

Austin Area Begonia Society Branch • of the American Begonia Society •

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 1

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY, 2015

HAPPY NEW YEAR

JANUARY MEETING:

January 25, 2015 2 P.M.
Greene Room of Zilker
Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton
Springs Road, Austin TX 78746

Zilker Garden Festival
March 28 and 29

2015 Southwest Region Get-
Together May 21 - 23
SheratonBrookhollow 610 Loop
Houston, TX

Room Rate \$89 per night

On May 20 a judging school is
planned for a full day for
student judges who will serve as
clerks for Friday morning. E-
mail lenert@flash.net or call
281-255-9004

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**American Begonia Society**  
**National Convention July 29—**  
**August 2 at Verve Crowne**  
**Plaza, 1360 Worcester Road,**  
**Natick, MA      \$115 per night**  
**800-265-0339**

### THE KING OF BEGONIAS

This begonia was collected by a native in 1892 in Trengganu but has since been encountered in 2002 by Sam Yen-Yen in Jahore, miles away from where it was first found. This rhizomatous begonia without a tuber has distinctive foliage with unusual surface since the leaves are tufted and the base is heart-shaped. It was transported to England where it received a First Class Certificate from the Floral Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society on August 14, 1894. Eleven days later *The Gardener's Magazine* described it as "one of the most distinct and handsome species introduced of late since it is pale buff-green bronze green and reddish brown which contrasts so effectively in the different lights and shades that play upon the curiously undulated surface of the leaf."

What is this gem that clings to rocks along streams in Peninsular Malaysia? It is "king" in Sanskrit! By now, you probably have guessed that Doug Byrom grows this once prized ornament species successfully in a terrarium. It is *Begonia raja*!

The male flower has 4 tepals while the female has three. This is an important characteristic that distinguishes *Begonia raja*, which has been hybridized with hardier *B.goegoensis* N. E. Brown thus imparting bronzy highlights to the leaf of the hybrid.



male



female



## AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 23, 2014

The Austin Area Begonia Society Branch of the American Begonia Society met at 2 P.M. in the Greene Room of the Austin Area Garden Center at 2220 Barton Springs Road with President **Doug Byrom** presiding.

**Doug** brought fried chicken and with the side dishes provided, the members enjoyed the Christmas Dinner.

**Lynn Sissney** gave the treasurer's report.

**Doug**, who is also the American Begonia Society Business Manager, finalized the purchase of begonias for the Zilker Garden Festival Begonia Booth and the Adopt-a-Garden Begonia Area of Zilker Botanical Gardens.

The Austin Area Garden Council will have a Christmas Dinner December 13, when the 31 Council Club Representatives will share a side dish for the ham provided by the council.

**Nelda Moore** decorated the begonia tree for the society while **Lynn Sissney** adorned the First African Violet Society tree with purple lights and a faerie garden theme. In January the fee will be collected from anyone planning to create a faerie house on the Woodland Faerie Trail.

While the AAGC Nominating Committee is still working on filling vacancies, Steve Blackson has presented a treasurer, who has been elected and has been working. Any club member who wishes to work on the next slate of officers should make that desire known to President Alsop soon.

The meeting adjourned at 4 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Nelda Moore, Secretary

*SEMPERFLORENS*



*B. rajah*



*B. cucullata*



## HORTICULTURE

Most begonia growers have already placed their delicate varieties of begonias in a lighted sheltered area since they have grown so well outdoors that they are "show plants." How to keep them that beautiful will be a challenge! Most of this November-December weather given Central Texas has been cool and overcast. The sun has appeared only briefly. Begonias can stand cold temperature much better than they can stand wetness. Some of them can be placed under porch roofs or moved to a structure that has some type of plastic covering on 3 sides with one side that can be raised on warm days so the begonias will not get too hot.

If the begonia is growing well outside, a large cardboard box held down with some sheets and bricks can be used over the plant.

Also a new type of plastic with microscopic holes in it can be purchased to place over a begonia area for a couple of weeks without daily removal.

Sometimes *semperflorens* can be grown for two years outdoors by being under mulch in front of some type of tall hedge.

Indoors the begonias can still be taken care of by watering only when they are dry and cleaning the dead leaves and spent blooms. Watch for insects and mildew. These plants can be misted in the heated home.

Check the container and if the pot is too large and holds too much water, then pull out the begonia and repot it in a smaller one.

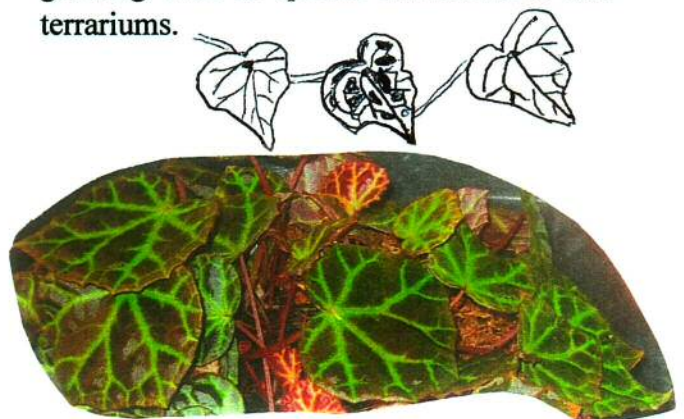
***Begonia reginula*** and *B. rajah*

Another begonia that was discovered in a Gunung Lawit forest in 1989 growing on rocks beside a waterfall was thought to be *B.rajah*, but it was named *Begonia reginula* or queen begonia since the male and female flowers had only 2 tepals. While *B. rajah* has a heart-shaped leaf, those of *B. reginula* have a rounded leaf base. The leaf of *B. rajah* has an abruptly pointed tip while *B. reginula* has a tapered tip. There are also differences in the leaf surface between the veins, the length of the inflorescence stalk, and the fruit and its size. The fruit of *B. rajah* is longer than broad, while the fruit of *B. reginula* is broader than long.

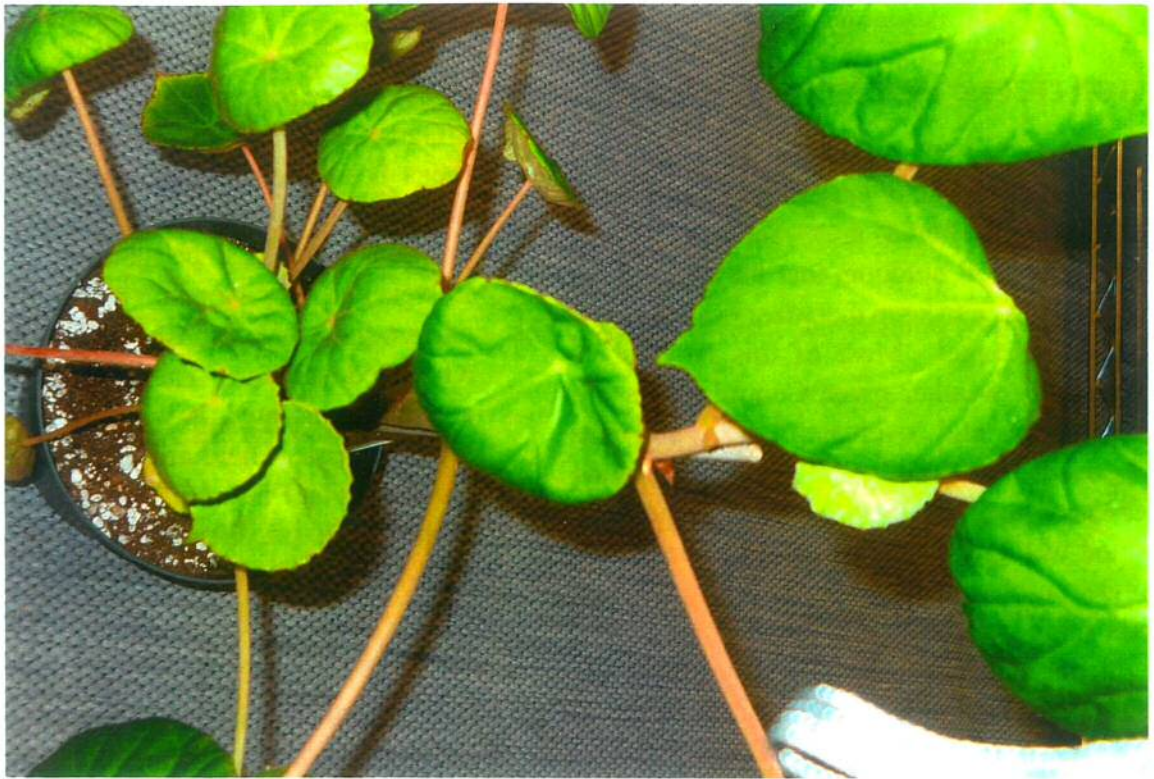
Nevertheless, these two begonias are not common since their habitat has been disturbed by bulldozing to make roads where begonias in small populations thrived by beautiful waterfalls, which are no longer there.

In 1992 Dr. Saw Leng-Guan noticed some minor differences between the Trengganu and Negi Sembilan populations of begonia since the male tepals are larger in Trengganu while the Negi Sembilan have plain green leaves as recorded by Ruth Kiew in *Begonias of Peninsular Malaysia*.

One thing that is certain in today's world is that begonia habitat is being destroyed. It is extremely important to keep these species growing even in special environments like terrariums.







Begonia "Kellermanii" shrub type, arid loving species, water-lily pad



Begonia U 402