



# AUSTIN AREA BEGONIA SOCIETY

A Branch of the American Begonia Society

Website: [http://www.kenfuchs42.net/aabs\\_index.html](http://www.kenfuchs42.net/aabs_index.html)



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NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2026

*Freda Holley, Ken Fuchs, Editors*

## NEXT MEETING

**Sunday, June 28** 1:30 P.M.

Zilker Botanical Garden Center  
2220 Barton Springs Road  
Austin, TX 78746

Program: Propagating Cane and Trailing begonias.



B. 'Apricot Shades'



B. 'Picotee'



B. 'Nonstop-Appleblossom'

## THE AUSTIN GARDEN CLUB'S PLANT SALE

By Doug Byrom

We joined the Austin Garden Club's plant sale this past weekend June 6-7, to kick off National Garden Week. We had good sales on Saturday, but it wasn't a good turn out on Sunday. We did enough for the club to pay for the cost of the plants. So everything we sell now will be profit. We did purchase some canes at the half-price sale at the Fort Worth convention that sold well. I bought some as well which included B. 'Lucerna' and at least two of Fredas' hybrids. I held these back so they will stay with club members.



B. 'Lucerna'

The program at our June meeting will be a new twist on propagating cane and trailing begonias. You'll just have to come to the meeting to learn more. I'll have just about everything you'll need including some cuttings. Feel free to bring your own cuttings to use or share. Remember Zilker has started their summer hours so our meeting starts at 1:30.

I look forward to seeing everyone at my Birthday Party — I mean at the meeting.

## TUBEROUS BEGONIAS

By Freda Holley

I, like most of you, have long been aware that one of the major type of begonias being grown in England, Scotland, Australia, and New Zealand are tuberous begonias. It is not that they will not grow for us in the south, but you have to buy them as plants or mature tubers in early spring and grow them till they die in July unless you have a climate-controlled greenhouse — don't we all wish!

However, at the many begonia conventions attended in California, there were always beautiful displays of tuberous begonias. Moreover I



Tuberous Begonias - Mix



B. 'Boliviensis Santa Cruz'

saw huge fields there of tuberous blooms growing with breathtaking beauty. I was surprised, however, to see such fields in Southern California and around San Diego. I thought the climate there would also be too difficult, but I later learned they were only successfully grown near the coast. Unfortunately I have also heard many commercial growers in California of all kinds are giving up on begonias as times change.

I know there are different species of tuberous begonias and literally thousands of hybrids. Their major attraction is their flowers which vary greatly in both size and color. They may be very small or as large as a dinner plate. The flowers may have only a few tepals or many. The species originate mostly in Peru in the high Andes mountains.



B. 'Fan Xing'



Mike Flaherty with his B. 'Cachuma' - 2023

When I want to know anything about tuberous begonias, I turn to my good friend in Santa Barbara, Mike Flaherty who not only grows them, but also has hybridized them. He is also a great plant photographer.

Having now covered all the divisions into which begonias are usually classified, this will be the last of these articles.



B. 'Lou Ann' - pendulous type



B. 'La Madelon'



B. 'Madame Helene Harms'



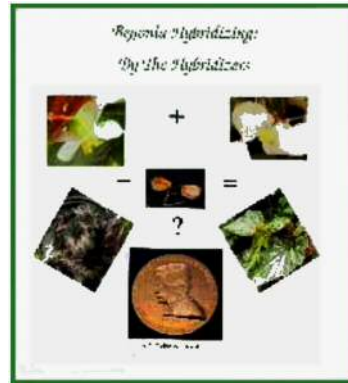
B. 'Sparks Will Fly'

### HYBRIDIZER: FREDA HOLLEY

I began hybridizing early when I really had no idea of what I was doing, but I loved growing things so it was a natural step. I grew begonias first from seed, although I bought a few at local nurseries. Soon I had a number of begonias.

I was an ABS member even then back in the mid-1980s. Then we took early retirement and moved to a farm on a small mountain in Arkansas. Anyway, I loved growing things from seed, so soon I had many begonias from seed ordered from ABS and was getting more seed from my own plants — mostly from canes. I knew how to cross these and grew more. I gave several names but forgot most of them and did not keep good written records.

We lived there in Arkansas about 10 years, then because of my husband's back problems, we moved again. We followed my younger son Gordon, because he was married with children, to several places before we wound up on a small acreage in Louisiana. There we soon built a 20x30 greenhouse and my begonia knowledge, number of plants and my own hybrids grew.



Freda holds up her booklet "Begonia Hybridizing: By The Hybridizers" at the 2013 ABS Convention in Austin.

I was also a consummate reader and writer. Thus, I learned more and more about begonias, their history, their genetics (I had basic knowledge from 1 class), and hybridizing. My own hybrids became more numerous and better. I also began keeping good records of parents, and I wrote 7 booklets offered for sale through ABS. The best seller was one called *Hybridizing Begonias: A Primer*. My last book to date was named *The Invisible Begonia*. It was the best at instructing growers to hybridize but the least popular because it talked about begonia genetics. It was also by far the largest.

With that said, I began favoring crosses with the

U-number begonias because their hybrids were often both hardy and unusual. I now knew and had strongly learned to follow the principle of not producing new look-alikes and those not hardy. With more than 2000 species and at least 15- or 16,000 or more hybrids, look-alikes or poor growers will never survive. I can only hope my later hybrids can pass that test.



B. 'Holleymoon' - Holley, Rhizomatous



B. 'Taylor Anne' - Holley, Cane-like Superba



B. 'Pagoda' - Holley, Cane-like



B. 'Holley's Beauty' - Holley, Rhizomatous

## LEGO MY . . .

Doug Byrom took these photos at the Fort Worth Botanical Garden. He said all were made of Legos and they were all throughout the gardens. He thought they were cool.





AABS MEETING MAY 24, 2026



