



AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY

A Branch of the American Begonia Society

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



Austin Area Begonia Society
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NEWSLETTER

February 2021

Nelda Moore, Ken Fuchs, Editors

NEXT MEETING:

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Dues are due.

AABS \$10.00

Please send to Vickey Cole
before February 1, 2021.

Vickey Cole
2105 Egger
Round Rock, TX 78664

SW Regional \$10.00

Send to

Joan Estes
7620 South Hwy 183
Lockhart, Texas 78644

American Begonia Society

\$25 or \$15 for digital

Pay online or see their website.

www.begonias.org



Irene Nuss and her sister Eunice Gray in 1967

BEGONIA 'IRENE NUSS'



B.'Irene Nuss' was hybridized by Irene Nuss. The begonia is a Superba that displays the classic type of an award-winning plant. It is large flowered, tough, easy to grow, and disease resistant. It forms an attractive plant, a show plant.

In *The Begonian* for January/February 2021 there is an article about Irene Nuss and her sister Eunice Gray. When Brad Thompson wrote BRAD's BEGONIA WORLD, he told about how he came to name begonias that he hybridized. One is B. 'Edna Redenbacher.' He said the name is a joke. One of his



test growers was Edna Regimbal. Brad wanted to name a begonia after her, but Irene Nuss had just named one B. 'Elda Regimbal' so he could not use that name. Elda had gotten mail sent to her with EDNA REDENBACHER on it. When she told John Ingles about the mail, he would write to her and address it that way jokingly; therefore, Brad kept the old joke going.

GROWING BEGONIAS FOR SHOW PLANTS



B. U501 - Doug Byrom 2019 SWR Show, Austin

What is a show plant? It is a nice begonia that is clean, healthy, well groomed, and symmetrical. It is a mature plant — a good representative of the type of begonia that you have placed in a clean container. It is one that you want the public to see and admire. It is one to be entered in a show so that you help your club. There are no spiders, bugs, dust, and rust (disease). If the plant wins, just smile. Try not to jump and sing! Rest assured that you have worked and enjoyed keeping the plant healthy, free of obvious litter or dead leaves and dead stumps above the soil line or the small orchid bark over the soil. After the show you should remove the decorative bark so as not to keep the plant too wet.

Also remove the dried stipules unless your plant is a rare species like *B. venosa*, *B. fernando-costae*, *B. kellermanii*, and *B. peltata*. Dried flowers and seed pods should not be left hanging. Damaged leaves can be removed unless there are many small leaves each having some brown edges. Using scissors cut gently until you have gotten all of the brown edges off. Keep the symmetry however. Do this the day of the show!

Be sure to clean the pot. Using a rag with some vegetable oil on it, wipe the container clean so that there will not be any dirt on its bottom to mess up the show table. The begonia should be watered a day before the show while it is at home.

To transport the plant safely get a cardboard box and turn it over. Cut out a hole big enough for the pot to fit in the cardboard that will keep the plant secure.

Have fun, stay busy during the pandemic, read and take good care of yourself so that you can enter your begonias in a show one of these days.



B. venosa



B. fernando-costae



B. kellermanii



B. peltata

HORTICULTURE

The all-day snowstorm on January 10th brought us a pristine landscape that surprised us and provided rain and moisture to relieve the drought. Most of us wanted to visit a nursery to purchase flowers again since hungry animals ate flowers and green leaves to stay healthy.

The first sign at the gate directed the customer to use hand sanitizer before picking up the selection.

Since it is early for begonias, there are tubers that you could plant. Then in March you must keep them from the strong wind or they will be damaged. Caring for the begonias that you have now is a full-time job. Cleaning the dead leaves and even repotting them take time out of your busy schedule. Always remember that the loving care that you provide them does not mean overwatering the plants.

Do not allow the begonias to stand in water. If they need more humidity, use a tray, put some pebbles in the bottom and add some water to the tray. Then place your pots of plants on the pebbles.

In the spring some of the begonias can be fertilized with a weak solution. If you have plants that you want to take to a show in bloom, start six weeks in advance by using a high bloom fertilizer such as 15-30-15. Use ¼ strength once a week like you normally use on other begonias with your choice of fertilizer that works for you.



BEGONIA 'WHITE ICE'

[from ABS FB page, December 31, 2020



Wishing all a Happy and Healthy New Year, from the American Begonia Society.

At this wintery time of year, we leave you with a photo of Begonia 'White Ice,' a cane-like cultivar known for being a vigorous begonia. Its leaves are deep green in color and covered with white spots that resemble drops of white ice. Its leaves are edged beautifully with the same silvery spots.

This cane-like cultivar was created in 1998 by Charles McGough, an ABS member in Texas who is an artist and known for putting those talents to work in his hybridizing. In the July/August 2000 issue of the *Begonian* he said, "I wish I could give some profound reason on just how you should go about choosing candidates for



hybridizing begonias, but I can't. In general, I work toward what you might call "most" goals, such as: the tallest, the smallest, the darkest, the lightest, most flowers, the largest flowers, the most intense flowers, the most spots, the most sun tolerant, and so on. Every artist has certain areas in design which are more exciting to him or her than others...for me these areas are contrast (or opposites) and linear qualities. Unconsciously and/or sometimes very deliberately I cross plants with this in mind. An example of a recent

cross is B. 'White Ice' where I took B. 'Flamingo Queen' (lots of spots, a large, elongated leaf with a point) and crossed it with B. 'Whiskey' (very much the opposite: small leaf, no spots, tight, short, and very vigorous grower). I just sat back after planting the seeds to see what would happen."

These photos were taken at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden Begonia Collection, Texas, home to hundreds of begonia cultivars and species and generously tended to by ABS volunteers who live in the area.

BEGONIA 'PINK MINX'



Begonia 'Pink Minx' is a cane stem hybridized by Kit Jeans Mounger, a prolific hybridizer, a creative artist, and a great writer who lived in St Petersburg, Florida and New Johnsonville, Tennessee. She considered hybridizing a fun exercise that brought a surprise gift like a Christmas gift. (See AABS Newsletter September 2019.)

As she says, "I always enjoyed seeing what surprises I'd find when the new plant unwrapped itself."

She moved to Afton, Tennessee and then raised Maine Coon Cats.

During her work with begonias she was honored with the Eve Kenworthy Gray Award and Alfred D. Robinson Medal of Honor for begonia cultivar B. 'Cowardly Lion.'

Bob Koehler, who died in 2015, had crossed B.



B. 'Cowardly Lion' *thiemei* with B. 'Cowardly Lion' and named the



B. 'Kit Jeans Mounger'

hybrid 'Kit Jeans Mounger.'

Ross Bolwell created 'Pepper 'n' Spice' (2008), a deep red rhizomatous hybrid by crossing B. 'Angel Glow' with B. 'Cowardly Lion.'



Ross Bolwell in Annangrove, NSW, Australia with another one of his prize-winning hybrids.



B. 'Pepper 'n' Spice'

BEEFSTEAK BEGONIA



Begonia 'erythrophylla,' usually called the beefsteak begonia, is a rare rhizomatous begonia found in tropical and sub-tropical areas. One of the oldest and widely grown begonias, it is not usually sold in plant stores, and is a real collector's item.

The glossy and fleshy rounded leaves are olive-green from top and burgundy underneath. These leaves have a prominent star-shaped venation and look like tiny umbrellas growing on hairy stems. The foliage gets covered with beautiful tiny pink scented

flowers making it look nothing less than eye-candy. Beefsteak begonia grows profusely for June Spann, who remembered it when it was growing for her grandparents in their Indiana farmhouse. June could not find one in Texas, but four years ago an aunt in Indiana had the plant from the family. June brought a cutting to Texas and continued growing it. Then she found AABS and met Valerie Morris.



Now several AABS members are caring for this beefsteak begonia that has roots in Indiana. Keep it growing because it has a sentimental value to a true begonia grower. Many thanks to a generous Texan.

AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY BRANCH OFFICERS

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Our ABS/SWR is scheduled to meet in Ft Worth April 28-May 1, 2021.