



## RHS Plant Trials and Awards

# *Begonia* Rex Cultorum Group

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# RHS Trial of *Begonia* Rex Cultorum Group 2005

## **Begonia Rex Cultorum Group**

This colourful and popular group of plants, that are relatively easy to grow at home, were put forward by the Tender Ornamental Plant Committee to the Floral Trials Sub-Committee as a very worthy candidate for Trial. Visitors to RHS Garden, Wisley during 2005 were treated to a brilliant display of a mixture of old, well-established and brand new cultivars of *Begonia* Rex Cultorum Group undergoing trial in the glasshouses. It was the first trial to be undertaken by the RHS of this plant group, and at the same time it was also the last tender plant trial to be undertaken in the old glasshouses at RHS Garden, Wisley. Tender plant trials will begin again in 2008 in the new Bicentenary Glasshouses.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the trial were: to assess the entries for the Award of Garden Merit as pot plants for the house, conservatory or greenhouse, and the production of a permanent reference, through the collation of photographic records and written descriptions.

## **Entries**

There were 87 entries in the trial submitted by two specialist UK nurseries, an additional National Plant Collections® holder and an agent for a breeder in the USA. Plants were assessed between July and October 2005.

## **Judging Criteria**

The trial was assessed for the AGM by the Floral Trials Sub-committee using the following criteria:

- Habit
- Leaf shape, colour, markings & arrangement
- Length of good display
- Health
- Tolerance of dry-ish conditions / atmosphere



## **The Public's Favourites**

This was a very popular trial with the public. Throughout the summer, voting slips were available so that each visitor could record which begonias in the trial were their favourites. The public's favourite ten plants were:

- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1 'Escargot'    | 6 'Curly Fire Flush'    |
| 2 'Fireworks'   | 7 'Martin Johnson'      |
| 3 'China Curl'  | 8 'Princess of Hanover' |
| 4 'Sal's Comet' | 9 'Carolina Moon'       |
| 5 'Sea Serpent' | 10 'Rocheart'           |

Of these only one, 'Curly Fire Flush', did not gain the Award of Garden Merit.

## **The Tender Ornamental Plant Committee's Favourites**

The Tender Ornamental Plant Committee visited the trial during the summer while at Wisley for a committee meeting. They also voted for their favourite plants; the top three were:

- 1 'Carolina Moon'
- 2 'Escargot'
- 3 'Sea Serpent'

All of these gained the Award of Garden Merit.



Front cover: 'Fireworks'  
(photo: Wendy Wesley)

Left: AGM plants  
(photo: Jacquie Gray)

Above: 'Curly Fire Flush'  
(photo: Wendy Wesley)

Opposite: 'Escargot'  
(photo: Wendy Wesley)



### Award of Garden Merit (AGM) 🏆 H1

'Carolina Moon'	'Mikado'
'China Curl'	'Namur'
'David Blais'	'Pink Champagne'
'Dewdrop'	'Princess of Hanover'
'Emerald Beauty'	'Raspberry Swirl!'
'Escargot'	'Rocheart'
'Fireworks'	'Roi de Roses'
'Helen Lewis'	'Sal's Comet'
'Hilo Holiday'	'Sea Serpent'
'Ironstone'	'Silver Cloud'
'Martin Johnson'	'Silver King'
'Merry Christmas'*	'Silver Queen'*
'Midnight Magic'	

### Award of Garden Merit subject to availability in the UK:

'Maui Mist'
'Miami Storm'

H1 plants requiring heated glass in the British Isles

\* indicates a recommendation that their AGM status should be reviewed in 2012

### The Award of Garden Merit

The Award of Garden Merit requires a plant:

- To be excellent for garden decoration or use
- To be available from nurseries or specialist growers
- To be of good constitution
- Not to require specialist care
- Not to be particularly susceptible to any pest or disease
- Not to be subject to an unreasonable degree of reversion

# Cultivation and propagation

## Cultivation notes

The 87 entries arrived at the glasshouses of RHS Garden, Wisley between January and March 2005 as young plants in 7cm pots. They were temporarily placed on a heated bench at 20°C to encourage root production and covered with a 17gm fleece for several weeks. In early May they were potted on into either 1 & 2L nursery stock pots, depending on individual plant vigour. In August they were potted on, one size larger, into standard clay pots with a free-draining low peat compost. Care should be taken when potting on not to do it too soon, as too much compost can overwhelm the root system.

They were grown in a large, airy glasshouse with a night temperature of 16°C, a day temperature of 18°C and a venting temperature of 22°C. They will grow at lower temperatures, but high temperatures were used to establish good growth for this trial. The general rule is that the higher the temperature, the more shade they will require; with lower temperature, more light is required. Begonias don't need strong light conditions, in fact with many of them it can be detrimental – sometimes resulting in more muted coloured leaves. For the trial, the glasshouses were white-washed on the outside, but in the strong summer light this was found not to be enough and a 50% shade net was added 2-3 foot above the plants.

Begonias also appreciate high humidity, but this can be more difficult to control. Water was splashed onto the paths and benches, but not the plants themselves, to increase the humidity. Plants were watered individually when the compost felt dry to touch; overwatering can be detrimental and so the plants are better kept drier. A liquid fertiliser with equal quantities of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, and with trace elements, was applied at every other watering initially, then at every watering. Higher nitrogen levels lead to more growth and some of the colour characteristics can be lost; phosphorus emphasises the leaf colours.

Although these begonias can, and do, flower they are not really noted for them. For fair comparison during the trial all the flowers were removed.

## Cultivation summary

- Do** Use free-draining compost  
Bring them into a light position for the winter  
Try to grow them in a humid environment (a saucer of pebbles can help)
- Don't** Let them become water-logged  
Sit them in direct sunlight in the summer  
Use too much fertiliser  
Sit them in a draft

## Propagation

Most begonias are relatively easy to propagate and this group are no exception as they are easily propagated from their leaves. There are a variety of different methods for leaf cuttings. These include, pinning a leaf to the surface of the compost and cutting occasional slits in it, ensuring each slit crosses a vein (see picture). Another method is to cut the leaf into V-shaped wedges, each with a vein, and to insert these into the compost. Rooting will take place where the vein has been cut.

Please be aware that some cultivars, particularly those recently bred, may be protected by Plant Breeders' Rights.



Pinning the leaf  
(photo: Tim Sandall)



The resulting young plants  
(photo: Tim Sandall)

## Pests & Diseases

Begonias can be susceptible to:

- mildew; more likely when plants are stressed
- botrytis; more likely when plants are overwatered
- vine weevil
- virus; western flower thrip can act as a vector carrying virus from plant to plant
- caterpillars; trial plants were treated with *Bacillus thuringiensis* early in the trial, following damage by a caterpillar.

## Begonias

The begonia family, *Begoniaceae*, in terms of the number of genera it contains, is very small. In addition to begonia there is one monotypic genus with tuberous rhizomes from the Hawaiian archipelago, *Hillebrandia sandwicensis*. *Symbegonia*, with 10 species from New Guinea that have perianth segments united into a tube on the female flowers, is sometimes recognised as a genus in its own right, but increasing it is included within *Begonia*. Two other genera that have been used historically, *Begoniella* and *Semibegoniella*, are now well established as being within *Begonia*.

The genus *Begonia* was described in 1700 by Charles Plumier, a Franciscan monk and botanist. With the name he honoured Michel Begon, a French botanist who was at the time Governor of Santo Domingo. The first begonia to reach England, *B. minor*, was sent by Dr William Brown from Jamaica in 1777. Following which, Sir Joseph Banks went on to introduce several species to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. By 1850 there were 200 species known in Europe; about 50 of these from living plants. Currently about 1000 species are recognised, 25% of which are in cultivation and with over 10,000 cultivars and hybrids.

### Begonias characteristics:

- monoecious, in that they have separate male and female flowers on the same plant, often adjacent in the inflorescence
- herbs to shrubs with fibrous or tuberous roots or rhizomes
- stalked, alternate leaves, usually asymmetric
- a succulent, often jointed stem
- four perianth segments (tepals), in two opposite pairs in male flowers and two to six tepals in female flowers; of varying sizes, but the same colour
- numerous stamens, massed in the centre
- many ovules and 3 styles
- fruit is fleshy or leathery and usually winged
- tiny, almost dust-like seeds

### Horticultural classification

The begonias grown in cultivation today can be grouped using the American Begonia Society's horticultural classification into:

- cane
- shrub
- rhizomatous
- tuberous
- trailing or scandent
- thick-stemmed
- Semperflorens Cultorum Group
- Rex Cultorum Group

### *Begonia rex*

*Begonia rex* is one of the rhizomatous species and it was introduced to England from Assam in 1856. The story varies, as stories often do, but some say that it was introduced to cultivation purely by accident. A Belgian commercial horticulturist, Jean Linden, is said to have noticed this begonia in the sheath of an orchid that was brought to the Stevens' auction room in London by the botanist Charles Simons. That Linden then purchased this species for 10,000 francs and two years later in 1858 it was introduced commercially, retailing at a cost of 50 francs per plant. It immediately caused a stir among growers and hybridizers who could see the commercial possibilities.



Fitch, W. (1859)  
*Begonia rex*, t5101.  
Curtis's Botanical Magazine

Numerous hybrids were made with *Begonia rex*, including *B. annulata*, *B. palmata*, *B. hatacoa* and *B. xanthina*. That was just the starting point. More and more crosses in as many combinations as possible were made. Hybrids with *B. evansiana* gave added height; hybrids with *B. diadema* introduced deeply cut leaves; hybrids with *B. dregei* gave smaller leaves; those with *B. decora*, colourful more reddish foliage and hybrids with *B. cathayana* dense, velvety hairs.

Although frequently referred to as 'rexes', all these hybrids are correctly attributed to:

### Begonia Rex Cultorum Group

This Group was described in 1920 by Bailey for the cultivars that involve *B. rex* as a parent to some degree. They are generally rhizomatous in habit, as per the species, but not always, as there is a range of other parents involved. However, all the Rex Cultorum group, and there are well over 500 cultivars, are noted for their attractive leaf colouring. Trends in fashion are reflected in changes with new releases over the years. For example, reds are currently popular, as was reflected in the colour range within the trial.

The Group can be broken up into different categories, by leaf size:

- small (sometimes referred to as miniature) <7.5cm (3")
- medium 7.5-15cm (3-6")
- large >15cm (6")

Some have a spiral to their leaves and some are classed as upright, referring to the nature in habit of the rhizome, and therefore the growth of the plant. This character becomes more dominant once plants are in to their second year, and therefore plants were not really noticeable as being a different shape during the trial.

# RHS Award of Garden Merit Descriptions



**'Carolina Moon'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by Jeans & sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe & Shirley's Plants

A showy leaf with clean markings, a nice red centre and a good spiral.

*Height and spread 25 × 45cm; three-dimensional habit, leaves well-spaced. Petiole to 15cm; hairs medium to sparse, white. Leaves 30cm long × 19cm wide, with spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, smooth and with a metallic sheen, acuminate tip, undulate and with a toothed margin. Centre and margin rich red-purple (59C), separated by a band of pale grey-green (194A). Reverse, red margin, centre and veins.*

**'David Blais'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by Lepisto & sent by Dibleys Nurseries

Produces masses of brightly coloured medium-sized leaves with dark veins that gain a silvery sheen when grown in low light levels.

*Height and spread 40 × 60cm; leaves well-spaced, slightly two-dimensional, flattened front to back. Petiole to 22cm, red streaked with green; pink hairs of medium density. Leaves to 25 × 13cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, rugose, metallic sheen on upper surface, toothed margin. Rich red-purple (a little paler than 59B), narrow strips of deep brown (200A) extend along veins from base across leaf and recurring adjacent to some veins at margin, flushed green. Reverse, red.*



RHS Herbarium

**'China Curl'**  
(syn: 'China Swirl', 'China Girl')  
AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by Woodriff & sent by Shirley's Plants

Superb plant with a striking double spiral and contrasting leaf colours

*Height and spread 30 × 45cm; three-dimensional habit, leaves well-spaced. Petiole to 17cm, pale greenish-red streaked with light green; hairs medium density, pink but with stronger red-pink on younger stems. Leaves 25 × 18cm with a double spiral, cordate, coarse texture, metallic sheen on upper surface, acuminate tip, sparsely hairy. Margin and central basal area deep maroon (darker than 183A), band between pale grey-green (194B), spotted with yellow-green (146A). Bright pink speckling at junction of maroon and green areas. Reverse, red margin, centre and veins.*

**'Dewdrop'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by Lewis & sent by Dibleys Nurseries

Excellent miniature with a neat small leaf that has a notable metallic sheen; reminiscent of a *Heuchera*. Ideal for growing on a windowsill.

*Height and spread 20 × 40cm; leaves well-spaced and three-dimensional. Petiole to 15cm; pink hairs of medium density. Leaves to 12 × 9cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, smooth, metallic sheen, acuminate tip, toothed margin. Pewter/pale grey-green (c.190D), flushed with mauve-pink particularly at the centre and margin. Reverse, red.*





RHS Herbarium

**'Emerald Beauty'**

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Shirley's Plants

A well-balanced beauty with plenty of strikingly-marked, sturdy leaves.

*Height and spread 20 × 36cm; three-dimensional. Petiole to 9cm; sparse white hairs. Leaves 19 × 13cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical and ovate, smooth, rugose, sheen on green patches, acuminate tip, margin toothed and lightly undulate. Olive green (much darker than 147B), with a red flush around central veins and margin as a narrow broken band; interveinal patches of pale grey-green (193B) extending to or almost to the leaf margin; small patches of yellow-green scattered at junction of olive and grey-green areas. Reverse, red margin, centre and veins.*



**'Escargot'**

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

Very pronounced single spiral and lovely markings; an outstanding plant that was very popular with everyone.

*Height and spread 26 × 47cm; three-dimensional habit. Petiole to 22cm, mid olive green; dense red hairs. Leaves 24 × 18cm, very pronounced spiral, obliquely asymmetrical and ovate, coarse, bullate and hairy, undulate margin. Leaf centre and margin dark olive green, lightly covered with pink hairs which are very obvious at leaf margin, band between bright green (darker than 130D). Reverse, highly reticulated with fleshy, hairy, red veins.*

**'Fireworks'**

AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by Kartuz & sent by Dibleys Nurseries

Vibrant, bold, striking leaf with wonderful colour contrast.

*Height and spread 30 × 50cm; a little two-dimensional, upright rhizome. Petioles to 14cm; densely covered in pinkish-red hairs, that also extending onto veins on leaf reverse. Well-spaced leaves, to 26 × 16.6cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, bullate, metallic sheen, margin lightly ciliate, acuminate tip. Centre of leaf very dark red-purple (much deeper than greyed purple 187A) that also extends along veins to margin; marginal band, deep vibrant pink (70A), that also extends around the darker area surrounding veins; between these two zones pale grey-green (193B). Reverse, red and hairy on veins, darker margin band and central area.*



**'Helen Lewis'**

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

Large, dark velvety, wonderfully patterned leaves.

*Height and spread 28 × 45cm; more or less two-dimensional. Petiole to 17cm; densely covered in pink hairs. Leaves to 36 × 24cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, bullate, metallic sheen, acuminate tip, toothed margin. Dark velvet brown (200A) flushed red with a 1cm band of grey-green (190C) patches and spots 1cm from margin; flushed mauve pink. Reverse, red.*



All descriptions are based on plants grown in the RHS *Begonia Rex Cultorum* Group Trial in 2005; plants grown elsewhere may differ according to cultivation conditions, particularly in leaf colour with different light intensities.

Colour codes were taken using the RHS Colour Chart. The fourth edition (2001) is available from RHSE Mail Order, Wisley, Surrey GU23 6QB.

**H1** = plants requiring heated glass in the British Isles

## RHS Award of Garden Merit Descriptions



### 'Hilo Holiday'

AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by J L Booman & sent by Proven Winners Europe Ltd

The attractive wide margin darkens from deep green to black as the leaf matures; both colours work well with the dots. One of the Great American Cities Series.

*Height and spread 30 × 60cm; three-dimensional habit with well-spaced foliage and upright rhizome. Petiole to 15cm; sparse pink hairs. Leaves 24 × 16cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, bullate, margin entire, tip acuminate. Main colour strong dark red (slightly paler than 187C), glossy; margin dark brown (c.200A) with slight dark flush, spotted with main colour, matt; some slight greening on inner marginal area. Reverse, dark red (183C) body darker red (187A) margin and centre.*

### 'Martin Johnson'

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Dibleys Nurseries

A very distinctive, jagged, bold leaf that was very popular with the public. This cultivar was named after an American breeder of begonias, rather than the English rugby player that shares the name.

*Height and spread 30 × 55cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves; upright rhizome. Petiole to 18cm; sparse white hairs. Leaves to 30 × 24cm, slight single spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, smooth, metallic sheen, pronounced acuminate tips, margin deeply cut and ciliate. Pale grey-green (193C), centre and margins flushed with bright magenta (N78A). Reverse, very pronounced veins, red centre, margin and veins.*



### 'Ironstone'

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

Good leaf power, whilst remaining nice and neat and having a good colour

*Height and spread 23 × 50cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves. Petiole to 16cm, brown with green streaks; medium density white hairs. Leaves to 22 × 13cm, without spiral, obliquely ovate, coarse, rugose, slight metallic sheen, acuminate tip, margin lightly undulate and lightly ciliate. Main colour grey-green (191A-B); margin and around base of veins green (138A), deepening (147A) at margin and spotted with main colour; light red marginal flush. Reverse, red in centre and margin and along veins, with white hairs.*

### 'Midnight Magic'

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Dibleys Nurseries

Pronounced single spiral; bright red leaf reverse that glows when the sun shines through. Although not judged for it here, it is one of the few cultivars that is noted for its pink flowers.

*Height and spread 25 × 50cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves. Petiole to 17cm; dense red hairs. Leaves to 24 × 17cm, pronounced spiral, asymmetrical, cordate, coarse, rugose, dull, acuminate tip, margin undulate and toothed. Very dark green (darker than 147A), strongly flushed red at margins and on reverse.*







**'Mikado'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

Large leaves and vigorous plant and good, bold leaf markings with an attractive red rim.

*Height and spread 30 × 55cm; more or less two-dimensional, well-spaced leaves. Petiole to 18cm, red; dense, long deep pink hairs. Leaves to 33 × 23cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, smooth, rugose, metallic sheen, sparse pink hairs, acuminate tip. Main leaf colour grey-green (c.194A); narrow marginal band and around and between pronounced fleshy veins, dark brown (200 A-B); spots of main colour at green/brown junction. Reverse entirely red, with white hairs on veins.*

**'Pink Champagne'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

Well-displayed leaves; a good pink with a black lacy edge and a purplish-red metallic sheen.

*Height and spread 25 × 45cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves. Petiole to 15cm, red brown; pink hairs of medium density. Leaves to 23 × 15cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, smooth texture, acuminate tip, margin entire. Background colour and around fleshy veins, dark brown-purple (deeper and more brown than 183A), large, bullate, metallic patches and spots towards margin of rosy-pink (186A-B). Reverse, mainly red.*



**'Namur'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Shirley's Plants

A neater, more compact version of 'Escargot'; said to be particularly good in its second year.

*Height and spread 20 × 30cm; three-dimensional habit, slightly congested leaves. Petiole to 7cm; dense red hairs. Leaves to 18 × 13cm, single spiral, with a double spiral on mature leaves, asymmetrical, orbicular, smooth, metallic sheen, acuminate tip, margin lightly undulate and lightly ciliate. Main colour grey-green (194C), with dark central blotch of dark olive green flushed with bright magenta (70A), increasing intensity with maturity; leaf margin a narrow rim of red and patches of mid olive green.*

**'Princess of Hanover'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

An elegant pot plant, a smaller leaf than some, but forming a well-filled plant. Mature leaves have a more undulate margin and a more pronounced spiral

*Height and spread 35 × 65cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves. Petiole to 28cm, brown with green streaks; medium density coverage of pink hairs. Leaves 17.5 × 15cm, single or double spiral, asymmetrical, cordate, coarse, pink hairs on upper surface, acuminate tip, margin undulate, ciliate, some deeply cut; Margin and centre deep olive green (darker than 147A), with a metallic grey-green (194A) band; irregular patches of green (143C) at junction of olive and grey-green, more marked on immature leaves; margin pink-flushed. Reverse, red around margin and in centre, hairy.*



## RHS Award of Garden Merit Descriptions



### 'Rocheart'

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Dibleys Nurseries & Rhodes & Rockliffe

Compact but vigorous plant with a distinctive speckled leaf.

*Height and spread 25 × 40cm; three-dimensional habit, slightly congested foliage. Petiole to 15cm; dense pale pink and white hairs, becoming more sparse in maturity. Leaves 21 × 14cm, pronounced spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate to orbicular, coarse, bullate, acuminate tip. Main colour dark yellowish-green (146A), spotted and patched with metallic grey-green (193A), spots having a glandular short pink hair; centre and margin dark brown (200A); pink flush to margin and surrounding central dark patch. Reverse, red around margin, centre and on veins.*

### 'Sal's Comet'

AGM (H1) 2005

Raised and sent by Dibleys Nurseries

Attractive and bold leaf shape and markings; leaves held apart giving a light effect.

*Height and spread 28 × 50cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced. Petiole to 16cm, green streaked red; sparse pink hairs. Leaves to 22 × 16cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, fleshy veins, very jagged, bullate, smooth textured, acuminate tip, margin finely denticulate, deeply cut and lightly ciliate. Main colour bright red-purple (70A-B) around and along veins, patches of dark grey-green (198C) at junction of pink area and margin; small central patch and margin dark brown (c.200A); margin spotted with main colour. Reverse, dark red (187A) centre and margin.*



### 'Roi de Roses'

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

Unique colouring; the spotted edge being strongly textured.

*Height and spread 27 × 50cm; three-dimensional habit. Petiole to 20cm; densely covered with long pink hairs which fade with maturity. Leaves to 28 × 16cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, broadly ovate, smooth apart from marginal area, ciliate margin, acuminate tip. Deep fuchsia pink (63A), metallic, fading slightly in maturity with pale green veins; pronounced band of rugose spots around margins, each with a glandular hair on a dark green background. Veins hairy on red leaf underside.*

### 'Sea Serpent'

AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe

Upright growth, with leaves that are often slightly cupped; the distinctive dark, shiny leaves with red spots that become brighter when it is grown with less light.

*Height and spread 30 × 60cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves, upright rhizome. Petiole to 13cm, sparse short pink hairs. Leaves to 18 × 13cm, without spiral. Obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, rugose to bullate, mostly dull except for metallic spots, acuminate tip, toothed margin. Main leaf colour near black, spotted with metallic red-purple (64A) blisters. Reverse, red around margin, centre and veins; veins hairy.*





**'Silver Cloud'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe and Dibleys Nurseries

Upright, tidy growth and wonderful silver foliage, particularly when in less light.

*Height and spread 30 × 50cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves, upright rhizome. Petiole to 12cm; dense white hairs. Leaves 19 × 15cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, rugose, slight metallic sheen, acuminate tip, toothed margin. Grey-green (194B), breaking down into spots near to veins; narrow strip of green (138A) around veins. Reverse, very pale pink hairs on veins.*

**'Silver King'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by Teupel & sent by Shirley's Plants

Striking foliage on a neat plant with even habit; plenty of foliage without congestion.

*Height and spread 30 × 60cm; three-dimensional habit, leaves well-spaced. Petiole to 20cm, brownish-red; sparse white hairs. Leaves 22 × 14cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, rugose, acuminate tip, margin toothed. Base colour deep olive green (darker green 147A), with patches of metallic grey-green (195C); flushes of bright red-purple (71D) around green patches increase with leaf maturity. Reverse, red.*



### Award of Garden Merit – Subject to Availability



**'Maui Mist'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by J L Booman & sent by Proven Winners Europe Ltd

Red and black leaves; simple and bold. One of the Great American Cities Series.

*Height and spread 42 × 70cm; a little two-dimensional, upright rhizome. Petiole brown, green-streaked; medium density of pink, fading to white, hairs. Leaves 30 × 21 cm, obliquely asymmetrical, without spiral, cordate, smooth texture, rugose, undulate and lightly ciliate margin, acuminate tip. Metallic deep red-purple (59B) in large interveinal patches and inspots at margin; background, along veins and around margin dark brown (200B), flushed with green.*

**'Miami Storm'**  
AGM (H1) 2005

Raised by J L Booman & sent by Proven Winners Europe Ltd

This could never be described as a subtle plant, with its near pillarbox red leaves; the brightest in the trial. One of the Great American Cities Series.

*Height and spread 34 × 50cm; three-dimensional habit, well-spaced leaves. Petiole to 19cm; medium cover of pink hairs. Leaves 22 × 15cm, without spiral, obliquely asymmetrical, ovate, smooth texture, bullate, acuminate tip, margin undulate and lightly ciliated. Main colour rich red-purple (60A); central patch near black, that extends along the veins and also with a narrow margin; occasional patches of pale grey-green 192C along veins towards leaf margin. Reverse, red.*



# Selection Guide



<i>B. annulata</i>	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Green
habit	2-3d
petiole hairs	Very dense; red
height/spread	28 × 50

'Dewdrop' 🏆	
leaf size	Small -medium
spiral	No
main colours	Pewter & pink
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Medium-dense; pink
height/spread	20 × 40



'Bettina Rothschild' (syn. 'Fire Flush')	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Green & red
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; red
height/spread	28 × 45

'Emerald Beauty' 🏆	
leaf size	Medium large
spiral	No
main colours	Greens & silver
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Sparse; white
height/spread	20 × 36



'Carolina Moon' 🏆	
leaf size	Large
spiral	Yes
main colours	Pink & green
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Medium; white
height/spread	24 × 45

'Escargot' 🏆	
leaf size	Large
spiral	Yes
main colours	Greens
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Very; red
height/spread	26 × 47



'China Curl' 🏆	
leaf size	Medium large
spiral	Double
main colours	Pink & green
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Medium; pink
height/spread	30 × 45

'Fireworks' 🏆	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Pink, green & black
habit	2-3d
petiole hairs	Dense; pink-red
height/spread	30 × 50



'Curly Fire Flush'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	Yes
main colours	Green & red
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; red
height/spread	28 × 45

'Green Gold'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	Yes
main colours	Greens
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; white
height/spread	27 × 45



'David Blais' 🏆	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Pink
habit	2-3d
petiole hairs	Dense-medium; red-pink
height/spread	40 × 60

'Helen Lewis' 🏆	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Burgundy/black & pale green
habit	2d
petiole hairs	Dense; pink
height/spread	28 × 45



'Denver Lace'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Greens & pink
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Medium; very pale pink
height/spread	28 × 45

'Hilo Holiday' 🏆	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Red & black
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Sparse; pink
height/spread	30 × 60



**Leaf size at end of trial:** small = <7.5cm;  
 medium = 7.5-15cm;  
 large = >15cm  
 measured in cms

**Habit at end of trial:** 3d = 3-dimensional;  
 2d = 2-dimensional (note many  
 cultivars started more 2-dimensional  
 at the start of the trial)

**Height/spread**



<b>'Ironstone'</b> 🏆	
<b>leaf size</b>	Medium large
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Green & silver
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	White
<b>height/spread</b>	23 × 50

<b>'Namur'</b> 🏆	
<b>leaf size</b>	Medium-large
<b>spiral</b>	Yes (sometimes double)
<b>main colours</b>	Green & pink
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Dense; red
<b>height/spread</b>	20 × 30



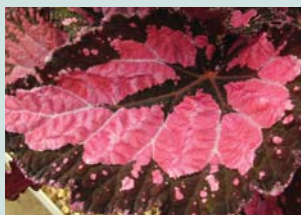
<b>'Kathy Shorindore'</b>	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Greens
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Very dense; white
<b>height/spread</b>	36 × 45

<b>'Pink Champagne'</b> 🏆	
<b>leaf size</b>	Medium-large
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Pink
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Medium; pink
<b>height/spread</b>	25 × 45



<b>'Martin Johnson'</b> 🏆	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	Yes
<b>main colours</b>	Pink & green
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Sparse; white
<b>height/spread</b>	30 × 55

<b>'Plum Rose'</b>	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	Yes (lacking in some leaves)
<b>main colours</b>	Pink, green & black
<b>habit</b>	2-3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Medium; red
<b>height/spread</b>	21 × 40



<b>'Maui Mist'</b> 🏆 STA	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Pink & black
<b>habit</b>	2-3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Medium; pink
<b>height/spread</b>	42 × 70

<b>'Princess of Hanover'</b> 🏆	
<b>leaf size</b>	Medium
<b>spiral</b>	Yes (some double)
<b>main colours</b>	Greens
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Medium; pink
<b>height/spread</b>	35 × 65



<b>'Miami Storm'</b> 🏆 STA	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Red & black
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Medium; pink
<b>height/spread</b>	34 × 50

<b>'Raspberry Swirl'</b> 🏆 (1994)	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	Yes (some double)
<b>main colours</b>	Pink & green
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Medium; red
<b>height/spread</b>	35 × 60



<b>'Midnight Magic'</b> 🏆	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	Yes
<b>main colours</b>	Dark green
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Dense; red
<b>height/spread</b>	25 × 50

<b>'Red Robin'</b>	
<b>leaf size</b>	Medium
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Red & black
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Sparse; red
<b>height/spread</b>	30 × 55



<b>'Mikado'</b> 🏆	
<b>leaf size</b>	Large
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Pale green & red
<b>habit</b>	2-3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Dense; deep pink
<b>height/spread</b>	30 × 55

<b>'Reine des Neiges'</b>	
<b>leaf size</b>	Medium-large
<b>spiral</b>	No
<b>main colours</b>	Silver
<b>habit</b>	3d
<b>petiole hairs</b>	Medium; white
<b>height/spread</b>	20 × 40



RHS Herbarium

# Selection Guide



'Rocheart' 🏆	
leaf size	Medium – large
spiral	Yes
main colours	Green & pink
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; pale pink & white
height/spread	25 × 40

'Seattle Twist'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	Yes
main colours	Pink & greens
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; pink
height/spread	30 × 55



'Roi de Roses' 🏆	
leaf size	Medium large
spiral	No
main colours	Pink & pale green
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; pink
height/spread	27 × 50

'Silver Cloud' 🏆	
leaf size	Medium-large
spiral	No
main colours	Green & silver
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; white
height/spread	30 × 50



'Sal's Comet' 🏆	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Pink & pale green
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Sparse; pink
height/spread	28 × 50

'Silver Green Heart'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Silver & green
habit	2-3d
petiole hairs	Medium; pink
height/spread	23 × 35



'Sal's Moondust'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Medium; pink
height/spread	30 × 56

'Silver King' 🏆	
leaf size	Medium-large
spiral	No
main colours	Green, pink & silver
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Sparse; white
height/spread	30 × 60



'San Diego Sunset'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Red & black
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Dense; pink
height/spread	26 × 56

'Valentine'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Pink & greens
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Medium; red
height/spread	25 × 47



'Savannah Pink Parfait'	
leaf size	Large
spiral	No
main colours	Pink & greens
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Medium; red
height/spread	30 × 55



'Sea Serpent' 🏆	
leaf size	Medium-large
spiral	No
main colours	Black & red
habit	3d
petiole hairs	Sparse; pink
height/spread	30 × 60



## Recommended Awards

### Subject to verification of the name

Two entries to the trial were submitted as 'Regal Minuet'; trial numbers 50 and 64. Although similar, there were distinct differences between the two. Both of these plants were considered to be worthy of the Award of Garden Merit, however neither award will be granted the AGM until their identity has been resolved. If you think you might be able to help shed light on this, then please do get in touch.

### 'Regal Minuet' (Trial no. 50)

Sent by Rhodes & Rockliffe.

Height and spread 22 × 50cm. Rich red-purple (deeper than 61A) with a small area of near black around leaf base that extends narrowly along veins; very narrow, broken rim of deep maroon to near black at margin.



### 'Regal Minuet' (Trial no. 64)

Sent by Dibleys Nurseries.

Height and spread 32 × 50cm. Metallic dark rich red-purple (187B-C); dark brown (200A) to black at centre, along veins and for an entire, narrow marginal band.



## Floral Trials Sub-committee

**Chairman:** Tony Lord

**Vice Chairmen:** Roy Cheek, Pam Schwerdt

**Members:**

Bill Boardman	Bob Brown
Marina Christopher	John Coke
David Creese	Ivan Dickings
Fergus Garrett	John Gibson
Diana Hart Dyke	Tony Hender
Ian Howell	Luc Klinkhamer
Sibylle Kreutzberger	Christopher Lloyd (RIP)
Alison Mulvaney	John Paton
Graham Rice	Jean Sambrook
Chris Sanders	Keith Sangster
Terry Smale	Mike Smallwood
Brian Talman	Ray Waite
Victoria Wakefield	Stuart Williams

## Senders of plants to the trial

Dibleys Nurseries, Llanellidan, Ruthin, Denbighshire LL15 2LG

Shirley's Plants, 6 Sandhey's Drive, Churchtown, Southport, Merseyside PR9 9PQ

Rhodes & Rockliffe, 2 Nursery Road, Nazeing, Essex EN9 2JE

Proven Winners Europe Ltd., First Floor, Silk House, Park Green, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 7QW

## Acknowledgements

Photographs by Wendy Wesley unless otherwise stated.

All the staff who worked in the glasshouses at RHS Garden, Wisley in 2005, particularly Nick Morgan, Glass Superintendent.

Richard Gilbert, member of the Tender Ornamental Plant Committee, for his help since the trial was first proposed.

The senders of the plants to the trial, not only for their plants, but for their time, interest and expertise too.

## Further reading

Thompson, M.L. & Thompson, E.J. (1981) *Begonias - The complete Reference Guide*. Times Books, New York.

Tebbutt, M.C. (2005) *Begonias - Cultivation, Identification & Natural History*. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon.

## Societies and websites

American Begonia Society: [www.begonias.org/](http://www.begonias.org/)

Dibleys Nurseries: [www.dibleys.com](http://www.dibleys.com)

National Begonia Society: [www.national-begonia-society.co.uk/](http://www.national-begonia-society.co.uk/)

Shirley's Plants, a National Plant Collection holder: [www.stbegonias.com/](http://www.stbegonias.com/)


Opposite: Judging the trial (photo: Jacquie Gray)

## The Royal Horticultural Society

The RHS is the UK's leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. Its charitable work includes providing expert advice and information, advancing horticulture, training the next generation of gardeners, helping school children learn about plants, and conducting research into plants, pests and environmental issues affecting gardeners. The RHS AGM plant trial scheme is an important part of this work.

The RHS receives no government grants and for every pound received from members' subscriptions we need to raise more than twice as much again to fund our charitable work. We also rely on donations and sponsorship to supplement income from our garden operations, flower shows, shops and plant centres.

## RHS Plant Trials

With so many different types of gardener and so many different cultivars available to them in each group of plants, it is important that a system of recommendation is in place to help with selection at point of sale. These recommendations must be clear and reliable to ensure that of the thousands of plants available in the UK, a proportion are known to be excellent garden plants. The RHS provides this information through its extensive programme of plant trials held at RHS gardens in the UK. The RHS Award of Garden Merit  signifies the selection of the best cultivars for general garden use.

RHS plant trials serve the professional gardener who wants to know the range of plants available, including the latest breeding and selection programmes, with their distinctive characteristics and provenance. They also serve the amateur who wants to know which plants will grow and perform well in a particular garden situation.

The RHS has an unrivalled resource of knowledge and expertise and is therefore best placed to conduct plant trials for the UK gardening market.

## RHS Herbarium

The RHS Herbarium keeps a record of trial cultivars as dried specimens with detailed descriptions and photographic images. This forms an important reference for the horticultural industry. Any new cultivars are highlighted and a Standard specimen is preserved and described.

The RHS Herbarium, stored at RHS Garden Wisley, is the largest active horticultural herbarium in the world. At present the collection contains about 80,000 herbarium specimens and over 30,000 images of plants. Material is actively collected from a wide spectrum of sources including RHS plant trials.

## RHS Trials Bulletins

*Canna*: September 2003  
*Daisies* (yellow, perennial): September 2004  
*Delphinium*: June 2004  
*Fuchsia* (hardy): December 2005  
*Geraniums* (hardy) Stage 1: June 2005  
*Geraniums* (hardy) Stage 2: June 2006  
*Hyacinthaceae* (little blue bulbs): September 2005  
*Lavenders* (hardy): July 2003  
*Miscanthus*: October 2004  
*Potentilla* (shrubby): July 2002  
*Rhododendron yakushimanum* & hybrids: May 2006  
*Peppers* (sweet): November 2006  
*Potatoes* (salad): November 2004  
*Saxifrages* (silver): May 2005  
*Spiraea japonica* (with coloured leaves): November 2003

## RHS Plant Assessments Bulletin

The first of what will become a series of online publications, to complement the *RHS Plant Trials and Awards* series, was published in July 2006:

*Pittosporum tenuifolium* hybrids & cultivars

These bulletins can be viewed at a larger size on the RHS Website:

[www.rhs.org.uk/plants/trials\\_bulletins.asp](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/trials_bulletins.asp)

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