applied for August 30, 2013; registration approved July 26, 2014.

Begonia 'Cracklin Rosie' is a cane. Leaves: Dark bronze-green with



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A Word with You: Apex - Obtuse or Acute

By Claudia Goodridge, New Haven, CT

“He missed the apex.” Not words of praise in race car lingo. I hear that phrase as we watch Formula 1 or Indy Car racing. (My husband is a fan and former participant in the sport.) The fastest line around a racetrack curve is as straight a line as possible, which means coming very close to the apex. Miss that line and lose time and maneuverability.

So, *apex* has a high context meaning for me. Mr. Webster says the *apex* in botany is “the end farthest from the point of attachment, or from the base of an organ.” In begonia literature *apex* is the blade tip or the end farthest from the juncture with the petiole to be exact. Tebbitt’s and Thompson’s glossaries agree. We just adopted the Latin *apex*, a point. I rather like the Latin plural, *apices*, but *apexes* is allowed.

Easy enough. Then add the angle of the blade *apex* ... *acute* or *obtuse*.

In geometry, an *acute* angle is less than 90 degrees, an *obtuse* angle greater than 90. In botanical terms, the *acute apex* on a leaf blade is less than 90 degrees and has straight sides. Thompson says “essentially straight or only slightly convex sides.” Golding hedges a bit with “straight sides that do not noticeably change their direction or curvature.” All agree on *obtuse* being blunt, rounded. The *obtuse apex* is greater than 90 degrees, but less than 180 degrees, and can be sharp or rounded per Golding. *B. trianae* has an *acute apex* as do *B. acutifolia* and *B. ‘Maxwellton.’* *B. rosacea* has an *obtuse apex* as do *B. ‘Lil O’Neill’* and *B. scabrida*.

Beyond *acute* and *obtuse apices*, there are further *apical* distinctions, probably to allow Mother Nature her many variations on a theme. Next time you drive around an *acute* or *obtuse apex* in the road, see if you can drive as straight a line as possible and legally cut a fraction of a second off your travel time.

PS - The easiest way to distinguish when 90 degrees isn’t obvious on a leaf blade is to hold a 90 degree corner from a card or paper behind the *apex* in question to see if it falls short of or exceeds 90.

B. tayabensis, acute apex (above). *B. curtii*, obtuse apex (bottom). Photos by Kingsley Langenberg



The Begonian

Adventitious v. Acaulous??



Begonia hispida var. *cucullifera* at the Montreal Botanical Garden. Photo by Craig Boyajian

Watch for the answer in your next *The Begonian* brought to you by A Word With You!

Last month's answer to Picture Quiz

May 2014 issue, page 151 – *B. integerrima*

Scandent or acaulescent?

And the answer is... SCANDENT

Scandent begonias are climbers.

The Begonian January/February 2014, p. 17.



1

A Rare New Begonia from Bolivia's Cerro Chataquila

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

Cerro Chataquila (Fig. 1), located about seven miles from the beautiful Bolivian city of Sucre, must be one of the most dramatic locations at which

I have ever searched for begonias. These sparsely vegetated hills have been eroded into a series of jagged peaks that sit next to what resembles a huge meteorite impact crater (Fig 2). They are also remarkable for being home to over 30 plant species known from nowhere else on earth.

Cerro Chataquila owes its botanical riches in large part to its isolation. These sandstone hills represent an outlier of the much taller Cordillera Real Mountain Range and while lower than most of the mountains in that range they are the only high hills for several miles in any direction. Their height causes them to catch passing clouds and consequently the environment around their summit



2

Fig 1. Cerro Chataquila's jagged summit is home to a new subspecies of *B. clarkei*. Fig 2. Looking down on the crater of Maragua from the summit of Cerro Chataquila. Fig 3. The new subspecies of *B. clarkei* has woolly hairs on its leaf undersurfaces and a ribbed ovary.

Continued pg. 174



3



5



6



4

region is both slightly wetter and cooler than the surrounding area and is similar to that of the distant taller mountains. Long ago plant species from these distant mountains must have dispersed to

Cerro Chataquila, and there, isolated from their source, gradually evolved into new species as they became adapted to the drier environment.

This slow, ongoing process can be witnessed in the rare new begonia (Fig 3) that I am describing from this locality. A new subspecies of *Begonia clarkei* that, while distinct, has not yet diverged enough from the original *B. clarkei* to be considered a different species. This new subspecies differs most obviously from the typical *B. clarkei* (Fig 4, also on back cover) by having a dense cover of wooly hairs on its leaves and ovaries, and by having its ovary wings greatly reduced. It is a remarkable plant that grows in one of the most arid habitats that any begonia, including the typical *B. clarkei*, has managed to colonize. Figures 5 and 6 show a plant of the new subspecies growing in a characteristically dry location at the base of a plant of *Puya herzogii*.

Acknowledgement:

This expedition was made possible by the generous financial support of the ABS, as well as several ABS members and branches. I also wish to thank Luis Huaylla Limachi and Hibert Huaylla for an enjoyable and productive day spent at Cerro Chataquila.

Fig 4. The typical *B. clarkei* lacks white wooly hairs on its leaf undersurfaces and has a winged ovary. Fig 5. Semi-arid habitat of the new subspecies. Fig 6. A closer view of the plant's semi-arid habitat showing the new subspecies growing at the base of a *Puya*.

Illustrating a New Subspecies of *Begonia clarkei*

Article and illustrations by Fuad Abdulkader, California University of Pennsylvania, PA

For two years, I have been illustrating new species of begonias discovered in South America by Dr. Mark Tebbitt. This past fall I was awarded a Morris Mueller Student Research Scholarship to assist me in continuing this work while pursuing my undergraduate studies. This scholarship allowed me to work on a group of five new begonia illustrations. One of these illustrations, that of a new subspecies of *Begonia clarkei* from Cerro Chataquila in Bolivia, is shown here.

Plant illustration is a crucial step in the process of publishing new species. Simple photographs of the plants cannot suffice, since they do not properly reflect the intricate structures of the plant. Illustrations allow for a more schematic representation of the plant that is akin to a blueprint. When I started my first illustration I had to come up with a drawing technique that would clearly show the shapes of different parts of a plant, while being pleasing to the eye. I decided to use simple black lines to show outlines and, in some cases, shapes of organs. Another method

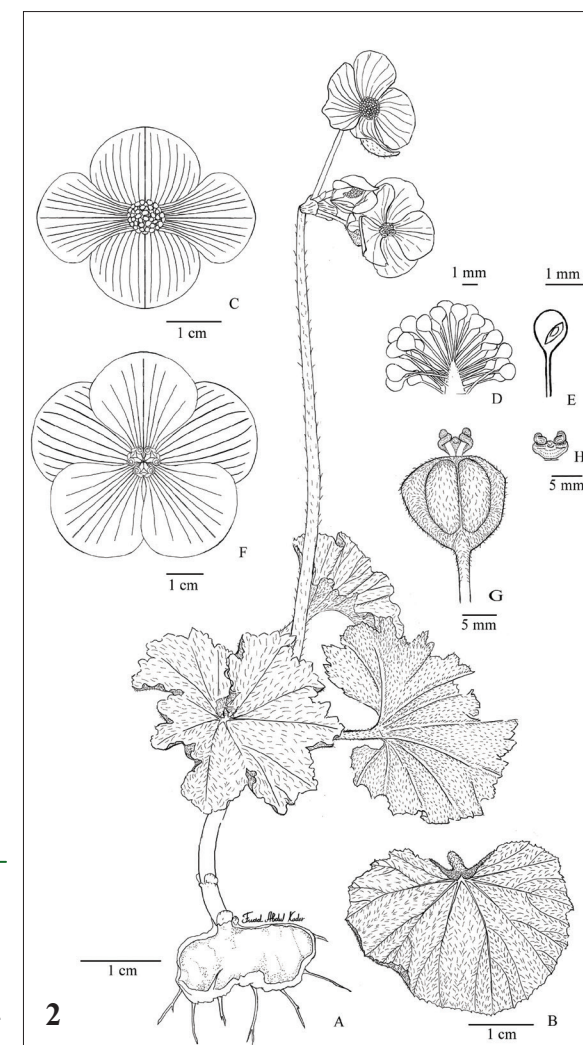
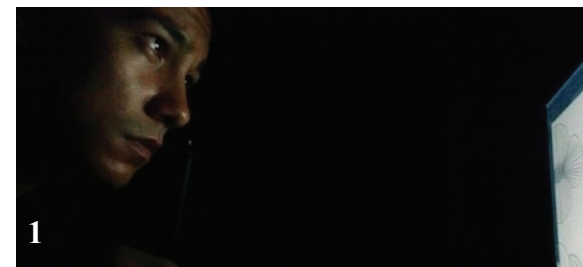
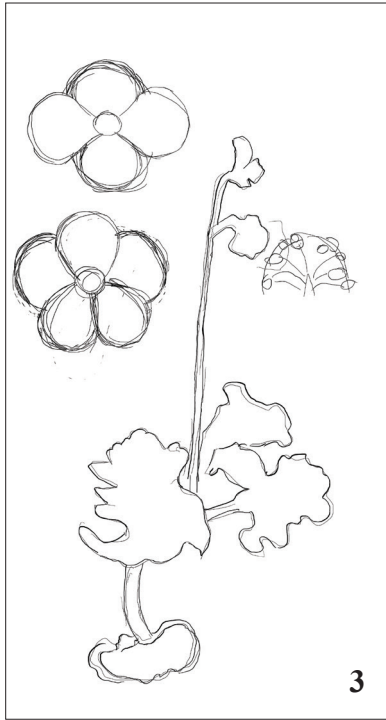
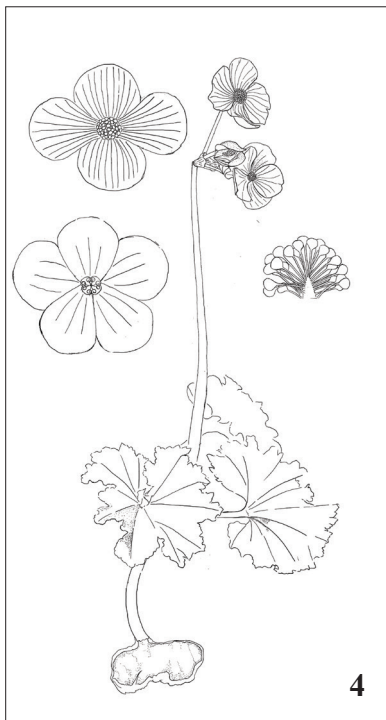


Fig 1. Drawing with a pen tablet and Adobe Photoshop. Fig 2. Completed drawing of the new subspecies of *Begonia clarkei*, showing A. habit, B. leaf, C. male flower, D. androecium, E. stamen, F. female flower, G. fruit, H. stigma and styles.



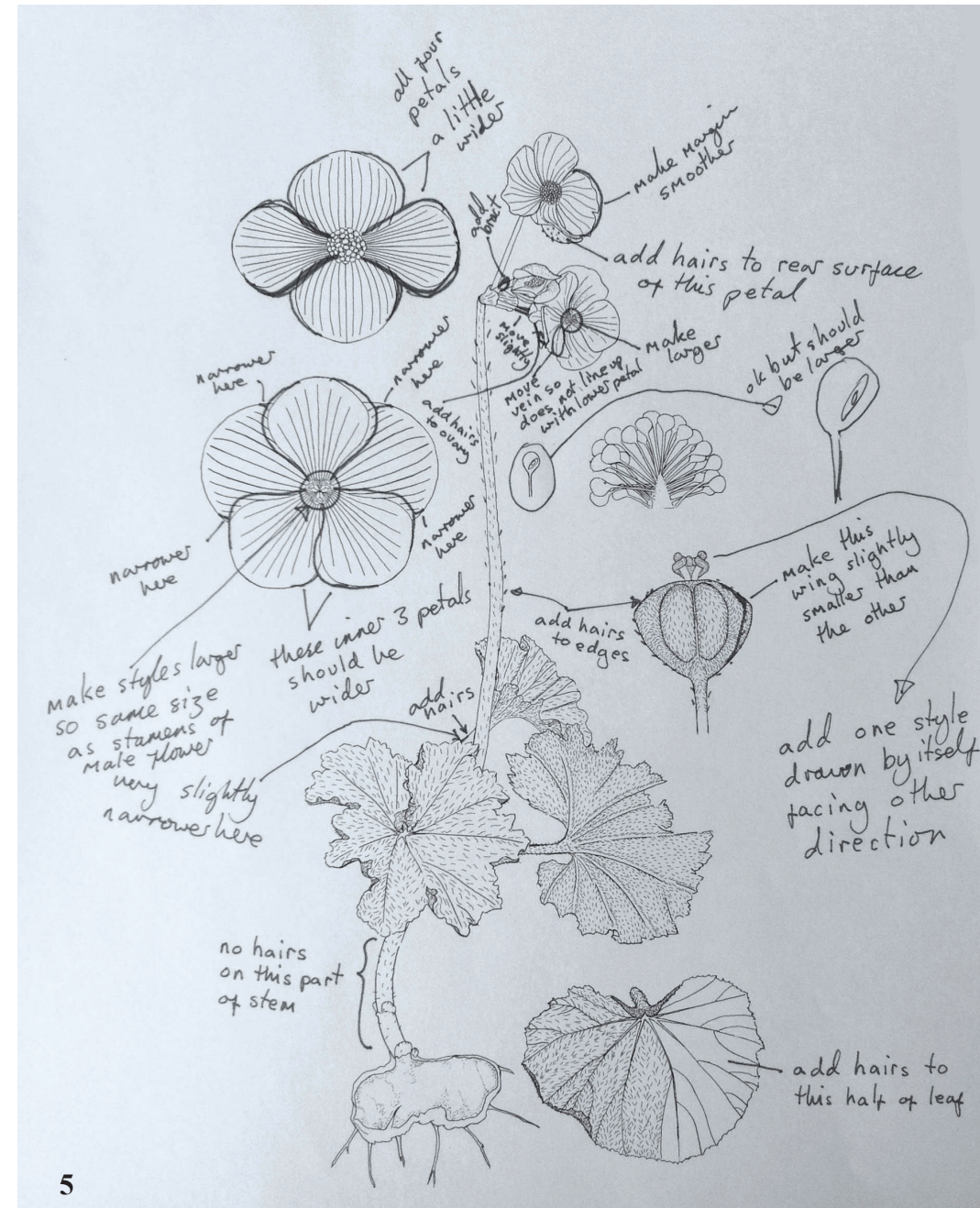
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that I use is stippling (covering area with dots) to indicate various colors. For this particular project, to save time and to ease my workflow, I used digital tools - a pen tablet and Adobe Photoshop (Fig 1), instead of traditional pen, ink and paper. The results, as can be seen on the finished illustration of the new subspecies of *Begonia clarkei* (Fig 2), are of the highest quality and virtually indistinguishable from a traditional pen and ink drawing.

The process of illustration starts off with Dr. Tebbitt providing me with photos and guidelines as to what to include in each drawing. After this I design the first draft (Fig 3) that includes the basic structure of the whole plant, as well as male and female flowers, fruits, and close ups of the reproductive organs. When each part of the plant is drafted, I add details to replicate the three-dimensional structure of each organ (Fig 4). During this step I constantly refer to the various photographs for the best result. When I'm finished I show the draft to Dr. Tebbitt for feedback. Upon receiving an annotated list of changes that have to be made (Fig 5) I start making corrections. This process repeats two or three more times until the final result satisfies Dr. Tebbitt. Usually there are no major problems; however, my only sources of reference are photographs and this sometimes limits what I can illustrate. For example, the styles very often are pretty hard to distinguish from each other and this can result in mistakes on the drawing. This is where feedback from Dr. Tebbitt becomes crucial since he knows the ins and outs of the plant. He figuratively becomes my eyes and helps me finish each illustration. Working with Dr. Tebbitt and the American Begonia Society Scholarship was a great opportunity for a college student like me. Though, my major is in Archaeology, I found this experience to be very rewarding. Since my first illustration I have learned a lot about plant structure and the process of preparing a scientific paper for publication, and it is a great honor to help publish these plant discoveries and make them public knowledge.



5

Fig 3. First draft of the drawing, showing basic shapes and layout. Fig 4. Second draft, with some of the structures now shown in three dimensions. Fig 5. A later draft with annotated feedback from Dr. Tebbitt.

Acknowledgment:

I would like to thank the American Begonia Society and Dr. Tebbitt for giving me an incredible opportunity to be the first person to document these newly discovered plants.



Begonia nurii: *A Limestone Species from Peninsular Malaysia*

Article and photos by
Joanne Tan Pei Chih
Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Last year the Botany Team of Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) has been focusing their exploration on several limestone hills in Peninsular Malaysia because the hills are under threat from quarrying for cement. The exploration aims to obtain biodiversity data for targeted hills and assemble a permanent record by collecting plant specimens with details of habitat and locality. With proper field studies, advice on conservation management could be reported to relevant parties.

From repeated visits to a group of adjacent limestone hills in Pahang, FRIM encountered several populations of *Begonia nurii* that displayed variability in leaf appearance. In the Malaysia Red List, *Begonia nurii* is categorized as Vulnerable (VU) because it is confined to limestone hills in the state of Kelantan and NW Pahang. It usually grows on cool shaded cliff faces covered by a thin layer of soil, decomposed leaf litter and mosses.

Edgar Irmscher, the renowned begonia taxonomist, named this begonia species in honour of



Fig 1 A few cement quarry projects manage get licenses although they would destroy prominent limestone hills known for their unique biodiversity. One limestone hill in Pahang, previously threatened by cement quarrying, thanks to the efforts by the local caving community and Malaysian Nature Society the cement quarrying was stopped. However land clearing for palm oil plantation, some mining activities (gold mining) and some minor illegal plant collection still threatens the biodiversity of the hill. (Photo by P. T. Ong)

Fig 2 The quarry area of this limestone hill in Perak is planned to be extended to the huge block seen on the right despite the area being rich in rare, threatened and endemic flora and fauna. (Photo by P. T. Ong)

Fig 3 The natural habitat of *Begonia nurii* growing on a cliff face at the base of a limestone hill. (Photo by P. T. Ong)



Fig 4 The common dull green form. (Photo by P. T. Ong)
Fig 5 The variant of *Begonia nurii* with glabrous leaves and yellow green blotches between the veins. (Photo by P. T. Ong)
Fig 6 The form with yellow-green blotched leaved with minute hairs. (Photo by P. T. Ong)
Fig 7 A completely green leaf with minute hairs on the surface.
Fig 8 The glabrous green form.



Mohamed Nur bin Mohamed Ghous, who collected the *Begonia nurii* type specimen with F. W. Foxworthy in 1924. Mohamed Nur was the Herbarium Assistant and Plant Collector in Singapore Botanic Gardens. He visited most parts of Peninsular Malaysia exploring unbotanized forest during the British colonial period.

The *Begonia nurii* variants encountered included leaves either dark green, green, or green with yellow-green blotches between veins or even bronze-green similar to those of *Begonia rajah*. Some populations had rounded blades, while others appeared slightly asymmetric with an obtuse tip. The degree of leaf rugosity also varied, but all had venation impressed above and prominent beneath. The leaves were usually glabrous above and hairy beneath. However, we also found populations with short hairs on both sides. All *Begonia nurii* observed have pale red to red petioles covered with dense soft hairs, creating a pretty contrast of colour and texture to the leaf blade.

We collected a few leaves and plantlets from different variegated populations for

ex-situ cultivation in the nursery. They grow well in good drainage potting mix and even better in potting mix with an addition of 50% coarse crushed bricks. Established plants thrive better under cool shade rather than in bright shaded condition. They are a rather easy begonia species to cultivate.

Begonia nurii is narrowly distributed on limestone hills within two states; but each particular variant only grows on a single hill. This means that very rare variants are especially vulnerable to habitat disturbance or degradation. Losing any elite gene corresponding to a unique leaf form is a great loss for the horticultural trade and presents a challenge to sustain them in nature. With less genetic diversity, in long term, the species is unlikely adapt to environment stress. Maintaining *ex-situ* plants attempts to prevent extinction of rare species, but it is still questionable as a conservation method in Malaysia as it requires a long-term commitment of skilled personnel and a steady flow of funding.

Peninsular Malaysia's limestone hills are mostly not legally protected, quarrying is the

main threat and causes irreversible damage causing extinction to rare flora and fauna within a short period of time. Unfortunately, to date, biodiversity has taken a back seat while commercial exploitation goes ahead.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Malaysia (MOSTI) under the 'Flora of Peninsular Malaysia project' (01-04-01-000 Khas) and 'Documentation & Inventory of Flora of Malaysia project' for funding the expedition to limestone hills in Peninsular Malaysia. To Dr. Ruth Kiew for editing and comments on the article; and to Mr. Ong Poh Teck for permission to use his photographs.

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Contact the author at: Joanne Tan, Forest Research Institute Malaysia, (FRIM), 52109 Kepong, Selangor, Malaysia, Email: joannetan@frim.gov.my



Fig 9 The dark green form. (Photo by P. T. Ong)
Fig 10 and 11 The bronze-green form of *Begonia nurii* (left) similar to the blades of *Begonia rajah* (right). (Photo by P. T. Ong)

2015 ABS National Convention Welcome to New England – 2nd Edition



Castle Hill Lighthouse on Rams Head and Narragansett Bay, Newport, Rhode Island, February 15, 2004. Photo courtesy of Alexey Sergeev, <http://www.asergeev.com>

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Hello future 2015 convention attendees, should you wish to extend your stay at the convention, please enjoy learning about things to do in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Maine. It was hard to limit the list of attractions and activities to the below. In all New England states enjoy whale watching, lighthouses, and all of the lobster you can eat!

Providence, RI

- Roger Williams Park and Zoo
- Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, showcasing art from Paul Revere's silver to the avant-garde works of recent alumni.

Newport, RI

- Newport mansions including The Breakers built by the Vanderbilt family and The Elms
- Fort Adams State Park
- Castle Hill Light House

Maine

- Portland Museum of Art and historic homes and buildings
- Scenic tours of the coast of Maine
- Rocky beaches with exquisite views

New Hampshire

- Portsmouth, Strawberry Banke Museum, historic homes and buildings
- White Mountains, scenic railroads and skyride

In the next Begonian Buxton will provide information on tours and other events related to the 2015 Convention.

Visit Buxton's website at www.Buxton-Begonia.org.

The Zen of Growing Begonias in the Terrarium We Know as Miami

by Lee Sinoff, Miami, FL, professional_resources@att.net

Yogi Berra, one of the greatest catchers ever in Major League Baseball, was also an outfielder and manager. He spent his entire 19-year playing career with the New York Yankees. As a player, coach or manager, Yogi appeared in 21 World Series—including 13 winning series—and he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972.

With all of his accolades earned in baseball, Yogi may be best known today for his, let's just say *distinctive* quotes, more than for his baseball achievements.

You know, the Yogi-isms we chuckle at: "It ain't over til it's over!" And, "This feels like deja vu, all over again." And, "You can observe a lot by watching." Aside from their subdued-yet-blatant wit, all Yogi-isms conveyed insight and wisdom.

While Yogi quit school in the eighth grade, Miami's own Tim Anderson not only earned an undergraduate degree, he also went on to earn a Master's. Of course, Tim is known throughout the begonia world, figuratively and literally, primarily for his amazing begonia hybrids. In Tim's case, his undergraduate and graduate degrees played key roles in Tim's drive to feed his passion for begonias and horticulture and floraculture in general.

Yogi-isms, which have added so much color to our verbal landscape, may well have been delivered precisely for their humor, more than for their true insight and wisdom.

On the other hand, Tim-isms capture and convey the purity of their focused insight and wisdom, wrapped with the merest twinge of humor to keep them from being out-and-out profound.

For example, at a Miami Begonia Society meeting 10 years

Three begonias on the left maintain their position and prominence, but the path loses its way to overgrowing foliage from the right and the left.



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Follow That Hose ! (top) The green 'water-snake' in the lower right-hand corner indicates where a clear path existed just a few weeks earlier, while assorted begonias in hanging baskets anticipate the sun breaking over the three-tier plant stand a few feet away.

The leeward side of a home-made, three-tier plant stand (bottom) is about to 'enjoy its slice' of sun, passing overhead. Even though there is a small, limited gap between a rolled-up shade cloth on top of the plant stand and an oak-charged canopy this side of the stand, the sun is strong enough to bleach out the cane's rich green color, yet the rex radiates its color... for the moment, since that color will also fade in the sun's presence, but return with the shade.

or so ago, Tim was asked about begonias' ability to deal with the volatility of Miami's natural environment, including the wide range in extreme conditions, such as intense broiling sun; hot, muggy days and nights; oppressive heat; and humidity so thick, you can wave your hand through the air and collect water drops in your palm. Tim began his answer by simply saying, "We live in a Terrarium !"

The Hot & Steamy Tropics

The comment earned a slight laugh from some people, but that wasn't Tim's goal. The statement did reflect Tim's absolute skill as a master of understatement.

Many people thought he was just making one of his subtle jokes—which he did so gracefully, they often elicited intense smiles, rather than outright laughter. But, some of us hearing Tim's comment immediately recognized he was giving us an important, essential key to begonia success in South Florida.

Thinking about Tim's observation and the valuable insight it totally captured, an image of sweltering, steamy, jungle scenes from Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* easily comes to mind.

Growing zone maps notwithstanding, here in Miami we do live on the edge of the tropics. And, we know that relative humidity, expressed as a percentage value, measures the amount of moisture in the air, compared to the maximum amount of moisture the air can hold at the same temperature and pressure—with 100% used as a benchmark for rain.

Miami does indeed have extreme levels of high humidity through much of the year. In fact, the Florida Climate Center, under the Office of the State Climatologist, reports that Miami's average morning relative humidity level is 83%, while Miami's average afternoon relative humidity level is just 61%.

You may be very surprised to learn that Miami doesn't have a lock on high humidity. The average morning and afternoon relative humidity for Eugene, OR is 91% and 60%; Asheville, NC 90%, 57%; Houston, TX 89%, 65%; St. Paul Island, AK 88%, 83%; New Orleans 87%, 65%; Chattanooga 86%, 56%; San Francisco 84%, 62%; Indianapolis 84%, 62%; Orlando 90%, 55%; Tampa 88%, 57%; and Tallahassee 91%, 54%.

High humidity can serve to keep moisture high in pots and containers, especially if the individual plants aren't getting enough direct sunlight, or really bright bright-shade to cause the plants to process the moisture.

We may talk about begonias being shade-loving plants and their enjoying bright shade and speckled sunlight. But, in our own experience, some begonias literally need direct sunlight hitting their leaves, more or less, for at least some time during the average day, in order to process and consume some water in the potting medium.

That more or less part of the statement could be a throw-away remark in some casual conversations, but not in this one. In Miami, some begonias do literally need more actual sun, while other begonias literally need less actual sun.

That's complicated by two things: (1) Often, the begonias which look like they cannot handle a lot of sun are the very ones which need more sun, and the begonias which look like they can handle more sun are often the very ones which can't! (2) The second complication is: In many cases, we don't know which begonias need more sun and which begonias need less sun until we've killed more than a few in the course of figuring which is which.

And, then, wouldn't you know it, as soon as

we think we've got it all figured out... it's the next day, and a whole new set of dynamics are stirring the pot!

Add Intense Sun to the Mix

Anyone who thinks Miami's tropical sun is just a casual player in this drama should watch the sunburn scenes from *The Heartbreak Kid* several dozen times.

In June, when the sun travels east to west straight overhead, it could easily be possible for someone's begonias to experience 10–12 hours of broiling sun, if there are no trees, shrubs or artificial covering to break or soften the sun's rays.

In December, when the sun is low on the southern horizon moving east to west, direct sun may only be available for 4–5 hours—and not necessarily broiling. It may also facilitate more angled, softer bright shade, in being a very good friend to begonias.

Let's not forget that South Florida has a genuine rainy season, beginning some time in May and continuing through October, often with daily morning and afternoon monsoon showers, giving way to severe thunderstorms. June, July, August, and September see the heaviest overall rainfall and most severe storms.

The combination of high humidity, bright sun, heavy heat, and frequent rain can mean that some plants and trees will seemingly grow several feet overnight. And, that can have its own impact on begonias, which are patiently waiting for the speckled sun to filter through the cover overhead, only to realize that the overhead growth has created a deep shade environment in place of the bright shade which was there just days before. In that situation, it's easy for potted begonias and hanging baskets to retain more moisture than the plants can process or handle.

And, woe to the person who mistakenly plants vines—*aristolochia*, *pasiflora*, *thunbergia*, etc.—and forgets to cut them back on a regular basis. Vines love humidity. In fact, stand too close to them for too long, and you may end up starring in a local remake of Robin William's urban jungle movie, *Jumanji*. Vines also love eating bright-shade locations.

A Zen Question to Ponder

Zen Questions—you know, '*If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?*'—are not asked necessarily to arrive at any specific answer but, rather to use as a point of pondering... to initiate contemplation.

The goal of Zen Questions is the contemplation itself, not the actual answer. The answer could change in any number of ways, depending on the conditions, the situation, the factors involved, the shifting nature of all the above and the awareness of that shifting nature, which we bring to it.

And, so it is with one question associated with the *Zen of Growing Begonias in the Terrarium We Call Miami*.

The question is: Is it better to put begonias in a place where they will be asked to endure X amount of broiling sun, for X number of minutes or hours during a typical day. Or, is it better to place begonias where the humidity, the potential rain, a weather front which can hang the rain in the area for days at a time, blocking any sun, where access to bright anything can not only be limited but also potentially completely compromised?

Basically, the question can be reduced to: Should our begonias potentially fry, or rot?

As Tim Anderson would say... "That's a very good question. And, the answer is, clearly, 'Yes'."

B. sizemoreae and Its New Hybrids

By Bernard Yorke, Brisbane Australia

Whilst I have been collecting and hybridizing begonias, as well as other plants for over 40 years, my main love has been begonias, especially those grown for their foliage with little maintenance. Whilst I greatly admire the rex varieties, I have only used them occasionally for pollination purposes, and that was quite some years ago. In short, I want to grow plants which do not require spraying for mildew and other problems.

Over the years I have endeavored to produce attractive foliage on sturdy plants that the average grower, or even

new collector, can grow with little pain of loss.

In the last 5 years I have been intrigued with *sizemoreae*, particularly that it can grow quite easily all year around, especially in Brisbane winters where we have only a few weeks of frost, if at all..then one never knows these days what winters are going to be like. All my bush houses are of sarlon shade cloth and protected from the westerly winds. I grow all my plants in a mix bought from a particular chain store because it has good drainage. I use that as a base, together with leaf

Continued on next page



Begonia 'Yorke's Whitsunday'



mold and other light sand.

However, I have made the observation that time and time again, plants planted at the very edge of the pot grow quickly and well..in fact, all the best foliage is usually when the rhizome is over the edge of the pot. This has been proven time and time again, due to the fact that the plant likes to feel pot bound. However, this causes a couple of problems, firstly that the plant becomes quite lopsided and needs stones in the bottom of the pot to keep it upright, and secondly, the mature plant is not suitable for exhibition purposes due to its lopsidedness and not being centrally grown in the pot.

Back to *sizemoreae*, another hybridizer friend of mine used the pollen from *sizemoreae* on a couple of other hybrids, and at six months, we thought we had quite

a variety of attractive foliage. However, at 12 months, all appeared identical to *sizemoreae*, even though *sizemoreae* had only been used as the pollen parent. I was lucky to acquire a few of these seedlings as I was confident that their strong chromosomes would be somewhat diluted...I was right!

I have used these *sizemoreae* hybrids with the beautiful *B. U400*, some chinese species, *delociosa*, even the lovely 'Little Brother Montgomery'. I am still excited at what the future holds and now share with you some of the most recent hybrids, these photos being taken in the past few days, which here in Brisbane, is right in the middle of our winter.

I will be sharing with you some of the other hybridization I have done in recent years in a separate article soon.



Begonia 'Logan Beauty' (opposite page, top).
B. 'Yorkes Rondo' (top). *B. 'Yorkes Shadowland'* (bottom)

In Memoriam: Russ Richardson



Russ receiving the picture of the begonia named for him in November 2013.

Mary Elizabeth Moultrie, Atlanta, GA

Many of us are thinking that heaven must be full of the most beautiful begonias. We know for certain that it is filled with some of the most remarkable people that we have ever had the privilege of knowing. Every month there seems to arrive the news of the death of another beloved member: Rudy, Marge, John, Irene, Millie and Ed, Joy, Gene and the list grows. This month the Greater Atlanta Branch is saddened by the news of the death of one of our founders, long time president and number one cheerleader for the love and knowledge of begonias. There were so many more reasons for our love of Russ Richardson.

His enthusiasm for all things growing and good was infectious. Indeed because of Russ, we as a group have grown and thrived. As with all of these stalwart members of the American Begonias Society, Russ had many interests and accomplishments. In addition to growing begonias, his hobby was being a ham radio operator. In his professional life, he started with a four year stint in the Air Force. After the war he attended Bethany College in West Virginia. His degree upon graduation was in sociology; and for the next forty years, Russ was a tireless worker in the fields of psychiatric and social causes. For many years he was the Executive Director of Planned Parenthood. When Russ moved to Atlanta in 1964, he became the Southeast Regional Director of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. In Atlanta, Russ was also a Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Emory University. He did much traveling in his job, and he would always look up the "begonia people" wherever he was. Therefore many of you have met and enjoyed Russ' company over the years. Other than obtaining two masters' degrees while he attended several different colleges, his other accomplishment while at college was meeting his beautiful wife of 67 years, Fern. I have always said that Russ had the perfect combination—beautiful begonias and his own beautiful "Fern." While we are grieving, we are extremely proud that Russ had the desire and drive to found the Greater Atlanta Branch. We have all been enriched by our having known him and each other. I would like to encourage all of you to attend your local chapter meetings as well as the national conventions whenever it is possible. It was at my local chapter meetings that I came to know and love Russ, and it has been at the national conventions that I have come to know and admire so many of our begonia greats. As much fun and excitement as it is getting more begonias at the conventions, the greater joy has been getting to know all of the wonderful people who are so willing to share their knowledge of begonias. Many plants are gone, but the memories and knowledge remain.

Our Goldie's Gone

by Bobbie West, Stanton, CA

It is with a heavy heart that I must pass on the news that another one of our wonderful begonia hybridizers has gone on to "Begonia Heaven". Mrs. Goldie Frost, the creator of over 50 registered and unregistered begonias in the 70's, 80's and early 90's, left a beautiful legacy. She passed away this last July 13th, just 4 months short of her 99th birthday.

She was born in Virginia on Nov. 16, 1915, one of 10 children. One sister survives her. She met Doug Frost in the late 40's and they married and moved to Idaho. In 1950 they moved down to Garden Grove and bought a house on a very large lot. When she and Doug started growing begonias and other shade loving plants they filled up their back yard with everything. Goldie got interested in hybridizing, and started with begonias.

She and Doug formed the Garden Grove Begonia Society in 1973, later to be named the Doug Frost Begonia Society, after he suffered several strokes in 1993 and 1994 and passed on.

She has created some very beautiful begonias, and named a lot of them after her children and friends.

Some of the ones that we can still find in our neighbors' backyards are 'Frost's Yosemite', 'Kathy Brown', 'Joy Blair', 'Tim O'Reilly', 'Estrada', 'Cosie', 'Dorothy Behrends', 'Frosty Knight', 'Garden Grove' and so many more. Many of these can be found at the Sherman Gardens in Corona del Mar, California.

She and Doug had 3 children, all of whom still live in the Southern California area. There was no memorial service in this area. Her body was sent to Idaho to be buried beside Doug, her soul mate.

There is just so much to say about Goldie. I wish I had the space to put it all down. Everyone I talked to said she was the sweetest, most generous person they ever knew. And I second that. I met her in 2006 and we became friends very quickly.

For any of you that remember her and would like to do something in remembrance of her, her son, Clyde, has asked in lieu of flowers to please send donations, or cuttings of any of her hybrids to the Alfred D. Robinson Branch in San Diego, in care of Michael Ludwig. His address is 6040 Upland St, San Diego, CA 92114.

The Alfred D. Robinson Branch is being dedicated to the preservation of our classic begonia collections from some of our foremost hybridizers. For a list of Goldie's hybrids, send a stamped, self-addressed #10 envelope to me and I will send it to you. Or, just e-mail me at bboopfans@aol.com and my address is 10550 Western Ave. #133, Stanton CA 90680.



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Potting Mix 101

by Greg Sytch, Horticultural Correspondent, gsytych@cs.com

Here in Florida, one of our biggest issues is finding a potting mix that dries enough during our hot, humid summers. From May until late September, dewpoints regularly soar above 70F, and combined with the rainy season where we can get inches of rain per day, or storm, the obvious problem of getting your soil to dry out is constant. Most begonias do not enjoy being wet so often.

One of the best ways to keep the soil drying out is to not repot after April. While that may not be an option if a begonia is rootbound, it does allow the soil to dry out. A rootbound plant can dry out even under the most humid conditions. However, a plant that dries out too much can suffer. Usually the taller canes, growing to six feet or more, may need repotting. They become susceptible to blowing over in our storms if the soil is too dry. One may not always be there to keep the soil watered during a dry spell, rare as they may be.

Potting mixes vary across the country, with different recipes and different brands used, amended, and swore at. I have found that lately, peat moss is staying wetter than it use to, and that causes unhappy begonias. Finding a mix that can dry out is the key.

Once using a national brand potting mix (professional from supply

houses), I have switched to making my own once again. I have found that purchasing a bale of Fafard Peat moss, dry, and amending it myself, has worked better than out of the bag mixes. We have pine bark mulch available to us here in large bags, inexpensively, and it makes a great aggregate along with perlite. Those ingredients mixed together create about as light of a mix as I can make. Using charcoal in the mix helps, too, but charcoal is a commodity hard to come by. I do try to bake the peat moss and pine bark in the Florida sun to ensure I am using them rather dry, and when repotting, I may not even water in the plant if the forecast is for heavy storms. Allowing the natural rainfall to do the job seems to help.

If your mix is too wet, experiment with some of the alternatives. Coco Peat may be an excellent base in areas with lower humidity. I have found that to be a poor choice in our wet climate. Vermiculite helps soil to stay loose, and I prefer the hard to get larger particles. Different brands of peat have different quality. Even Sponge Rock (extra large chunky perlite) helps, but it is not cheap! Once a mix works under your conditions, stock up! Do not wait until you need it, only to find it is out of stock or discontinued. I found that out the hard way once.

Happy growing!

Greg

In the Mailbox



B. chlorosticta

Article and photo by Leora Fuentes

I have grown *B. chlorosticta* (brown variety, pictured above) for at least 10 years and this year is the first time it has bloomed. This plant was originally given to me by Bill Ash from England. I grow it with my collection of terrariums on stainless steel shelving with shop lights attached to each shelf. I have always used fluorescent light bulbs with good success. Recently I had to replace a shop light fixture so I decided to try some grow lights. It was after I bought the grow lights that *B. chlorosticta* bloomed. I also have the green variety on the same shelf and it has not bloomed yet.

B. chlorosticta is from Sarawak, Malaysia and is classified as a shrub-like begonia. This plant prefers cooler temperatures and high humidity so I keep it on the bottom shelf. During the warm months I set my timers to come on at 8:00 p.m. and off at 7:00 a.m. I also have a fan that runs 24 hours a day.

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NEW: *Begonia Hybridizing: By The Hybridizers*, Edited by Freda Holley, published through the Millie Thompson Publication Fund, March 2013.

This great new book by Freda Holley is filled with articles written by some of our most famous, prolific and successful hybridizers. It is a philosophy of hybridizing divided into three parts and includes articles by Ross Bolwell, Walter Dworkin, Freda Holley, Gregory Sytch, Chuck Ades, Brad Thompson, Patrick Worley and Rudolf Ziesenhenné. The pictures are many and stunning.

Domestic: \$21.00

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Note Cards from the Jack Golding Collection

Eight cards with envelopes, each card a different begonia species. This collection of botanical illustrations is part of a series of renderings by Jack's daughter, Marilyn Golding White. The cards were used as Jack's Season's Greetings cards to his friends and associates.

\$15.00

ABS Bookstore

Begoniaceae, Edition 2, Part I: Annotated Species List, Part II: Illustrated Key, Abridgement & Supplement

Jack Golding & Dieter C. Wasshausen, 2002, Smithsonian Institution, Volume 43: 1-289

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Seeing Begonia

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An invaluable source book for the beginning or advanced begonia hybridizer.

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Begonia Notes

by Rudolf Ziesenhenné

Reissued by the Thelma O'Reilly Reprint Fund. Originally printed in the Santa Barbara Branch, La Begonia Barbareña.

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Begonias – 1984 Update

by Mildred L. Thompson

Reissued 2009, "An addendum for particular portions of *Begonias: The Complete Reference Guide* (Times Books, 1981). Includes species and hybrids and many pictures.

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continued next page

San Diego Plant Show and Sale

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Begonia lyallii var. lyallii f. masoalensis in bloom.

Photo by Craig Boyajain

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Mari-Jean Anderson saw and photographed this begonia (possibly *nelumbifolia*) while she was kayaking down the Hillsborough River in Florida.

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Book Store... Jan Brown, 310-670-4471, begoniabrown@yahoo.com.

Branch Relations... Tom Keepin, 4513 Randwick Drive Houston, TX 77092-8343; 713-686-8539; thomas.keepin@gmail.com

Business Manager... vacant

Conservation... Johanna Zinn, 4407 Jensen Place, Fairfax, VA 22032, 703-323-7513, jazinn@cox.net

Convention Advisor... Mary Sakamoto, 13362 Mount Hood Dr., Santa Ana, CA 92705; 714-852-3695; m.sakamoto@sbcglobal.net

Convention Chairs... Margaret Sporer, 10049 Glenmore Ave. Bradenton, FL 34202, 941-351-8486, pspor2@verizon.net; Dale Sena, 816 W. Braddock St, Tampa, FL 33603, 813-221-0567. Convention email begoniaconvention2014@aol.com

Entries/Classification... Vacant

Facebook Manager... John Boggan, dcbegonias@gmail.com

Grants Committee... Martin E. Delgado, P.O. Box 39685, Downey, CA 90239; 562-310-8380; mdlbrarian@consultant.com

Historian... Sandra Threadcraft, 3058 Weslock Circle, Decatur, Georgia 30034; 404-243-8686; Sunmoontrine@yahoo.com

Horticultural Correspondent... Gregory Sytch, 6329 Alaska Avenue, New Port Richey, FL 34653-4301; 727-841-9618; gsytch@cs.com

The Begonian November/ December 2014

Deadline Date September 28

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Internet Editor... Julie Vanderwilt, 720 Mission Park Drive, Santa Barbara, CA 93105; Phone 805-687-8033 vanderwilt@cox.net

Judging... Maxine Zinman, 2770 Kimble Rd., Berryville, VA 22611; 540-955-4555; begonia@visuallink.com

Members-at-Large... Sandy Boyd, 5 Walnut Circle, Chico, CA 95973; 530-891-5760; smacboyd@gmail.com

Membership... Paul Rothstein, 2 Flock Lane, Bella Vista, AR 72714; paroan2001@yahoo.com

Nomenclature...

Registrar of Hybrids... Priscilla Purinton, 129 Queens River Drive, West Kingston, RI 02892; 401-782-8154 or 401-688-0678, ppurinton@gmail.com.

Parliamentarian... Linda Lawson, 525 Terrace Place, Norman, OK 73069-5034; 405-364-2425

Public Relations... vacant

Save Our Species Coordinator... Johanna Zinn, 4407 Jensen Place, Fairfax, VA 22032, 703-323-7513, jazinn@cox.net

Seed Fund... Dean Turney, 467 Fulvia Street, Encinitas, CA 92024; dean@deansmail.us

Slide Library... Charles Jaros, 106 Pine Valley Ct. DeBary, FL 32713; 407-687-5621; cjbegonia@yahoo.com

Unidentified Species (U Numbers)... Co-Chairs: Charles Jaros, 106 Pine Valley Ct., DeBary, FL 32713 407-687-5621; cjbegonia@yahoo.com

Mary Bucholtz, 1560 Lancaster Terr., #1008, Jacksonville, FL 32204; 904-353-9111



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