

BEGONIA CHATTER



Astro Branch American Begonia Society <i>4513 Randwick Drive</i> <i>Houston, Texas 77092-8343</i> <i>(713) 686-8539</i>	Next Meeting: DATE: July 10, 2016 TIME: 2:00 PM PLACE: West Gray Multi-Service Center PROGRAM: Naturalistic Growing
JULY 2016 ISSUE	www.begoniahouston.org

NATURALISTIC GROWING OF OUR BEGONIAS

The July 10, 2016 meeting of the Astro Branch of The American Begonia Society will be held at the West Gray Multi-Service Center located at 1475 West Gray Street. We will meet in Activity Room 1. The doors will open at 1:00 P.M. We need to set up the room so if you can arrive early (about 12:15 – 12:30) to help that will be a big help.

Our Refreshment Host and Hostesses' for this meeting will be **Tony & Donna Robert, Mel Babb and Ruby Lewellyn.**

Vice President Johnny Williams will preside over this meeting. There will be a short business meeting to catch everyone up on what is going on with the National, Southwest Region and the Astros

Our Program this meeting will be **Naturalistic Growing of our Begonias.** We will look into growing begonias the way they grow in the tropical rain forests. Please don't forget your notebook as there will be **HANDOUTS** for you to take home and refer to at a later date. There are

lots of begonias that grow epiphytically in trees, on cliff walls and in crevasses of rock formations. We have found that they can be mounted on wooden planks, slabs of cork, driftwood, in bricks and rocks. Johnny Williams also has a way to grow them using wire and hardware cloth that is easy to put together and hang from a tree.

This should be a very interesting program so please make plans to join us. Our refreshment Host and Hostesses' will have lots of tasty treats to excite our taste buds and nice cool drinks to wash them down. We will also have our usual drawings. Above all your Begoniatic friends will be there to talk about begonias with you.

See You There!



MINUTES OF THE JUNE 5, 2016 MEETING AND SUMMER PICNIC

June 5, 2016 was a beautiful day with blue skies, puffy clouds, a nice breeze that kept the wind chimes making relaxing music and a pleasant upper 70's to low 80's as our temperature for the day. Tom's yard contains lots of trees with dappled sunlight so it was very pleasant along with the sound of several water features.

We had a very good turnout of members, guests and a new member. Everyone enjoyed lots of delicious food, fun conversations and strolling through Tom's beautiful home and gardens. It was a very relaxing day with no rushing around or time restraints.

After everyone had their fill of the delicious food President, Janet Carpenter, called us together for a short business meeting but really had no business to conduct. President Carpenter called Cheryl Lenert to the front and Cheryl, in turn, called Tom to the front. Cheryl told Tom, in honor of his recent retirement AND MOSTLY for all he does all year long for our ASTRO'S we members wanted to give him a gift. She presented him with a beautiful garden bench that members had contributed to purchase – and also a book in which members had written a personal page to honor him. Tom was extremely happy to receive these gifts.

Door prizes were then drawn. They were B. 'Cowardly Lion', B. 'Flamingo Queen, B. 'Lois Burke' and several other garden plants/cuttings and two butterfly pot decorations.

After a bit more visiting everyone began gathering their items and leaving. It was a lovely afternoon and the weather was beautiful!

Thank you Tom, and Astro members.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Williams, Secretary

PRUNING, PLANTING AND TRANSPLANTING

July

1 st	Taurus
4 th & 5 th	Cancer
13 th , 14 th & 15 th	Scorpio
18 th & 19 th	Capricorn
23 rd & 24 th	Pisces
27 th & 28 th	Taurus
31 st	Cancer

August

1 st	Cancer
9 th , 10 th & 11 th	Scorpio
14 th , 15 th & 16 th	Capricorn
19 th & 20 th	Pisces
23 rd & 24 th	Taurus
27 th , 28 th & 29 th	Cancer

- Planting and Transplanting are best done in Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces with Cancer being the best.
- Best Pruning for quick growth is first Taurus and then Capricorn.

WEATHER FORECAST FOR JULY 2016

According to the United States Weather Service, Houston and surrounding area fall in Region 7 of the National Map. Here is what they predict our weather will be like for the month of July. Our temperatures will be near normal and our precipitation will be near normal. Our temperatures should average from 80 degrees in the North to 85 degrees in the South. Our coolest July temperatures will be July 7th thru 9th, 15th thru 17th, 21st & 22nd and 26th & 27th. Our warmest July temperatures will be July 3rd thru 5th, 12th thru 14th, 24th & 25th and 30th & 31st. There will be frequent isolated showers and thunderstorms near the Gulf. Otherwise, widely scattered showers and thunderstorms at 3 to 5 day intervals. There is increasing hurricane potential the last week of July.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

Birthday wishes go out to our members born in this month of July.

Mel Babb	July 28 th
Sara Chumley	July 26 th
Tom Keepin	July 18 th
Shirll Manes	July 25 th
Valerie Morris	July 14 th
Brad Neugebauer	July 13 th

“Life is a story you write as you go. Your story is uniquely you – interesting and inspiring and as it continues unfolding, may it always be deeply rewarding”

Happy Birthday!

The Challenge of Rex Begonias

By Michael J. Kartuz

The king of begonias, Rex Cultorum is a frustrating challenge to many begonia lovers and growers. Understanding their special cultural requirements will make growing these beautiful begonias easier.

Culture

To bring out their lustrous colors, rex begonias require bright filtered light but not direct sun. Temperature is important, not below 50 degrees F. or above 90 degrees F. Provide as much humidity as possible. Grouping plants together in a sheltered area such as a shade house or greenhouse is recommended. Rex Begonias respond to growing under fluorescent light very well. Lamps should be 12 to 14 inches above the plants, and 12 hours of light provided.

Growing Media

Your regular begonia growing mix should work fine for rex begonias. We use a peat moss based potting medium with perlite added for extra drainage. Do not over pot, as this might increase the danger of rot.

Pests and Diseases

Like other begonias, rexes are relatively free of pests. Mealybug is probably the most common insect problem. A systemic pesticide containing imidacloprid is a recommended control. The greatest problem many growers tell me is mildew. The best control is an old one, a light dusting of micronized sulfur applied monthly especially during periods of cool, damp weather

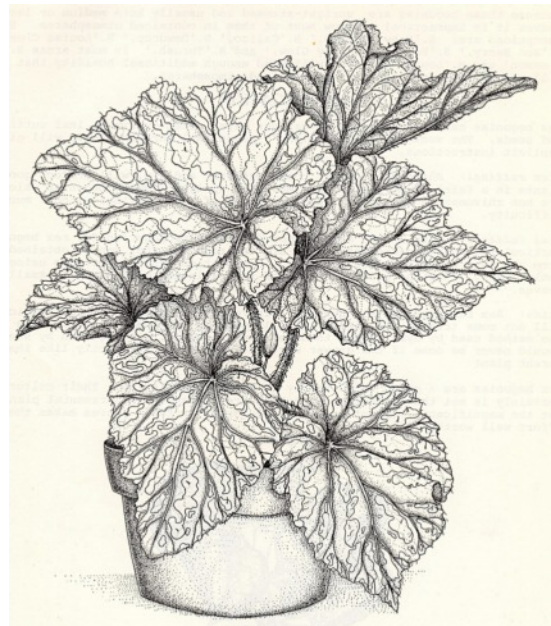
Propagation

Rex begonias are easy to propagate and reproduce from leaf cuttings or seed. Leaf cuttings can be rooted in moist perlite in an enclosed container covered with plastic film under fluorescent light. Every rex begonia grown from seed will be different as virtually all rex begonias are complex hybrids. The method is the same as for other begonias grown from seed.

Winter Dormancy

One of the greatest misunderstandings of rex begonias is their need for winter dormancy when grown under natural light. It is usually not a problem with plants grown under artificial light. When leaves start to go, keep plants almost dry. The rhizomatous stems will stay. In early spring cut back the stems about half way. New growth usually starts in late March or early April.

*(This article was taken from September/October 2011, **Begonian** Volume 78 Page 179)*



MY VERY SPECIAL GIFT

It is very difficult to put into words my feelings on June 5th. It was a pleasure having all the Astro members and guests having a wonderful time enjoying my gardens and each other company. If there were a way to make a request for a perfect day I couldn't have asked for better. When we had the business meeting with no business and Cheryl calling me to stand beside her I admit I was surprised. The words she spoke filled my heart with joy, hearing that this bench was the idea of our members to honor me. I love what I do to make our Astro meeting not only a learning experience but also a fun one. I intend to keep on doing what I do for you my friends.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the joy you have given me. I love my bench and it will have a very special place in my garden

Love
Tom

Getting My Adopted Species **B. scharffii** Circulated

By Bernie Wiener, Havertown, PA

My adopted species was discovered in Brazil in 1888. It is shrub-like and covered with very light pink hairs. Pale pink flowers appear from October to July. I have been growing *B. scharffii* for about 15 years and it has been a major part of my begonia presentations, which are given at the Philadelphia Flower Show, garden clubs, and arboretums (Barnes, Jenkins, and Scott). I give the attendees a starter plant to take home as something to remember me by and, hopefully they will start growing other begonias.

I am always taking cuttings because if I neglect pruning the mature plant it begins to look ratty. Therefore, I am sure to have a good supply of starter plants in my greenhouse for future usage. I find that the easiest, fastest and the cleanest method for starting my SOS plant is by using Oasis Root Cubes. There is a hole in the middle of the root cube, which is perfect to insert a cutting.

These cubes offer a firm base to keep the cutting erect.

Using a shrub-like begonia as a give away makes a perfect plant to demonstrate how to propagate cuttings. I use the largest cube (1 ½") making it possible to stick two cuttings into one cube. Once the roots form I can place the entire cube into a 3" plastic container or divide the cube to make two plants. I recommend the following types of soil to use: Scott's Metro -mix 560 contain Scotts Coir, Fafard Mix #52 or Premier Pro-Mix BX. If you are using any one of these mixes for propagating add some super coarse perlite. Transplanting the rooted cutting in the cube has a great advantage since you do not remove the cutting from the cube so there is no shock to the plant and roots form much more quickly.

B. scharffii prefers morning sun since stronger sunlight bleaches out the green surface of the leaves. I use a liquid fertilizer with 9-16-9 only during the growing season and then every 4 to 6 weeks. Placing three started plants in an 8 inch hanging basket makes a very nice presentation since the plant will quickly begin to cascade. During this past summer my greenhouse went up to 110 degrees but with good ventilation and keeping the gravel floor wet the plants stayed alive. My adopted begonia has made quite an impression with my indoor garden friends - what with the different colors on the leaves plus the hairy surface. It is a wonderful plant to get a beginner started in growing begonias.

Save Our Species is a great feature of the ABS and I hope more members will join the participant list (<http://www.begonias.org/SOS/SOS.htm>) that appears on the ABS website

Reference

Propagating Begonias Without Using Soil Mixture by Bernie Wiener The Begonian Sept/Oct 2009, page 182.

(This article was taken from the September/October 2011 issue of the Begonian Volume 78 page 195)

Astro Branch's Annual Picnic at the home & gardens of Tom Keepin



Begonias growing in garden along with bromeliads and Persian shield.



(L) Pat Hiscock, Tom Keepin, Lucy Melara, Donna Williams (seated) & Johnny Williams .



Johnny Williams, Tom Keepin & Janet Carpenter at the Business Meeting.



Vietnam species growing in garden unprotected for three years.



Lucy Melara, Donna Williams and Johnny Wiliams enjoying the peacefulness of the garden.



Members enjoying
Tom's garden room.



Midge Gorman & Eddie Litchfield
in small greenhouse.



Susan Willis with her son, Jim.



Tony & Donna Robert
relaxing in the garden.



Members eating and relaxing
in the garden room.



Tom Keepin & Cheryl Lenert
after Tom was present with his bench.



Pat Hiscock with Door Prize
B. 'Lois Burke'



Cheryl Lenert with Door Prize
B. 'Flamingo Queen'.



(L.) Jane Anderson, Pat Hiscock &
Lucy Melara ready for the
business meeting.



Johnny A. Cole giving out Door Prize
tickets to our members.



Members & guests assembled
for our Business Meeting.



President Carpenter calling the
meeting to order.



Gloria Hunter (guest of Gail Warren & Geanie Riggs.)



Lucy Melara with her Door Prize.



New member Mariana Garcia with her door prize.



Members waiting for their numbers to be drawn.



(L) Dorethea Homes & Sandra Riggsby enjoying lunch in the garden.



Quiet lunch in the big greenhouse.