BEGONIA CHATTER

Astro Branch **American Begonia Society** *4513 Randwick Drive* *Houston, Texas 77092-8343* *(713) 686-8539*	***Next Meeting:*** **DATE: December 6, 2020** **TIME: 1:00 PM** **PLACE: Matzke Park Butterfly Garden** **PROGRAM: Social/Picnic**
DECEMBER 2020 ISSUE	**www.begoniahouston.org**

CHRISTMAS PICNIC IN THE PARK

At long last, we have a chance to meet at the Astro Branch in Matzke Park as long as Mother Nature is kind to us and makes it a lovely day. We are not planning a business meeting this time unless something very urgent comes to our attention and must be attended to. It has been so long since we have seen each other and December is our annual Christmas Party we decided to have a Christmas Picnic Social in the Park.

The way this will work is each member or couple will need to bring their lunch or snack(s) and drinks for the day. If you are in the baking mood and would like to make a batch of chocolate chip cookies we won't complain. Your favorite lawn chair, your name tag, and your mask is a must.

Instead of having to go out and find a plant related item to wrap as a swap gift, we thought it would be better to just have everyone bring a potted begonia or plant no larger than a 10" hanging basket. As we always say "bring a plant you would like to put into your collection". We will give you a raffle ticket when you bring us your plant. In addition to the plants, we will have our usual drawings, door prize, name tag, and raffle. Tom will be there between 12:00 and 12:30 to set up tables for your plants and to stake out our area. You are welcome to arrive at that time as well but we would like to get underway at
1 P.M. since it gets dark so early now.
We hope to see you at long last.
Until then…Happy Growing!

Matzke Park:
13110 Jones Road Cypress, TX 77070-4438
Telephone: 281-253-8100

Hoppy Holidays!

MEETING AT MATZKE PARK DIRECTIONS

The park is at the corner of Grant Road and Jones Road. If you are going north on Jones there is parking to the right off of Jones Road. If this is full, continue to Grant Road (the next signal), turn right and go to and go to the next signal (Balcrest/Copeland). Again turn right and you will see the entrance to the back parking lot. Alternatively, you can go across Grant and park in the shopping center parking lot (on your right).
Jones Road is easily accessed from 290W.
You can also Google Matzke Park for directions from your location.

PRUNING, PLANTING AND TRANSPLANTING

December

2nd, 3rd & 4th	Cancer
11th & 12th	Scorpio
15th, 16th & 17th	Capricorn
20th & 21st	Pisces
25th &26th	Taurus
30th & 31st	Cancer

January 2021

8th & 9th	Scorpio
12th & 13th	Capricorn
16th, 17th & 18th	Pisces
21st, 22nd & 23rd	Taurus
27th & 28th	Cancer

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

(The pruning, planting, and transplanting dated above have been taken from the **Harris Farmer's Almanac for 2021)**

WEATHER FORECAST FOR DECEMBER 2020

According to the United States Weather Service, Houston, and the surrounding areas fall in Region 7 of the National Weather Map. Here is what they predict for the month of December.

Our temperatures will be near normal and our precipitation will be near normal. Our average temperature should average from 38 degrees in the North to 50 degrees in the South. Our coolest temperatures for December will be December 1st & 2nd, 6th thru 8th, 15th thru 18th, 22nd thru 24th, and 29th thru 31st. Our warmest temperatures for December will be December 4th & 5th, 10th thru 14th 20th, and 26th thru 28th.

There is a good chance for scattered showers and thunderstorms and areas of steady rain about December 5th thru 7, 13th thru 16th, 21st thru 23rd, and 28th thru 30th. There will be a chance for snow or freezing rain in the North about December 22nd, 23rd, 28th, and 29th. There will be spotty heavy rainfall, especially near the Gulf.

UPDATE ON MEMBER JOHNNY WILLIAMS

Johnny is in a skilled nursing home and is doing better in some ways, but still has a long way to go. He currently has pneumonia and is having a problem with his blood pressure plummeting – even without any activity. He may have to go back to the hospital. They are giving him saline to help bring it up but that causes the swelling to start again and we are so hoping he won't have to go back on dialysis.

Donna sends her love to everyone and says Thank-you for all the cards and well wishes.

As you can see Johnny is not out of the woods yet so please keep the cards and well wishes coming.

Please believe me when I say they do help with the patient's spirit and healing.
Tom

photo by Ed and Millie Thompson

Begonia acaulis Merrill & Perry

by Millie Thompson
Southampton, New York

B. *acaulis* in an elegant, low-growing species that has an abundance of pink flowers all year long when it is grown under fluorescent lights.

Leonard Brass, renowned botanist known for his explorations in New Guinea, collected this specimen in Rauna, western Papua, along the Laloki River in 1933. It was found as a common rock plant in the light rain forests at an altitude of 450 meters. In 1943 this species was described and named by Elmer D. Merrill and L. M. Perry and published in the *Journal of the Arnold Arboretum*.

However, B. *acaulis* was not introduced into cultivation until 1968 when J. F. U. Ziech also found B. *acaulis* in Rauna, where he found it growing on rocky slopes in a semi-shady location. He then sent seeds to the Wageningen University in the Netherlands, and then it was distributed to other collections.

B. *acaulis* is a tuberous species and for botanical classification it is placed in the section *Diploclenium*. It is a stemless species (acaulescent); thus its name *acaulis*. This species grows naturally in a low symmetrical shape. The medium green leaves are orbicular (circular) with heart-shaped bases. The surface of the leaves is satiny and covered with short hairs. Bright pink flowers rise above the foliage. The male and female flowers have four tepals and are sparsely hairy on the outside. The plant in the photo was grown in a 20" split bubble and was 5 years old at the time the photo was taken.

B. *acaulis* is an especially fine species for growing under fluorescent lights in a contained atmosphere of a bubble where it will grow almost effortlessly. From the information about the native habitat, it is easily understood why it must be grown in a terrarium. The growing medium that I have found to be the most successful is the sphagnum moss/perlite mix. Water very carefully so that it is never over-watered. Use either Hyponex or Schultz indoor plant fertilizer and use according to the directions on the box. It is important to keep the plant groomed to prevent the rotting of leaves and flowers.

Joan Coulat - Sacramento Branch, American Begonia Society, July 2007

Hillebrandia sandwicensis D Oliver

by Morris Mueller

The family *Begoniaceae* currently contains only two genera — *Begonia* and *Hillebrandia*. Another genus, *Symbegonia*, found in and around New Guinea, has recently been folded into the genus *Begonia*. *Begonia* contains hundreds of different species, while *Hillebrandia* contains only one — *Hillebrandia sandwicensis*. It is found only in the Hawaiian archipelago on the islands of Kauai, Maui, and Molokai, and is the only member of *Begoniaceae* found on any Pacific island.

In Polynesian it is called both *pua maka nui* and *aka`aka`awa*.

The plant was discovered in1865 by M. Baldin and described by D. Oliver in 1866 and named in honor of Dr William Hillebrand a pioneer botanist who sent specimens of Hawaiian flora to Kew.

Hillebrandia sandwicensis grows in wet seepage areas along streams in rainforests where it receives bright, filtered light. It grows from fleshy rootstock which has been described as both rhizomatous, or corm-like or tuberous. The rootstock must dry out only slightly in summer and fall when dormant. It will not tolerate hot temperatures, preferring the cool, moist conditions where it grows naturally at 3,000 feet or higher elevations.

Leaves are similar to those of the rice paper plant (*Tetrapanax papyrifera*) in shape. The plant grows tall (three to four feet) and is erect. The flowers are white with a pale pink center in large clusters of rather large individual flowers.

The seeds are difficult to germinate. I had only two germinate and they never got beyond the seed-leaf shape. Others, including the Montreal Botanic Garden, also report difficulty in seed germination. There are no reports of vegetative propagation.

Additional pictures of *Hillebrandia sandwicensis* are in Mark Tebbet's book, ***Begonias***, on plates 10-12, on the cover of the April 1950 ***Begonian***, and on p 230 of the November 1981 ***Begonian***.

Joan Coulat - Sacramento Branch, American Begonia Society, June 2007