

Austin Area Begonia Society Branch of the American Begonia Society

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 3

NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 2015

MEETING: MARCH 22, 2015
2 p.m. IN Adopt -a-Garden Begonia Bed
Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Road
Austin, TX 78746

Do not bring any food for sharing with members. This is the day when we bring begonias to plant in the area near the building.

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Zilker Garden Festival MARCH 28-29
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2015 SOUTHWEST REGION GET-TOGETHER MAY 21-23
Sheraton Brookhollow 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.
Call 281-255-9004 or send e-mail to lenert@flash.net.

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AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY
NATIONAL CONVENTION

JULY 29---AUGUST 2

VERVE CROWNE PLAZA
1360 WORCESTER ROAD
NATICK, MA
\$115 per night
800-265-0339



B. 'Ginny,' a shrub-like begonia, is a Watchorn hybrid from 1971 with parents *B.echinosepala*, a bare-leaved, small leaved plant with white fragrant flowers that bloom summer and winter and *B.'Margaritae'*, a hairy leaved, wide-leaved male parent with pink flowers that bloom spring and summer. The result is an everblooming hairy-leaved, narrow-leaved easy to grow plant that can take quite a bit of sun as well as a freeze of 17 degrees if left in the landscape. Although the blossoms are not fragrant, they are white when closed in their clamshell stage. The petals are covered with red hairs. When the blossoms open, the insides are white. Once the male flowers open the cluster looks pink. Because the ovaries of the female flowers and the stems are pink the overall picture is a profuse white and pink cluster.

This begonia grows in a variety of mixes and light conditions, but it does best in a loose, organic mix with strong light especially early morning sun. A highbloom fertilizer during the growing season should be applied year-round if grown in a container that is brought into the home during winter.

It is free from pests and diseases.

**AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH
OF THE AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 22, 2015**

The Austin Area Begonia Society Branch met Sunday, February 22, 2015, at 2 P.M. in the Greene Room with seven present: **Ken Fuchs, Jackie Johnson, Jim Landers, Arlene Lantz, Nelda Moore, Valerie Morris, and Verlene Schoen.**

Jackie Johnson, President Pro-Tem, called the meeting to order at 2:30 P.M.

Minutes were approved as published.

No treasurer's report since Lynn Sissney was absent.

Next Meeting: March 22—Bring gardening tools for working and planting the Zilker Begonia Garden: pruners, gloves, shovels, hoes, rakes.

No Meeting in May since most of us will attend conventions and Get Together.

Zilker Garden Festival: Doug Byrom, Valerie Morris, and Joe and Nelda Moore will set up the tent on Friday, March 27, at 11 A.M. **Raine Freeman** will work Saturday morning while **Verlene Schoen** will assist others at closing Sunday afternoon March 29 at 5 P.M.

Program: Valerie Morris discussed the high standards required for begonias entered in the Southwest Region Astro's Plant Show Thursday, May 21, from 4:30 -7:30 P.M. Good grooming of all plants outside the plant room is essential. Examine closely for dirt, damage as a result of transporting the plants, and insect infestation since any of these will result in point deductions or in the case of insects and disease of total rejection of the entry. The soil level in the pot should be about one-half inch from the top of the clean clay container that has been wiped with baby oil. Never use black or white pots such as those sold with plants by the nurseries. Some canes may be staked with a bamboo stick that is not conspicuous. Plants entered must be grown by the person who enters the begonia for at least 3 months before the show. Labels should be pushed down into the soil or mulch or removed from the plant.

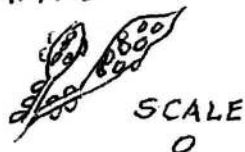
Begonias brought by Jim Landers, who had hail damage, Jackie Johnson, and Valerie Morris were examined closely and advice was given for later showing and how to achieve good growing by trimming and pinching for new growth.

The meeting was interesting and helpful. Begonias are also needed for the Zilker Garden Festival Flower Show in the auditorium Thursday and Friday, March 26 and 27, depending on the category and flower.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Nelda Moore, Secretary

APHID



LEAF MINER



BROAD MITE



WEEVIL



BEGONIAS AS SUBSTITUTE FOR IMPATIENS WALLERIANA

In recent times Downy mildew *plasmopara obducens* has caused *impatiens walleriana* and *balsamina* to be taken from the market because they have yellow leaves that fall rapidly. Underneath the leaves are white mildew spores that have developed as a result of cool and moist 60 to 70 degree F days.

For their replacement one can use the following plants that have shade bloom habits, uniform shape, and are diverse and versatile. *Alternanthera*, a sort of groundcover like Joseph's Coat, but named Red Hots, Red Threads, Mai Tai, Grenadine, and Little Ruby are excellent. Another is *ageratum houstonianum* in High Tide Blue or Artist Blue. Even the Rex Begonia called Escargot or the *semperflorens* can beautify the landscape since some of these begonias can grow in morning sun or even in full sun. Dragon Wing Begonia is a great blooming plant that is a little taller, but the effect can be as beautiful as a bed of *impatiens*. In warm weather *Coleus* and *alternanthera* can be used. *Caladium bicolor* can tolerate early morning sun as well as Blue Daze or *Salvia splendens* or *farinacea*. There is also New Guinea *impatiens* and *Lobelia* that can be used to edge a flower garden.

GOOD GROOMING OR GOOD CARE OF BEGONIAS AND OTHER PLANTS

Good grooming is just as essential to the health and appearance of a plant as soil mixes, fertilizers, watering, and growing conditions. It should be done once a week or each time the plant is watered. Good grooming means keeping the entire plant, pot, and environment clean. It includes

training of the plant itself. It also includes staking and using ties to keep the stems from bending or curving.

Pinching is removal of part of the stem to produce side branching and bushier growth. Remove the growing tip or the end of the shoot or stem with three or four nodes just above the side shoot. This should be started when the plants are very young and continued at regular intervals throughout the life of the plant. As a result a low-growing cane-like begonia forms a low compact plant.

Pruning is a more drastic cutting back of the stems especially cutting further back than the fourth or fifth node. This removal of old, woody stems will allow for new growth. This is the kind of pruning done for roses or crepe myrtles to allow the plant to have better air circulation especially if two stems cross one another.

Pruning is also used to control the size of the plant.





BEGONIA 'VERSCHAFFELTIANA'

In 1853 Dr. Regel named a popular begonia after Ambrose Verschaffelt, a Belgian nurseryman. The hybrid resulted from two species from Mexico—*B. manicata* (1842) and *B. carolineifolia* (1852). While the former has a creeping rhizome and willowy flower sprays, the other parent has a thick upright stalk and large unusual leaves.

According to Alice M. Clark the begonia is twenty-six inches high with a bright green stalk that seldom branches. It has white spots between the prominent leaf scars, which are like notches on a hunter's gun. The leaf emerges close to the main stem and expands into six wide, pointed lobes, hairy on their reddish edges. The woolly brown hairs extend up onto the raised ribs on the back of the leaf like *B. carolineifolia*. The top of the leaf is a shining yellow-green with distinct red splashes on the edges, both above and below. It is eight to ten inches long, thick and firm like *B. manicata*. The dark pink buds puff into lilac-rose flowers as seen in the picture above.

The photograph below shows the parent *B. manicata* from S. Mexico in 1842. It has an erect rhizome and is a stout grower to 20 inches with medium, toothed, smooth fresh-green leaves, with paler veins, red beneath and a collar of red bristles topping the leafstem. Its flowers are soft pink and usually blooms winter to spring.



Begonia manicata [Rh]

Begonia carolineifolia is also rhizomatous with thick stems from ten to twenty inches. It has a circular fan of glossy, mid-green, quilted leaves. The plant blooms in spring with pink spotted flowers.



Begonia carolinifolia [Rh]



Valerie Morris gives tips on grooming begonias for the Southwest Region Astro's Plant Show Thursday, May 21.





Working and Planting the Zilker Begonia Garden, Sunday, March 23, 2014

