

## VICTORIAN BEGONIA SOCIETY Inc

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### **NEXT MEETING**

Saturday 21st May, 2022

***At Robert Clark Centre, Ballarat Botanical Gardens***

*11:30am Committee Meeting*

*12:30pm Barbecue lunch*

*1:30pm Meeting*

**Speaker: Wayne Walters**

**“Winter Care of your Begonias”**

**All Welcome**

Please bring salads &/or Goodies for Afternoon Tea.

### **Wayne's Words of Wisdom**

Hi everyone. We hope you are all well. If not get well soon. To all the mothers we hope you all have a happy Mothers Day.

Our next meeting is on the 21st May. We will have a barbecue . Could you bring some salad and some goodies for afternoon tea please.

There will be a Committee meeting at 11:30am.

Congratulations to the members who brought plants for the competition. It was very nice to see Stan win the Best Tuberous Begonia and Roger the Rhizomes as well as first in the Canes with myself second in the Canes.

Your tuberous begonias should have the growing tips pinched out and the water reduced so the plants can ripen well for next season. By the end of June the foliage should be dying down and the tubers can be taken out. When completely dry store the tubers in boxes or trays with vermiculite . Place the tuber on top and sprinkle with sulphur to stop moisture and rotting. Cover the tubers with vermiculite and store in a cool area or leave the tuber in the pot in a cool spot and do not water them.

Our last meeting was at Wayne and Dianne's place.. We would like to thank everyone who came to help and enjoy the day.

Many thanks to all. Wayne



"Ruth Littlemore"



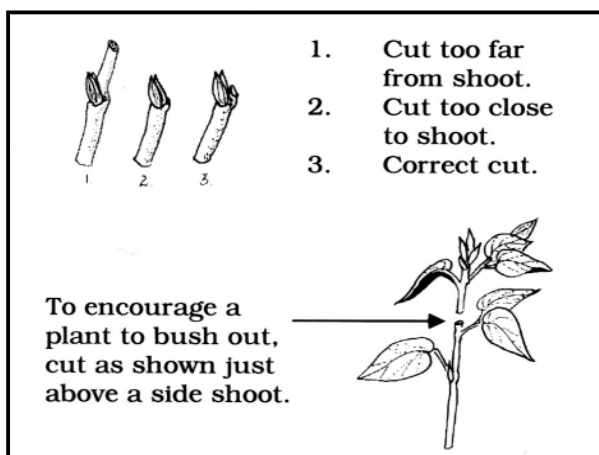




### Competition Winners

<b><u>Rhizomes</u></b>	First	Roger Hawker	'Freddie'
	Second	Roger Hawker	'Ruth Littlemore'
<b><u>Canes</u></b>	First	Roger Hawker	'Kermo Queen'
	Second	Wayne Walters	'Fitzroy'
<b><u>Tubers</u></b>	First	Stan Woolstencroft	'Gwen Cross' *
	Second	Stan Woolstencroft	'Nicole'
<b><u>Single Tuber Flower</u></b>	First	Michael Williams	'Hannah'
	Second	Roger Hawker	'Raggedy Ann'

\* **'Gwen Cross'** was hybridised by Owen Bedford who has since renamed this beauty as there was another tuberous begonia also named **'Gwen'**. Many of us still know it as **'Gwen'**



### ← Pruning

Sourced from

Produced for the 8th Australian Begonia Convention,

Ballarat

March 2005

## TRAILING-SCANDENT BEGONIAS

There are not many true climbing plants in the Begonia world, but there are approximately forty-four species in the trailing-scandent group. 'Climbing' means plants that have adventitious roots that assist the stems to attach to a support and therefore allow the plant to climb. There are many more plants that trail or have a lax habit making them useful as hanging basket varieties. There are also plants that naturally grow on trees or rocky slopes as true epiphytes that suit growing in baskets. All of these types are classified horticulturally as 'trailing-scandent' varieties as defined in the Thompsons reference work 'Begonias The Complete Reference Guide'. What these plants lack in numbers is made up for by their appeal as plants of great interest and diversity.

As is usual there are a number of species and many cultivars that can be described as trailing-scandent types. Let us begin with some of the species. *B. radicans* is an excellent plant to start with. This true climbing plant commonly known as the 'shrimp begonia' has had many names, the most well known of these in Australia being *B. limmingheana*, *B. glaucophylla* and *B. procumbens*. With symmetric mid green leaves and wonderful salmon orange coloured flowers in late winter-early spring that hang in sprays along the stems this begonia is fantastic in a hanging basket. It also makes a good ground cover which will climb up timber surfaces. Its close cousin *B. solananthera* with similar but smaller foliage and white red-centred fragrant flowers is another great basket plant. Both species have been crossed with each other to produce the hybrids *B. 'Fragrant Beauty'* and *B. 'Spotches'* with variegated leaves. Both are excellent basket plants with the bonus of fragrant flowers. Interestingly, the leaf bases of these plants are all symmetric as opposed to the usual asymmetric.



***B. solananthera***

*B. fagifolia* and *B. glabra* are two other white flowering trailing varieties. The former has hairy stems with a few hairs on its glossy leaves whereas the latter has no hairs but is very glossy. Both are good in-ground plants as well as basket varieties. All the forms of *B. mazaе* are included in this group but they can seem like shrub begonias which can be used in hanging baskets. One species that really suits basket culture is *B. thelmae* with its close almost overlapping leaves and small white flowers. It is very fussy in cold temperatures and high humidity, easily succumbing to botrytis (grey mould) which collapses the stems very quickly; but it is a real treat during the warm months. Another epiphytic species fussy in the cold is *B. polygonoides*, but it produces a wonderful display when grown in a warm position. This species has narrow lanceolate leaves and fruits quite different from the usual winged capsule.



***B. polygonoides***

There are many hybrid trailing varieties, the majority having a trailing parent on one side and a cane stem begonia on the other. *B. 'Tiny Gem'* is one such plant, with small cane like leaves and thin stems that allow it to produce a beautiful shape in a basket. Add to that the deep pink flowers produced throughout the warm months and you have one of the best trailing varieties of all. *B. 'Bob-o-link'* and *B. 'Ellmerose'* are two other examples of this type of hybrid, but both have thicker stems and larger leaves requiring judicious pinching to get them into a good shape. However, their peachy pink shade of flowers really provides a wonderful colour contrast for the rich green foliage. Other hybrids have been produced using one trailing parent with a non-trailing species. Plants fitting into this group include *B. 'Ivy Ever'*, a beautiful pink flowering plant with leaves having a dark reddish purple centre extending along the veins. *B. 'Wanderer'* is another nice trailing type that springs from *B. dregei* and *B. solananthera*. A good thing about this variety is it has inherited the best from both parents and is not prone to mildew like *B. dregei*.

Other hanging basket varieties are: a natural species hybrid *B. soli-mutata* x *B. thelmae*, which is known as U002 (unnamed) or in the U.S.A. as *B. 'Manaus'*; *B. mazaе* var. *nigricans*; and *B. oxysperma*, a shrub-like begonia ■

*(an edited compilation of NSW Begonia News articles from September 2001 and February 2010) Sourced from NSW Begonia News February, 2011*

## **Care of Rhizomatous Begonias** Maria Holmes

### **Bringing Your New Begonia Home...**

Rhizomatous begonias are interesting plants. Spectacular, varied, cantankerous and difficult to grow! But there are a few simple actions you can take that will insure a high rate of survival with these beguiling beauties.

### **Humidity is the Key..**

Many well-meaning begonia enthusiasts kill off their new rhizomatous begonias soon after bringing them home. "I must have over watered another one!" mutters the grower. But, this is often not the case. I think THE SHOCK of bringing one of these rhizomes home to a new climate is simply too much for many of them. Let me explain...

The new plant most probably came from a place where the environment was hotter or colder, wetter or dryer, or sunnier or darker than your back yard. This often proves to be too much for such delicate vegetation. But, it's easier than you think to compensate for this.

When I bring a new plant home, I put it in a plastic bag or clear plastic box in a relatively dark, protected spot for a week or so. I mist the plant with water, or water and Superthrive™ for extra humidity. Every day, I open the container a little. I gradually move the plants into an area with more light. Since I've been doing this, I've only lost two or three plants, which is infinitely better than the mass suicide situations I used to encounter. Remember to keep the container out of direct sunlight since this mini-greenhouse will trap heat and quickly turn your plant to a brown mush.

### **Even Weak Plants Can Survive...**

In case you bring a very small plant home from somewhere, there are other measures you can take to ensure its survival. Understanding that infant plants are more delicate than older ones, you might want to keep the plant in a darker and/or more protected spot than the others. Keeping it in a plastic bag or box with a little extra humidity for as long as needed also helps.

Do not overwater the plant, because baby rhizomatous begonias are even more sensitive to water than their more established siblings. One good way to determine if a plant needs water is to pick up the pot and feel how heavy or light it is. By doing this often, you will soon develop a sensitivity as to when a plant is dry and requires watering. You can, of course, put your finger 1 cm. or 1.5cm. into the soil. If it's cool to the touch, there's still water down there. With older plants in larger pots you may want to put your finger 2 cm. down into the soil to check for wetness. If it's dry that far down, you can go ahead and water.

One last help for very young or particularly sensitive plants is to seal them, pot and all, in some sort of terrarium and put them indoors under a fluorescent light. While this may sound like a lot of work, it's well worth the effort to put up a fluorescent fixture in the garage or spare bedroom. Some plants do not winter well, even in Southern California's mild weather, and an indoor setup will keep them robust through the damp, cold winter. It's also comforting to have one's treasured plants nearby so you can enjoy them without having to go outside in the drizzle or icy fog. Most nurseries and hardware stores' garden shops have one or more books which discuss terrariums and indoor gardening.

### **Soil Can Make the Difference...**

I re-pot all my rhizomatous begonias in my own soil mix once I get them home. Others' soil mixes may hold more or less water than yours. Your own soil causes the new plant to dry out at about the same time as your other plants, making watering uniform.

The last safety measure for rhizomatous begonias is to take a leaf and propagate it ■



*B. 'Little Brother Montgomery'*

*Adapted from 2007 American Begonia Society article.*

## Breeding Tuberous Begonias Ralph Willsmore

When setting out to breed some begonias you may or may not have a specific goal that you wish to achieve. There are no rules as to who can or cannot try their hand at hybridizing tuberous begonias whether crossing within the tuberous hybrids or with other species of the begonia family. The possibilities are endless. For now we will talk about tuberous x tuberous crosses. To start the process you will need a female flower and pollen from a male flower. The female flowers are almost always single and can be distinguished by the three lobed swelling at the back of the flower; this is the immature seed pod. There are usually two of these sitting either side of the male flower, this combination of flowers in the modern day hybrids can sometimes have as many as three male flowers with the female flowers with the seed pods on the outside of the outer male flowers. You will also need a male flower that will produce pollen. This can be a problem at times and absolutely impossible with some of the modern highly bred double varieties. Some of these will not produce pollen at all no matter how you may try coaxing them. These varieties may be used as the female parent. Some double varieties will produce pollen sacks (anthers) at the end of a long flowering season, probably as a survival process if the plant has been flowering for an extended period of time and the plant is a little exhausted.

Leaving them on the hungry side could help the possibility of the plant producing pollen. Sometimes there may be just one or two anthers hiding in amongst the petals, and other times there will be quite a cluster of anthers or anywhere between the two. One way of forcing a variety to produce pollen is to take cuttings early in the season in 50mm tubes and leave them in that small container until they are quite hungry and stressed and letting them flower as soon as they wish. If this does not work pot them on into a larger container and quite often the sudden surge of nutrients will cause the plants to produce pollen. Another source of pollen is to use plants of a slightly inferior quality which produce semi double flowers, which if crossed with fully petalled flowers usually produce flowers of high quality. Pollen from single flowered varieties is not advisable if you are wanting to produce double flowers as the progeny will most certainly have single or semi double flowers at the very best. There may be exceptions but not too often. If there are characteristics in a single variety that you wish to produce, in a double flower, it would be advisable to use pollen from a double flower and put it onto the female flower on the single variety. Some strains of tuberous begonias from Europe and the U.S.A. produce pollen quite freely at the end of the flowering season and can be very useful. Just to complicate the hybridizing process, the species from which our modern beautifully flowered hybrids have been bred, have different chromosome numbers; some have fourteen others have thirteen. Despite this, successful crosses have been made between the varieties with different chromosome numbers. Unless you have a reference of the chromosome numbers of the modern day hybrids you will just have to take your chances as I do. Once you have the desired pollen and it is showing signs of releasing from the anthers it can be transferred to the stigmas of the female flowers by the use of a small water colour paint brush, camel hair is recommended but so long as it is soft and will hold the pollen it will be fine. Be careful not to damage the stigmas as you apply the pollen. If there is a cluster of anthers on the male flower take the flower from the plant and then carefully remove the petals from the flower taking care not to dislodge too much pollen. Then use the cluster of anthers as a brush and dust the pollen directly onto the female flower, taking care not to damage the stigmas. Either of these options can only be performed when the pollen has started to be released freely from the pollen sacks on the sides of the anthers. Leave it too long though and the pollen will be all gone and the opportunity will be lost. Pollen can be stored in black 35mm film canisters in the refrigerator until the desired female flower is ready for pollination, This is when the female flower has been open for a day or two and for the next two or so weeks. I don't know if there are any particular times of the day that are essential for pollination but it is an advantage if it is a nice warm day. The more pollen the female flower receives, the more seed it will produce. The first sign of a successful cross is that the petals on the female flower will fold inwards a little and in three or four days they will fall from the flower. This can even take weeks in colder weather. The seed pod will swell and point downwards. This is an indication that the cross is successful. When the crosses are first made they should be labelled or identified, jewellers' tags are a good option. The cross can be noted on the tag with the female variety on the top and the male below. After six to eight weeks the seed pod should start to ripen (may be even longer in very cold weather). The seed pod will start to turn brown and splits will form at the top of the pod and at this stage it should be taken from the plant and placed in an open container in a warm protected area. When the seed pod is completely dry take two pieces of A4 paper empty the seed on to one sheet and leave the other on the table. Gently lift the sheet holding the seed and tilt it above the one on the table so that the seed will roll onto the lower sheet of paper, by tilting the paper one way then another so that the seed separates from the chaff. Take care not to sneeze or cough while doing this as the seed is so fine it will blow away. The seed can be placed in a small glassine envelope as used by stamp collectors, then place this envelope in a seed envelope (available from a news agent) with the cross noted on it. The seed can be stored

in an airtight container in the refrigerator and will stay viable for years. I germinated seed this year that was pollinated in 1993. Seed from the variety *B. 'Sceptre'* will only keep for one or two years. As most amateur hybridizing is performed towards the end of the flowering season when botrytis could affect the plant or the branch that the seed pod is on it is advisable to spray the plant and seed pod with fungicide suitable for controlling botrytis. I had botrytis affect a side branch which was carrying a prized seed pod, I removed the branch, cut away the botrytis and placed the branch in a glass of water and was able to ripen the seed pod. So be vigilant. As a general rule tuberous begonias are eager to improve themselves and this is evident if you look at the species from which they originated. On the other hand I remember crossing 'Blushing Bride' (female) x 'Wedding day' (male). I was almost drooling at the very thought of the resulting seedlings. It should have been a marriage made in heaven, with the quality of both plants along with the names but it proved to be a disaster. The plants produced very inferior flowers not held but dangled on the weakest of flower stems. But don't let this stop you from trying your luck at this fascinating pastime ■