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FIGURE 1.

A COMMERCIAL CROP OF FIBROUS BEGONIA READY FOR MARKET

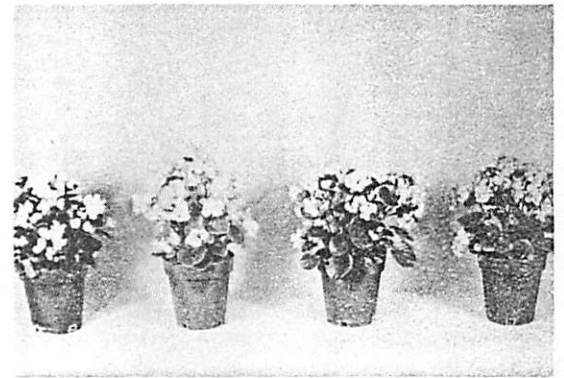


FIGURE 2. FOUR VARIETIES OF FIBROUS BEGONIA RECOMMENDED FOR FLOWERING PLANT PRODUCTION. L TO R WHISKY, DERBY, PINK COMET AND AMBRA.

## VARIETIES OF FIBROUS BEGONIA FOR A FLOWERING PLANT CROP

Paul V. Nelson and Dennis Cover

It is very apparent to bedding plant growers, with their season well underway, that the popularity of fibrous begonias is growing rapidly. Begonias are certainly a first class bedding plant showing adaptability to bright and shady locations and a wide range of colors and forms. These features lend themselves to further applications. Have you ever considered fibrous begonias for a year-around flowering plant crop? They can be used to fill in the gaps in a production schedule and are quite well accepted in the high traffic, low mark-up channels. (Fig. 1). They also make a superb hanging basket plant.

Numerous varieties are available but some have poor growth form and others are slow growing. We conducted a series of three trials to identify those varieties which are best suited to flowering plant culture. Our standards of judgment were speed of growth, floriferousness, fullness of the plant and the overall form.

Seed was germinated under mist in flats containing Jiffy Mix medium. Seedlings in trial 1 were transplanted directly into 6 inch standard plastic pots while seedlings in trials 2 and 3 were transplanted into 2 1/4 inch pots and later shifted to 6 inch standard plastic pots in trial 2 and 5 inch standard plastic pots in trial 3. Use of the intermediate pot was not necessary but was done to conserve space. Cultural dates are listed in Table 1. Beyond the seedling stage plants were grown in a medium consisting of 45% vermiculite; 45% sphagnum peatmoss; 10% field soil amended with 7 oz. of dolomitic limestone and 3 oz. of 20% superphosphate per cu. ft. Natural daylengths were utilized. Liquid fertilizer was applied weekly at a

Holiday Plant Day, March 30-31, Monroe, N. C.

strength of 250 ppm nitrogen and 125 ppm potassium (4.4 oz. potassium nitrate plus 4.8 oz. ammonium nitrate plus 7.2 oz. calcium nitrate per 100 gallons). When season of the year permitted a night temperature of 60°F and a day temperature of 75°F was maintained.

Table 1. Cultural dates for 3 fibrous begonia trails.

	Trial		
	1	2	3
Sowing Date	7-17-74	1-21-75	6-30-75
Transplant to 2 1/4" pots	---	3-6-75	8-11-75
Transplant to 5 or 6" pots	8-28-74	4-16-75	9-2-75
Ready for Market	10-26-74	5-16-75	10-27-75

The results of these trials are tabulated in Table 2. The height and width data were collected in the third trial. All varieties that developed undesirably long internodes in the first two trials were pinched in the third trial. In the cases of Luise, Jewelite and Scandinavian Pink an increase in quality was achieved; however, it was not sufficient to recommend these varieties for flowering plant culture. Other varieties responded adversely or not at all to the pinch. Red Butterfly has large flowers 2 1/2 inches in diameter which are somewhat reminiscent of the Rieger begonia. Although leaves are large and few flowers are borne at any one time the unusualness of this begonia may lend itself to a limited market.

The best varieties are moderately compact and highly branched. These are Ambra, Derby, Pink Comet, Vodka, Whisky, Bella 7 and Blushing Baby. Pink, rose, red, white and bi-colors as well as single and double flowers are represented in this group of varieties. Figure 2 shows finished plants of four of these varieties in 6 inch pots. It should be noted that many other varieties of fibrous begonia are available. Undoubtedly other desirable flowering plant varieties exist among them.

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Appreciation is expressed to Fred.C. Gloeckner and Company, Inc. for providing most of the seed used in this study.

Table 2. The final visual rating, height, width, description, and comments for fibrous begonia varieties tested in the study.

Variety	Rating by Trial <sup>X</sup>			Height (in)	Width (in)	Description				Comments
	1st	2nd	3rd			Flower	Leaves	Stem <sup>Y</sup>	Branching <sup>Z</sup>	
Ambra		5	5	8.3	11.4	pink	bronze	S	C	
Derby	5	5	4	8.6	11.1	coral salmon-white center	green	S	C	
Pink Comet		5	5	7.4	11.4	salmon pink	bronze	S	C	
Whisky		5	5	8.6	11.2	white	bronze	S	C	
Vodka		5	4.5	7.4	10.9	large, scarlet	bronze	S	C	
Bella 7		5	4	6.8	10.3	carmine rose	green	S	C	
Electra		5	3	8.0	12.2	lt. salmon scarlet	green	S	C	
Blushing Baby		4.5	4.5	8.8	11.1	double & semi-double light pink	green	S	C	
Matador		4	4	8.3	10.6	bright scarlet	green	S	C	few flowers
Red Pearl		4	4	7.9	12.3	bright red	green	S	C	
Scarletta	4	4	3	7.4	10.2	bright bonfire red	green	S	C	small plant
Red Butterfly		4	2	7.9	11.7	very large red	green	S	I	
Pink Tausendshon	4	-	-	-	-	bright pink	green	S	C	
Linda		3.5	3.5	7.3	10.5	rose tinged with salmon	green	S	C	small plant
Carravelle		3	1	10.6	12.0	pink, red, rose	green	S	I	
Gay Lady		3	4	8.1	11.0	bright scarlet	bronze	S	C	slow flowering
Othello		3	2	10.2	14.2	bright red	bronze	L	C	
Viva		2	4	7.8	10.6	white	green	S	C	few flowers
Luise		2	3	10.1	12.8	bright rose	bronze	L	I	
Indian Maid		2	2	7.4	11.6	red	bronze	M	C	few flowers
Cappuccino		2	2	10.4	12.9	white	bronze	L	I	
Jewelite		1	3	8.2	11.8	scarlet and rose red	reddish bronze	L	I	
Scandinavian Pink		1	1.5	8.7	11.9	rose pink	green	L	I	
Party Girl		1	1	9.1	11.9	pink	green	M	I	few flowers
Red Ribbon	1			-	-	red	green	S	C	small plant
Danica Rose	2			-	-	rose pink	dark bronze	S	C	early leaves too large

<sup>X</sup>Ratings range from 5-best to 1-poorest. The highest rating reflects a fast growing plant yielding an abundance of early flowers on a highly branched, moderately dense plant.

<sup>Y</sup>A desirable stem internode length is designated by "S", a moderate length by "M", and a disagreeably long length by "L".

<sup>Z</sup>A compact, sufficiently branched plant is indicated by "C" and a lanky, insufficiently branched plant by "I".