



VOLUME10,NO.10

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2016

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Austin Area Begonia Society Branch

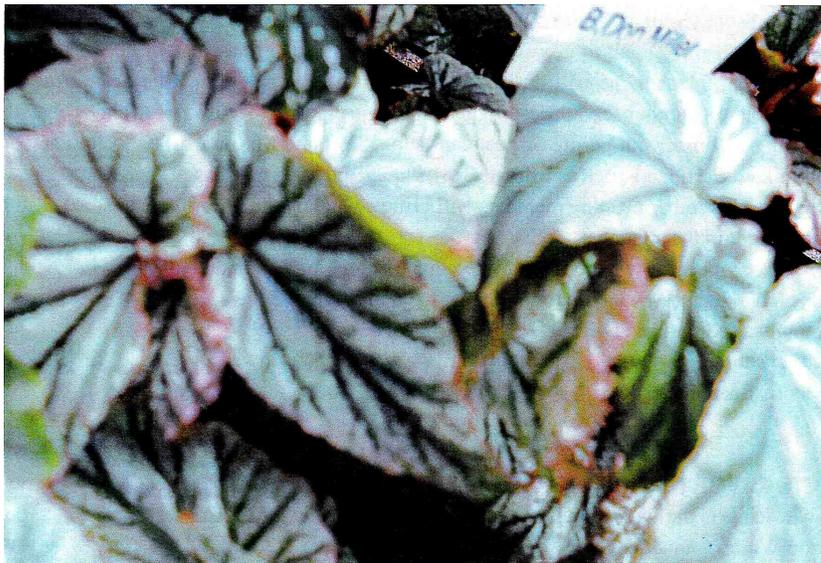
Link to calendar for clubs at Zilker Botanical Garden: <https://teamup.com/ksc8f9cbc02119dd79>

MEETING:      OCTOBER 23                      2 p.m.  
**Home of Jim and Joan Estes** 512-620-0322  
7620 South Highway 183  
LOCKHART, TEXAS 78644

**DIRECTIONS:**

Travel through Lockhart past the new WalMart on the left, continue south until there is a cylinder water tank on the right. Slow down and watch for the red sign on the left. Take the gravel road through the pasture. Their home is to the left of the curve. The begonia greenhouse is by the barn.

POT LUCK: Each person brings a covered dish to share such as vegetables or desserts or casseroles.



Begonia 'Don Miller' – mallet type with silver leaves on a compact medium-sized plant that has pink blossoms.

AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH  
OF THE AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY  
MINUTES OF MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2016

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, 2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas 78746 on September 25, 2016.

President **Doug Byrom** welcomed **Ken Fuchs, Doris Hill, Jackie Johnson, Jim Landers, Julie Marcus, Nelda Moore, and Verlene Schoen** to the meeting, where dues were officially set at \$10 per member. Doug received a notice that the Austin Branch has not paid for a Holiday Ad that helps to support the publication of *The Begonian*. Nelda Moore will quickly send her personal check for \$151 to the 2016 ABS Holiday Greetings, Frances Drescher, 11529 Riverchase Run, West Palm Beach, FL 33412. She will also write a check for \$200 to Carol Notaras, ABS treasurer, for Dr. Mark Tebbitt's research, page 8 of the January/February 2016 *The Begonian*.

On October 22 from 8 A.M. until 6 P .M. our society will sell and promote begonias in the auditorium along with the herb, iris, and other clubs during the Porcelain Arts Sale.

The American Begonia Society and the Southwest Region Get Together will be held in San Antonio,

Texas in 2017, and our society will work the Plant Sale.

Jackie Johnson, Program Chairman, prepared a booklet on Rhizomatous Begonias since most members found them difficult to grow. Watering them outside once a week or giving their pots less water so that the rhizome will not rot in wet soil was one solution. They can grow on a lower shelf in the greenhouse with less light than other types of begonias. A clay pot with a lighter potting soil mix with perlite or peat can help. Sunshine Mix or Farfave were named as ideal soil mixes. Fertilizers such as MiracleGro or LadyBug were mentioned.

During the November meeting members will bring a wide mouth terrarium and some cash for begonias to plant in the container.

The October meeting will be held in the country home of Jim and Joan Estes in Lockhart. The Alamo and Houston Branches are welcome to attend and hold their meetings there.

Meeting was adjourned at 4 P.M.  
Respectfully submitted,  
Nelda Moore, Secretary

### **COUNCIL REPORT FROM VICKEY COLE**

Cat Newlands is the Executive Director of Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy.

Sharon White is now the Gift Shop Manager.

A letter from the Texas State Bonsai Exhibit needs signatures and Zip Code from each person.

Volunteer hours are important, and a person who will record them is needed. A Work Day to clear sections of the garden to accomplish capital improvements will soon be held. Cash donations from clubs and individuals to help maintain the Barton Springs Median (\$6000) are appreciated.

The Austin Area Begonia Society and The Optimistic Garden Club will host the Austin Area Garden Council or Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy on October 11. All food, drinks, and decorations have been provided for the event.

### **SOME COMMON HOUSEPLANTS AND THEIR TOXICITY**

Some common houseplants can be toxic to humans and pets since some of them can cause burning and swelling of the mouth or can cause skin problems. Only a few are mentioned with their toxicity: asparagus fern and other ferns (dermatitis), Boston ivy (oxalates ), Crown of Thorns, dumb canes or dieffenbachias, philodendrons, and umbrella plants or Schefflera, but begonias are not poisonous.

In fact during the worst of times during World War II, people who grew begonias had something to use in a salad or on a slice of bread so that they could keep themselves from starving to death. Do you still have the recipe for Potato Peelings Pie?

According to L.H. Bailey (1922), stalks of some species of begonia are used as the leaf stalks of

rhubarb. He tasted every begonia that he was growing and concluded that the rhizomes of many species from South America are bitter and astringent — even used there for certain fevers and syphilis. Some contain purgative principles. The sour sap of an Asiatic species can be used to clean weapons.

Some **begonias that are used as food** include the following:

- B. *deliciosa*** – sweet sour used in mixed salad
- B. 'Margaritae'** – sour, tasty when sliced like coleslaw and tucked in a bun with a wiener
- B. 'Raspberry Parfait'** – hairy leaved, unpleasant like nibbling on a wool blanket
- B. *cubensis*** – bitter
- B. *epipsila*** – sour and thickish but good in Irish stew
- B. Rex Cultorum** – very tangy whole on open faced sandwich with cream cheese
- B. *subvillosa* or *leptotricha***– very good, rivals *deliciosa*, not so sweet



*B. deliciosa*



B. 'Margaritae'



*B. cubensis*



*B. epipsila*



*B. subvillosa*



B. 'Oteka' was hybridized by Dianna Wilkerson of Oklahoma. This pretty rhizomatous begonia is a cross between a rex cultivar and B. U508, an unidentified Asian species. Plant it in a pot with a mix that provides excellent drainage.

Below is B. 'Geneanne'



B. 'Evening Star' was hybridized by Lowe from Florida in 1970. B. 'Chumash' and 'Joe Hayden' are parents to this rhizomatous begonia.