AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH

OF THE AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 8 NEWSLETTER AUGUST, 2014

NO MEETING AUGUST 24

August 15 2 P.M. -7 P.M.

August 16 10 A.M.- 7

August 17 11 A.M.-5

Austin Area Begonias of Home and Garden Show

AUGUST 22-23 :

American Begonia Society Annual Meeting

Fort Worth Botanical Garden

SEPTEMBER 9 AAGC

SEPTEMBER 13

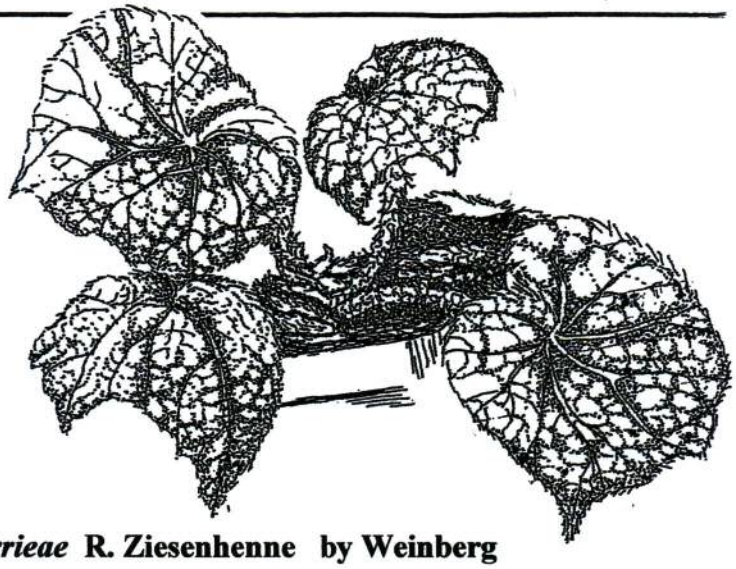
Monarch Butterfly Event

2015:

American Begonia Society Convention

"Begonia Revolution"

New England July 29-August 2, 2015



B. *carrieae* R. Ziesenhenne by Weinberg

B. *carrieae* was first discovered in Ocosocoautla in Chiapas, Mexico on April 13, 1967, by Thomas MacDougall. Rudolf Ziesenhenne described it in the May, 1978, issue of *The Begonian.* Its name comes from Carrie Karegeannes, the nomenclature director of the American Begonia Society at that time. It is a rhizomatous in the begonia Magnusia section. Its large lobed leaves are bright lime green with a rugose surface with deep set veins, giving them a puffy effect.

The leaves are also covered with scale-like hairs that divide into longer terminal hairs. The white flowers that appear in late winter and early spring have tepals 3/4 of an inch long. B. *carrieae* can be grown under lights about fourteen inches from the surface of a shelf. A very coarse loose mix such as two parts sphagnum moss, one part vermiculite, one part perlite, and two tablespoons of powdered horticultural lime is recommended for a four inch clay pot since the roots need air. The plant also needs to dry out between waterings and it must have humidity and cool temperatures.

AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH OF A.B.S.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD JULY 26, 2014

The Austin Area Begonia Society Branch of the American Begonia Society met Sunday, July 26, 2014, in the Greene Room of the Austin Area Garden Center, 2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX 78746 at 2 P.M. with the following members present:

Doug Byrom, Vickey Cole, Ken Fuchs, Jackie Johnson, Jim Landers, Arlene Lantz, Julie Marcus, Nelda Moore, Valerie Morris, and Lynn Sissney.

President Doug Byrom called the meeting to order at 2:15 P.M. after everyone had selected a plate full of wonderful food from the Pot Luck Luncheon.

During the October 18 Birthday Celebration of the Austin Area Garden Center the Begonia Society determined that begonias will not be sold on that day in the Oak Grove in Zilker Botanical Gardens.

The Home and Garden Show will open from 2 P.M. until 7 P. M. on Friday, August 15, from 10 A.M. until 7 P.M. on Saturday, and 11 A.M. until 5 P.M. on Sunday. The Begonia Society will sell begonias, but some will be free when a new member completes a membership form. Hopefully, that person will join in the fun and return each month to be with the group. Nelda will provide information about growing begonias and the membership form.

Since the American Begonia Society Annual Board Meeting will be August 22 and 23 in the Fort Worth Botanic Garden with hotel reservations at the Hilton Garden Inn, 912 Northton Street, Fort Worth, TX 76104, the local society will not meet August 24.

Ken Fuchs will set up Facebook for begonias.

Plans were discussed to attract more members by giving programs at nurseries such as the Great Outdoors or the Natural Gardener during the spring.

The meeting was adjourned, and the program on propagation proved to be fun, exciting, and educational as members worked and accumulated new varieties of begonias as well as some other shade loving plants.

Respectfully submitted,

Nelda Moore, Secretary

B. diadema

Cultivated hybrid or wild species? Rekha Morris

B. diadema Rodigas [Platycentrum] has been in cultivation since 1882 [Tebbitt, M. Begonias, 2005, 114-115]. Despite this over 130-year-old history, its origins have remained cloaked in mystery and/or misinformation.

According to one account regarding the origins of *B. diadema*, it is said to have arrived in Belgium with some orchids from Borneo and named and marketed under its current name by nurseryman, John Linden. *B. diadema's* origin in Borneo has been rightly questioned, as this species has not been found in

Borneo. Moreover, it is closely related not to species from this tropical island but to Himalayan begonias from NE India such as *B. rex* Putzeys. Since it was this same nurseryman, John Linden, who is responsible for disseminating a similar story regarding the origins of *B. rex* Putzeys [Tebbitt, 2005, p.202], such colourful accounts appear dubious at best. According to Linden, he found this legendary species growing in the axil of, what else but an orchid!

An alternative assumption regarding the origin of *B. diadema* has been that it is, as described by Dr. Tebbitt, "an artificial hybrid." In discussing *B. diadema* and *B. deliciosa*, both of which have been hybridized with the *B. rex*-cultorum group, Dr. Tebbitt goes on to state that "Indeed they may even represent early hybrids of this group" [Tebbitt, 2005, p.115].

Since my initial and accidental introduction to this plant through one of the lavish plant sales at an ABS convention around 2006, I had assumed that it was indeed a hybrid due to the ease with which I was able to grow it. When I began to familiarize myself with species begonias from India around 2005, *B.*

diadema was not among the species I thought of as Indian in origin. C. B.Clarke's 1879 coverage of the begonias of India naturally does not include this species among those described by him as having their origins in India [which at that time included Nepal and Burma, now Myanmar] as this species was not known until a few years after this publication. When I began documenting Indian species I used Clarke's coverage as my guide, so *B. diadema* was not among the list of species I expected to encounter in my efforts to compile a current, well-documented list of Indian species begonias.

My first encounter with a small colony of 3-4 plants with palmate foliage, and the characteristic irregular maculation of white dots and dashes on either side of the central vein of each lobe occurred quite by chance in 2009 in Arunachal. I photographed these plants thinking that I had found yet another form of *B. palmata*. It was not until I returned to the USA and began to organize and edit my photos that it occurred to me that I might have found *B. diadema*.

We had arrived at this forest site quite unintentionally. Having taken a wrong turn we got lost, and ended up at a steep, narrow river gorge with the metal bridge across it broken and dangling in mid air. Since this forest was the home of wild elephants, whose fresh droppings attested to their presence in the vicinity, I was rushed out of the area and had no way of retracing my way back.

This year I was fortunate to be assigned the same security officer who had accompanied me in 2009, and was responsible for rushing me out of the forest where we had been lost. As we embarked on this trip to document species Begonias in Arunachal, I asked him if it might be possible for him to find his way back to the same forest. He was amused by the request but said that he would try once we got closer to the area.

Within the first three days of this 2013-2014 trip I was fortunate to document two species,

which I had not seen before. Elated by these two 'new' finds at the initial stage of my trip, I found myself preoccupied with the notion of finding more 'new' species. The small colony of begonias resembling *B. diadema*, which I had photographed in 2009, was no longer in my thoughts!

In heading westwards from the eastern side of Arunachal we had to cross some dozen wide rivers, which at this time were mostly dry, as they had not yet begun to swell with the monsoon rains. There were either no bridges across the narrow, often swift running streams of water in these river beds, or the bridges were hastily set up, insecure wooden structures, which would collapse with the onslaught of the monsoons. Several of these rivers ran through or along the edges of a lowland forest with dirt tracks used by trucks. In the absence of regular roads connecting some of these districts of Arunachal these dirt tracks provided short cuts, which often reduced travel time by as much as 4-5 hours were one willing to take a chance on these isolated and difficult tracks.

Since I had been in this lowland forest on three previous trips and had never seen a single begonia, as we began to drive through this forest I settled back to take the catnaps, which enabled me to travel for weeks with as little as 3 to 4 hours of sleep each night. As we bumped along, we hit a boggy and heavily rutted stretch where the greater force of the jolting vehicle roused me from my catnap. I woke up to hear the chauffeur talking to the security officer, and wondering if he had taken a wrong turn, as he had no idea where we were.

I began looking for my compass as this had occurred previously in this same forest where there were no signs and no humans to guide us out of the maze of dirt tracks. As I searched for my compass I happened to look out of the window, and reacted with a low scream. I was so astounded at what I saw in the section of forest we were passing through that I could make no other sound. The chauffeur slammed the brakes, and both he and the security officer looked at me apprehensively. Pointing to the edge of the forest I rushed out muttering "begonias". This was the very first time I had seen any begonias in this lowland forest, and what I saw this time looked like a tall and robust colony of *B. palmata*.

As I began photographing, my camera picked up some foliage with white maculation all but hidden in the tangle of thick forest undergrowth and the dominant and more plentiful deep green foliage of the majority of the begonias in this colony. If I was excited at encountering begonias in this lowland forest
where I had never found any on previous trips through it, I was now so astonished that I was riveted motionless to the spot. What the camera had picked up appeared to be none other than the white maculated foliage of *B. diadema* with the rows of dots and dashes flanking the main veins of each palmate leaf.

I ran back to the car to fetch my small trowel, and digging through the layers of compacted loam managed to find a root buried some 20cm. below the surface. Digging this up and washing off most of the sticky lumps of soil around the roots I was able to see the stem widening at the base where it joined the short, stumpy, tuber-like formation comprising the root system. Familiar with the long, narrow rhizomes of *B. palmata*, and the somewhat shorter and thicker rhizomes of *B. sikkimensis*, the two other species with divided, palmate foliage I had documented in Arunachal, I was relieved to be able to confirm with 90%
certainty that what I had inadvertently found was *B. diadema*. With a little effort I also located isolated mature capsules in this thriving colony of *B. diadema*. Many of the plants grew upright on stalwart brown stems to a height of some 1.2 metres, and those, which had fallen over as the trucks ploughed their way over the narrow, boggy track piling up the loamy soil a couple of feet high along the forest edge, had rooted at the nodes, and were sprouting fresh green leaves.

These new leaves, more than the adult ones, had their dentate/denticulate margins prominently defined in red, and were further articulated with a palmate shaped maroon-red patch in the center of each leaf. The plants with the white maculated foliage appeared to have been later to start their growth cycle as most, but not all, of these plants were smaller with their stems still in the incipient green stage.

After over an hour of marveling at and photographing this lush colony of begonias I was finally able to resume our bumpy drive. Arriving at one of the many rivers we needed to cross, we were able to redirect ourselves, and head westwards to our designated stop for the night.

On returning to the USA I was able to compare the roots and capsules I had photographed with those of *B. palmata* and *B. sikkimensis*, and confirm that my efforts to document species begonias in India had been rewarded beyond my expectations.

B. diadema's questionable ancestry is no longer in the realms of uncertainty: it is neither from Borneo nor a cultivated hybrid but a species from India. Where precisely in NE India the 19th century plant originated remains unclear, however, the origins of this species are clearly in NE India as attested by my finding it in the Eastern Himalayas of Arunachal Pradesh. Since it has never before been documented in this northeastern state of India, it is with great satisfaction that I introduce *B. diadema* as another new species for Arunachal Pradesh.

♦ Several days later I came across another small colony of *B. diadema*, which I will be describing in the monograph on the species from Arunachal Pradesh, which I am in the process of preparing with the help of Freda Holley.

May13th, 2014

Begonia diadema—cultivated hybrid or wild species?

SIGNS FOR PLANTING AND TRANSPLANTING BEGONIAS:

AUGUST 13 AND 14	PISCES	SEPTEMBER 1	SCORPIO
AUGUST 21 AND 22	CANCER	SEPTEMBER 8 AND 9	PISCES
AUGUST 31	SCORPIO	SEPTEMBER 27 AND 28	SCORPIO

Signs for pruning for quick growth:

August 16 and 17	Taurus	September 4 and 5	Capricorn
		September 13 and 14	Taurus

***The Leaflet* Publishes Ken Fuchs' Article About Displaying Begonias in the Home**

Ken Fuchs and Jim Landers worked diligently after their trip to Home Depot to purchase a SuperSlide 48" x 12" Ventilated Wire Shelf, which they cut into 8 inch sections for four 48 inch ShelfTracks and ten 12 inch ShelfTrack Brackets. The ShelfTracks are level, and the shelves can be moved to allow for different sizes of pots and plants. The pictures show the plants with their labels on this beautiful display in their breakfast room which has three windows with the small shelves for the nine inch sections between them.

Ken says the potted begonias have added a dramatic touch of color to the room.

Ken and Jim's second shelf project. The tall begonia on the top shelf is simply growing in a bottle of water and has quadrupled in size.

Jim's greenhouse is his new playground.

A number of hanging baskets decorate the backyard.

Ten AABS members attended our July 27th meeting. After the luncheon, we all had fun potting cuttings for future sales.