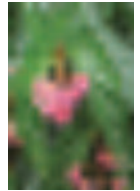




AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY

A Branch of the American Begonia Society

Website: http://www.kenfuchs42.net/aabs_index.html



VOLUME 16, NUMBER 5

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2022

Nelda Moore, Ken Fuchs, Editors

NEXT MEETING

**Sunday, October 23, 2022
2 P.M.**

Jim and Joan Estes home
7620 South HWY 183
Lockhart, TX 78644

A red sign on the left side of the highway just past the cylinder water tower has the address. Drive through the gate that will be open, then on the gravel road until you see the barn on the left, and then their beautiful home. Please bring a vegetable dish, a salad, or dessert to share for this event.

AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH OF ABS OFFICERS:

President – Valerie Morris
Vice President – Doug Byrom
Secretary – Nelda Moore
Treasurer – Vickey Cole
Membership Chairman – Joan Estes
Newsletter Editors – Nelda Moore
and Ken Fuchs

WHAT IS IN A NAME? HOW TO NAME A BEGONIA!

Brad Thompson wrote an amusing account of how he named his begonias that he hybridized. Using his nickname Bad Brad and a play off of a restaurant chain called “Bob’s Big Boy” he used B. ‘Big Bad Brad’ for a begonia that had large leaves and flowers.



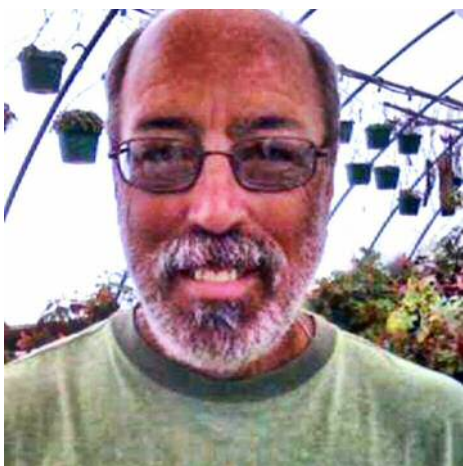
B. ‘Castaway’ - Cane-like 1990

B. ‘Castaway’ was the first of the Treasure Island names. Brad instructed a test grower to throw the plant away. She ignored him and the tiny plant turned into a great begonia that was almost thrown away.



B. ‘Mary’s Surprise’ - Cane-like 1990

B. ‘Mary’s Surprise’ was named after Mary Sakamoto, who was also a test grower. During a meeting Mary brought a neat plant to show since it was blooming and had a fragrance, which was a surprise.



Brad Thompson



B. 'Miss Kitty' - Cane-like - Superba 1992

B. 'Miss Kitty' was a part of the *Gunsmoke* names, but Festus and Marshall Dillon did not make the cut.



Miss Kitty - Amanda Blake and Elaine Baxter

B. 'Miss Motormouth' was named for Elaine Baxter [former Iowa Secretary of State]. Brad had called her on the phone to give her the good news that he had named a new begonia after her. She turned to her husband who was sitting close by her and excitedly gave him the news. He quickly said that if he were naming it, he would call it Miss Motormouth. Next time Brad used the name as a joke.

BRAD THOMPSON (1952-2018)

by ABS <https://www.begonias.org/brad-thompson/>

When Brad Thompson decided to get interested in begonias, he went big, very big! Brad began collecting and creating new Begonia varieties in 1988. By 1990, he had a collection of four to five hundred plants, entering his own hybrids into competitions around the Los Angeles area, and winning many

trophies. Brad's interest in hybridizing and his productivity led him to work in California nurseries. From 2002 until 2010, Brad worked at Hi-Mark Nursery in Carpinteria, CA, a Begonia specialist nursery that focused on Brad's hybrids in the early 2000's. When the nursery closed, Brad moved to Kartuz Greenhouses in Vista, CA where he worked until he passed away in 2018.



Brad focused on creating varieties of Begonia that are easy to grow and can tolerate heat. His plants are valued, because of their compact shapes and quantities of beautiful flowers.

However, Brad took his work far beyond cane types, with explorations into rex, jointed stem, and specializing again in rhizomatous hybrids; ultimately, he created over 350 new varieties of begonias. Brad also felt the existing registration process was stiff and unapproachable, so he completely re-created the information into a handbook format to encourage hobbyists to register their new hybrids.

Brad was an excellent grower, and a talented hybridizer of begonias; but that was only part of what Brad brought to the society. Brad's desire to communicate basic information about begonias had him writing in almost every issue of *The Begonian* for over a decade. He wrote about hybridizing, candidly sharing what he had learned and discussing his bad habits with equal candor. Brad's photography became a staple part of the look of *The Begonian* for much of this time.

Ultimately Brad served as Editor of *The Begonian*, and many viewed his tenure as one of the high points for the publication because of the amount of information that was packed in each issue.

Brad developed his own website as well, and Brad's Begonia World (www.BradsBegoniaWorld.com), was a great resource for all the basics of Begonia care and culture, growing for show, and more. The website contents are now compiled in print format and available from the ABS Bookstore.

THE REX CULTORUM GROUP OF BEGONIAS

Mildred and Edward Thompson's *Begonias The Complete Reference Guide* describes the Rex Cultorum group of 545 different cultivars and many unnamed hybrids as the 1911 catalog of Thedosa Shepard and Company, "Nature has bestowed on Rex begonias many of her choicest gifts, uniting radiance and brilliancy of precious jewels, the shining luster of metals, with the beautiful colors and textures of the most costly fabrics."

Another fascinating story surrounds its introduction in England in 1856 when a species *B. rex* Putzeys was accidentally found in the sheath of an orchid that J. Simon brought from Assam, India. When a Belgian horticulturist Jean Linden purchased the treasure for 10,000 francs, he introduced the begonias commercially causing excitement among growers who crossed them with Asiatic species and previous species with ornamental foliage of diversity of colors, textures, and leaf forms. In 1863, *B. evansiana* was used to produce a taller hardier type.



B. imperialis

In 1875 *B. imperialis* was used for types with smaller leaves. By 1884 *B. diadema* produced lobed leaves and *B. decora*, a species discovered in Penang in 1892, gave hybrids red colors and metallic sheens and tones while velvet textures came from *B. cathayana*, a species found 1904 by A. Henry in Yunnan. Miniature rexes were developed by using semituberous begonias, *B. dregeis* and *B. Weltonensis* in 1931. In the 1940s tuberhybrids were crossed with Rex Cultorum, giving many hybrids that are still in cultivation today such as *B. 'Fireflush.'* In

1883 F. Nemecek, a gardener for Count Erdody, a Hungarian nobleman, crossed *B. argentea cupreata* and the mutant with spiraled leaves was *B. 'Contesse Louise Erody.'*



B. 'Fireflush'



B. 'Dewdrop'



B. 'Lorraine Closson'

Most of these begonias prefer 70 degrees F. They do not thrive at lower temperatures. Delicate temperamental types such as velvet-like or silky foliage should not be grown outdoors. Some small-leaved Rex begonias need more humidity and need to be grown in a terrarium. B. 'Baby Rainbow,' B. 'Calico,' B. 'Dewdrop,' B. 'Ethel Arnold,' B. 'Little Bandit,' B. 'Lorraine Closson,' and B. 'Ruby Glow' are a few. Never over water a Rex. Give them plenty of light but not direct sunlight.

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2022 MEETING OF THE AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH OF AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY

The Austin Area Begonia Society Branch of ABS met at 2 P.M. Sunday, September 25, 2022, in the auditorium in Zilker Botanical Gardens at 2220 Barton Springs Road in Austin, TX 78746.

Present were the following: DOUG BYROM, JIM ESTES, JOAN ESTES, RAINEE FREEMAN, ELIZABETH JACKSON, JIM LANDERS, ARLENE LANTZ, NELDA MOORE, and GENEVA TOWNSEND.

Program

Doug Byrom brought videos from the Fort Worth Botanic Garden Species Bank—one of the largest collections of species in North America. All were watching intently and writing the names of the begonias from around the world that they would like to grow. Some of these exotic species grew on limestone while others held arm-like appendages which held blooms at their ends.

Taddy Hamilton, Debbie Garrett, and Don Miller led the tour while 2 volunteers demonstrated their talents in carefully taking a begonia out of a pot and planting it in a larger container. First, the volunteer used her hand to fill the bottom of the larger pot. Then she took the smaller pot and placed in on the soil. Finally, she placed soil around the used pot. Then in the bigger pot she carefully took the begonia and planted it and watering it. The individuals also talked about the soil they used and how they cleaned pots and containers. The terrariums holding those species that required more humidity were shown and one species growing under the table required less light than the container on the shelf. Don pointed out the difference.

Food

Delicious snacks added to the enjoyment of the afternoon. Sandwiches, cakes, muffins or bars with cream cheese, peach cobbler, fruit trays – much to eat and drink decorated the table. Begonias of every kind and size adorned the room.

The October meeting will be in the home of Jim and Joan Estes located at 7620 South Highway 183 in Lockhart 78644. Drive out past the Wal-Mart until you see the huge white water tower on the right. Drive slowly and look for their address. Turn left and use the gate that is open. Drive to their home and barn.

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Respectfully submitted,
Nelda Moore, Secretary



B. 'Miss Louisiana' - Freda Holley 2011, Photo by Jim Landers



The "Original" Rex, the species B. rex 'Putzeys'

Photo by Rick Schoellhorn