



VOLUME 11, NUMBER 5

NEWSLETTER

May, 2017

**NEXT MEETING:**

May 28 2 P.M.  
Greene Room  
Austin Area Garden Center  
2220 Barton Springs Rd.  
Austin, TX 78746  
Pot Luck

EVENTS: Zilker Botanical Garden  
May 27

Woodland Faerie Trail opens; closes 7/30

June 3 noon to 5 P.M.  
Garden Club of Austin Show and Sale

June 10 10 A.M. to noon  
Wild in the City

July 8 10 A.M. to noon  
6 D's of Container Gardening

August 18-20  
Beekeeper Seminar

September 9 10 A.M. To Noon  
Bulbs for Austin Area

October 28  
Show and Sale Porcelain Arts

AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY AND SOUTHWEST  
REGION GET TOGETHER CONFERENCE  
IN SAN ANTONIO

Begonias: Our Mission was aptly named by the American Begonia Society and the Alamo Branch since begonias are the beautiful herbs that are used throughout the world for food and medicine. In fact, research continues to discover new uses of plants to find cures for dreaded diseases. Tied into this theme was the beautiful Educational Display in the Plant Show in the Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel May 3-7. Photographs and begonias identified and used for food and surviving in the forest or garnishing food platters, and flavoring the food as well as healing the body that has been attacked by colds, cough, consumption, fever, eye infections, itching skin, tumors, or even an enlarged spleen were displayed.



Don Miller from the Dallas Begonia Branch presented a seminar Saturday morning titled "Begonias, the Beautiful Herb," explaining how begonias are used as food and medicine throughout the world. It was based on his research that contained information from *Economic Botany*, *The Begonian*, and *Begonias, Cultivation, Identification, and Natural History* by Mark Tebbitt. A copy of his handout is included in this newsletter.



[AABS WEBSITE http://www.kenfuchs42.net/aabs\\_index.html](http://www.kenfuchs42.net/aabs_index.html)



Randy Kerr presented the next important seminar about begonia species, which he pampers in California. He stressed how important it is to keep species in cultivation because begonias in the wild are disappearing due to weather changes, drought, and loss of habitat. His method of keeping seeds using a mini microscope and a testing meter for growing species is definitely a help. Following his presentation, he had many cuttings in ziplock bags available for give-aways to the members in the audience.



After viewing many begonia species grown by Mr. Kerr, Deborah Garrett, curator at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, gave us a tour of the Fort Worth Species Bank, showing some of the changes that have taken place in the greenhouse. She has been responsible for many improvements including use of

pea gravel under the tables and widening sidewalks to accommodate wheelchairs. Over 400 terrariums are also neatly housed in part of the greenhouse. Deborah appreciates the donations that have come her way, and she continues to work with Mr. Byers to get things that she needs.

The Plant Show 2017 had 82 exhibits and 19 exhibitors. During the Saturday Banquet Johanna Zinn presented cultural awards to Lou Dyess, whose plant scored 97.5, Janet Carpenter, Charles Jaros, Cindy Moran, Carol Orozco, Don Miller, Freda Holley, Leora Fuentes, Sandra Justice and Doug Byrom, the Sweepstakes winner and Millie Thompson Sharing Award.

### Southwest Region Awards

In the absence of Charles Jaros, who was taken to the hospital early Friday morning with heart problems Nelda Moore was asked to present the special awards given by the Southwest Region: **The Mae Blanton Service Award** went to **Deborah Garrett** and the **Volunteers who work at the Species Bank of the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens.** Deborah accepted the two awards that were named for the creator of the Southwest Region and the first recipient of this award as well as the **Triple Crown** from the **American Begonia Society.** Mae Blanton accomplished so much with her love of begonias.

**Bobbie Price** became the **Hybridizer of the Year for 2017.**

## National Awards

Cheryl Lenert presented the ABS Awards to Antoon Hoefndgers, Jacky Duruisseau, and the Alfred D. Robinson Medal of Honor, which recognizes an outstanding hybrid or cultivar that is registered with the ABS Nomenclature Department to 'My Special Angel.'

Sandy Justice earned the Rudolf Ziesenhenn Award for her work as editor of "The Leaflet" since she collects and edits the work of others for publication using excellent design and content to contribute knowledge and appreciation of begonias.

Bobbie Price won the Marge Lee Award for harmony among members.

Sally Seville was selected for the Astros Award.

## The Artistic Division of the Plant Show

Photography of B. 'Pollux' won a first while a table runner created by Vera Miller of Mesa, Arizona was best of the division.

Other winners include Freda Holley for first place on a new introduction named 'Summer Illusion.' Carol Orozco won first with B. 'Little Darling' and second with B. 'Madame O'Reilly.' The Best Species Award named for Rekha Morris went to B. lancolata by Sondra (Sandy) Justice.



Bobbie Price



B. lancolata - Sondra Justice

## HORTICULTURE

All newly purchased begonias should be planted and should be receiving excellent care by now. If you have long canes and you desire a full showy plant, simply trim the branches and root them in water for the Zilker Botanical Garden Begonia Garden, which at present does not exist.

By the end of June all herbs will have been moved to the Rose Garden and the raised beds designed for the blind students to touch and smell and identify the plantings should be vacated. This herb garden will be worked by addition of new soil and begonias will adorn the area.



AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH MINUTES  
APRIL 23, 2017

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, Sunday, April 23, 2017, for delicious food and begonia food for thought. Members present were **Charlotte Boyle, Vickey Cole, Rainee Freeman, Ken Fuchs, Jackie Johnson, Jim Landers, Arlene Lantz, Nelda and Joe Moore, Valerie Morris, Verlene Schoen, and Lynn Sissney.**

Valerie Morris presented the financials from the begonia sale during Zilker Garden Festival.

Vickie Cole gave a report from the April 11 council meeting:

Cat Newlands told about the success of the First Starlight Social before the festival; Cindy Klemmer notified the members that the gardens will be open 9 A.M. until 6 P.M. except Thursdays when they will be open until 8 P.M. The Stream Bed is completed and David Mahler of Native Plants will maintain the garden for a year. Kris Ermis reminded the clubs that dues are due by June 1. A discussion about the festival will be held at 11 A.M. on May 9 and all club officers are invited. Vickie will record the begonia volunteer hours for each of us May 9.

Jackie Johnson, president pro tem, provided a list of Begonia References including Books at Amazon. Ken Fuchs pointed to other online references such as Alibri.com, reviews about Begonia books, and the low prices. Valerie and Nelda will give reviews of books that they own.

Program topics and thoughts about planting begonias where the Herb Society Garden was located were discussed. The Herb Garden will be moved to the Rose Garden by the end of May.

During the next meeting a show and tell about the begonia you grow will be held. At this meeting Valerie and Nelda brought begonias for members to grow. All were reminded that the Austin Branch will be in charge of the Plant Room during the San Antonio Begonia Convention. Doug Byrom, Valerie Morris, Nelda Moore, Jim Estes, Joan Estes, Lynn Sissney, and members who live in San Antonio will be working during the event. Doug and our members from the Alamo Branch will be showing begonias in the Plant Show.

The meeting adjourned at 4 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nelda Moore, Secretary



## BOOK REVIEWS

By Nelda Moore

*Those Majestic Begonias Growing and Hybridizing the Upright Rhizomatous Begonias* is a 2017 Freda Holley booklet that is being sold for \$10 and is a worthwhile 54 pages to read and enjoy the many photographs of easy to grow begonias that survive the heat and cold of southern regions such as Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, where Mrs. Holley has been growing begonias for over 40 years.

"The purpose of this book is to describe a group of begonias that may be spread over a number of divisions, but that is uniform in having an erect rhizomatous stem and that have many members that thrive in my difficult environment here (in

Louisiana)," states Freda in her introduction. She also says that these divisions of upright species come from Mildred Thompson's *Begonias: The Complete Guide*. Freda spreads these begonias over 4 divisions:

Thick-Stems (Trunk-like, Non-Ramified, and Thickset);

Rhizomatous (Rhizome Erect: entire/subentire, lobed, cleft, parted, compound, and crested) and Rhizome Jointed at or Below the Soil with Upright Stems;

Rex Cultorum (non-spiral and spiral);

Trailing-Scandent.

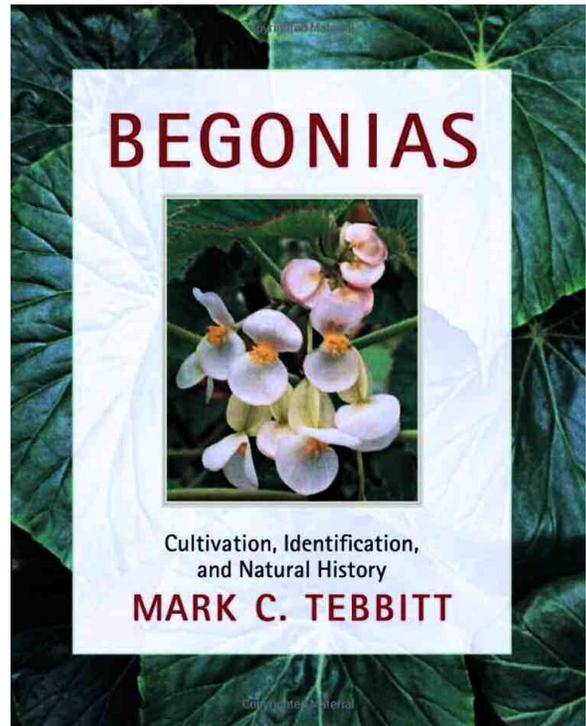
Freda has found that those begonias that have done best are in the Thick-Stem Division. Most of the begonias from the Americas have 28 chromosomes instead of 22 as the Asian species and

they are easy to cultivate and hybridize. If beginners would start with indestructible B. 'Selph's Mahogany' or B. 'Rudy,' they would not become frustrated. Instead they begin with the colorful Rexes and these are difficult for the experienced grower. Freda's cross easily and are found in the Gireoudia section. Information about species can be found on the International Database of Begoniacea website of Ross Bolwell in Australia, but Mrs. Holley discusses her own experience in growing some of them instead of telling about their background.

(I have taken a leaf as Freda has done and the leaf is growing.)

*Begonias: Cultivation, Identification, and Natural History* is a 272-page book (\$58.25 at Amazon) written by Mark C. Tebbitt that should be in your Begonia Library.

Not only does Mark tell you how begonias got their name, but he also tells how these plants were successfully brought to England after having been in cultivation in Asia in the 1400's when B. grandis was used for its medicinal properties. Even today it is used by the Chinese. B. fimbristipula of southern China is used for the bitter tasting purple tea that can be found in Asian Markets in the United States.



Mark Tebbitt in detail tells about many species of begonias from around the world, provides many plates showing leaves and plants of different begonias, and then provides a glossary and bibliography.

Paul Harwood's beautiful hand-drawn stems and begonias add much to this interesting book of all that you want to know about begonias.



Shrub Like - large leaved B. acida – Doug Byrom



B. 'Pollux'



B. 'Moonlit Snow'



Begonia  
Art  
Work



Deborah Garrett and Freda Holley



Best of Show REX CULTORUM B. 'Judy Cook' - Sondra Justice



CONTAINED ATMOSPHERE – Leora Fuentes



RHIZOMATOUS B. 'Red Fred' – Doug Byrom



NEW INTRODUCTION, HOBBY GROWER  
B. 'Summer Illusion' – Freda Holley



CANE-LIKE, INTERMEDIATE B. 'Bobbie Price' – Cindy Moran

## Begonia, The Beautiful Herb

By Don Miller

Throughout the world in tropical regions where Begonias grow naturally man has used them for food and medicine. Now in America we are beginning to learn how our favorite plant group can be used as a salad herb, delightful garnish and in herbal symbolism.

In the language of herbs Begonias symbolize *Attention!* and *Woes be gone*.

Many Begonia plants are savory. They have a sweet and sour taste much like oxalis or rhubarb. Begonias have large amounts of the sugar, fructose, and contain malic, oxalic and citric acids. They are also high in vitamin C.

In Sikkim and the Moluccas of Indonesia, begonias have been used to make a sauce that is used with meat and fish.

In China, Indonesia, and Brazil begonias are used in salads. In the West Indies begonias are used as a tea for colds.

In Gabon *B. auriculata* and *B. mannii* are used in soups and salads.

In Java, the Philippines, and Brazil they are used as flavoring ingredients.

Mountain Pima children in northern Mexico chew on the stems and *B. gracilis* specifically for the sour taste which they find refreshing.

Children in China have been reported to use *B. grandis* spp. *evansiana* in the same manner as *B. gracilis*, although it is recognized as potentially dangerous.

The Tarahumara people of northern Mexico used the sap of *B. gracilis* as well as Oxalis to curdle milk in cheese making.

*B. humilis* is used in Trinidad for colds, cough, consumption, and fever. Leaves of *B. oxyloba* are used in East Africa to expel parasites of the intestine. The crushed leaves of *B. glabra* have significant anti-tumor properties.

*B. cucullata* is a diuretic and used like spinach as a vegetable in Brazil.

*B. luxurians* is used in Brazil for fever.

*B. franconis* is said to be the most tasty begonia.

*B. isoptera* is used as a poultice to treat an enlarged spleen in Java.

*B. augustae* is used in New Guinea to treat itching skin.

In Ecuador natives pick the stems of *B. fuchsoides* and chew them to relieve fatigue and thirst. In Mexico the petioles of *B. heracleifolia* and stems of *B. incarnata* are collected and eaten as a vegetables.

The juice from the pulp of the crushed leaves of *B. parviflora* is applied for treating eye infections and tumors.

In America a Strawberry and Begonia pie is made from the stems of tuberous begonias.

The leaves and flowers of Semperflorens begonias and others are used in salads and as a garnish.

You must be cautioned that ingestion of large quantities of Begonias can be potentially toxic because of the oxalate content.

This information has been compiled by Don Miller. Most of this information comes from the publication, *Economic Botany January - March 1992*, Published by The Society for Economic Botany, articles in *The Begonian*, and the book *Begonias, Cultivation, Identification, and Natural History* by Mark Tebbitt.