The October 7, 2012 meeting of the Astro Branch of the American Begonia Society will be held at the Houston Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Park Drive (Herman Park). This meeting will be held in the Azalea Room due to the Fall Plant Sale of the African Violet Society. The doors will be open at 1:00 P.M.

Our Refreshment committee lead this month by Leigh Boyer will have a nice variety of tasty treats for you to enjoy.

President Donna Robert will preside over this meeting. There will be a short business meeting to keep us all up to date on what is going on with the Astros, Southwest Region and National.

Our Program this month will be on hybridizing with the Spotlight on Greg Sytch. Greg lives in New Port Richey, Florida. Unfortunately Greg can’t be with us for this meeting, but he has provided us with pictures which we have enlarged and lots of hybridizing information we can pass on to you. Also on hand to talk about hybridizing will be Tom Keepin, the creator of B. ‘Carmel Browne’ and sister seedling B. ‘Misty Meadows’. B. ‘Carmel Browne’ is literally being grown all over the world. We are hoping that Bill Claybaugh will be able to be with us and talk about his hybrids especially his most noteworthy B. ‘Stars and Stripes’ which is very hardy in our gardens and also does well in a container. Between the three of us we will give you the inside story on hybridizing. It is very fascinating as well as interesting to create something very different yourself. I will warn you this is not something you do for instant gratification. It takes time and sometimes lots of tries before you get success. It really is fun.

We will have Raffle and Name Tag Plants and lots of tasty treats provided by our Refreshment Committee. Above all your begonia friends will be there to talk begonias with. We hope everyone can make it, because we think this will be a very interesting and fun program. Who knows you may just want to try your hand at hybridizing and create the next big begonia sensation.

See You There!
PRUNING, PLANTING & TRANSPLANTING

October
- 2nd, 3rd & 4th: Taurus
- 8th & 9th: Cancer
- 17th & 18th: Scorpio
- 21st & 22nd: Capricorn
- 25th & 26th: Pisces
- 30th & 31st: Taurus

November
- 4th & 5th: Cancer
- 13th & 14th: Scorpio
- 17th & 18th: Capricorn
- 21st, 22nd & 23rd: Pisces
- 26th, 27th & 28th: Taurus

- Planting and Transplanting are best done in Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces with Cancer being the best.

- Best Pruning for quick growth is first Taurus and then Capricorn.

WEATHER FORECAST FOR OCTOBER

(Taken from the Harris Farmer’s Almanac 2012)

According to the United States Weather Service, Houston and surrounding area falls in Region 7 of the National Weather Map. Here is what is expected for the month of October.

Our temperatures will be near normal and precipitation will be near normal. Our temperatures should average from 62 degrees in the north to 68 in the south. Coolest October days will be 2nd – 5th, 11th – 13th, 20th - 23rd and 30th & 31st.

Warmest October days will be 8th – 10th, 17th – 19th, and 26th – 28th. October will be a relatively dry month. Shower and thundershower likelihood will be highest October 1st – 3rd, 10th – 12th, 19th – 21st and the 29th & 30th. There will be only isolated showers at other times. There will be a low to moderate hurricane threat the first week.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

Happy Birthday wishes go out to all our members who were born in this month of October.

Martha Burg October 29th
Debbie Norris October 10th
Bill Smith October 18th
Lynne Smith October 16th
Johnny Williams October 10th

Today is a day to enjoy being with friends, to look back on where you’ve been, to look forward to the special times the future holds for you.

Happy Birthday!
MINUTES OF THE
OCTOBER 7, 2012

The September 9, 2012 meeting of the Astro Branch of the American Begonia Society was called to order at 2:00 P.M. by President Donna Robert. President Robert welcomed our guests Josephine DeLeon (guest of Irene Bragg) and Sandra Rigsby (Bluebonnet Society).

Sunshine Lady Ruby Lenert stated that there were several cards to sign. Debbie Norris’s father broke his arm in three places and she was looking after him. Holly Millegan (Cheryl’s daughter) is having a baby and is in the hospital because of risks involved. Dianna Wilkerson had a stroke with no paralysis and is back home. Ruby thanked all for their condolences. President Robert read a note from Millie Garrett (Janet Carpenters mother) stating that she had to resign due to health problems. President Robert stated we are to have elections this year. Positions we need to fill are President, Vice-President, Secretary and Refreshment Chair. The responsibilities involved for each of these positions were reviewed. Members were asked to seriously think about serving in one of these positions.

New Business: Tom and Shirll have requested and received rhizomatous leaves from the Species Bank at the Ft. Worth Botanical Garden for us to put down for our Annual Fund Raiser and to add new cultivars to the stock plants at JJL Greenhouses. Tom stated that we will need to reimburse for the shipping charges (FEDEX) and make a donation. Cheryl Lenert made the motion and Johnny Williams seconded it. There was no opposition. Tom needs your renewal date from the address label your Begonian. Shirll Manes has a list of leaves you can order from Fort Worth. You will need to pay the postage and perhaps give a small donation. President Robert called for a short break before the program.

The meeting was called to order after twenty minutes. The program was to be held in the Rose Room so the drawings were done before changing locations.

Name Tag Plants:
B. ‘Matchmaker’- won by Tony Robert
B. ‘Catalina’- was won by Johnny Williams
Ivy- was won by Sarah Chumley
Ivy- was won by Marilyn Chapman
Ivy- was won by Cheryl Lenert
B. popenoei- was won by Shirll Manes
B. ‘Plumb Gorgeous’- won by Anna Belle Hicks

Raffle Plants:
B. ‘Kristy’- was won by Jo DeLeon (guest)
B. ‘Dangling Pearl – won by Tony Robert

We moved to the Rose Room and put down lots of leaves and members took them home to start. They will be brought back, transplanted and taken to JJL Greenhouses to our friend Debbie to finish off for us.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M.
Respectfully submitted by
Tony Robert
Acting Secretary
Fragrant Begonias

By Dominique Benoit

The first time I saw the flower cluster of B. ‘Lucerna’, my first begonia, my first reaction was to bury my nose in it. And to take it out immediately, disappointed because it had no scent. I still liked the satin-like quality and the color of its leaves, its brilliant and profuse flowers, but it lacked fragrance.

As a result, as soon as I started my collection, I looked for scented begonias. The first one must have been B. solananthera, and I found that it was smelling really nice, like violets. Then there was B. ‘Bettina Rothschild’, which surprised me because it smelled like a rose, and I did not know it was scented.

Since then, I have had fun searching for even the most fleeting fragrances. For instance, B. minor (syn. Nitida odorata), B. ‘Sweet Magic’, B. masoniana, B. ‘Honeysuckle’, B. venosa, B. egregia, B. dichroa are an enchantment every time they bloom.

Of course, some begonias will “flash” their scent only at certain times of day or at a certain stage of bloom. Often, female flowers emit their scent when they are ready to be pollinated, thus attracting pollinating insects.

Heat and the enclosed atmosphere of a room or a greenhouse also seem to make their scent stronger.

For instance, the beautiful B. minor ‘Alba’ that was so fragrant in my veranda completely lost its scent when I set it outside, in a draft. But if the weather turns sultry, if a stormy threatens and the air is still, it regains all its scent.

Sometimes, too, you must wait until the plant reaches a certain strength or maturity, until it is fully grown.

This is why I continue to smell my favorite plants at any time of the day, and I am often pleasantly surprised.

If your B. solananthera does not smell, if B. ‘Sweet Magic’ is sulking, set them in a warm place, away from drafts, and you will find that when the flowers open you can smell their fragrance more than one meter (three feet) away.

Do not be discouraged: this fall, on a sunny day (they were so few!), after growing B. ‘Lucerna’ for over ten years, I discovered that, after all, it had a slight scent!

Other begonias are scented or said to be: B. lubbersii, B. malabarica, B. kellermanii, B. echinosepala, and B. heracleifolia.

(Taken from the Begonian May-June 1995 Issue page 87)

[A tip from France on cleaning pots: Soak in a pail of detergent water for one week – that does it, no scrubbing!]
B. staudtii Gilg

*B. staudtii* Gilg var. *dispersipilosa* was first described by Edgar Irmscher. It was found in 1954 in Tropical Africa, probably in the Guinea forest region of West Africa, as this area abounds in yellow-flowered begonias. It has also been collected in Cameroon. It is in the section Scutobegonia and has 34 chromosomes.
The Guinea region has an annual rainfall of over 80 inches. Temperatures average over 68F in January and over 86F in July. Vegetation consists of tropical rain forest, woodlands, and wooded savanna. Soil type is laterite (decomposed rock), red to red-brown in color. Humus content is very low, due to rapid decay of organic matter caused by high temperatures and high humidity.

*B. staudtii* var. *dispersipilosa* is classified as a rhizomatous begonia with distinctive foliage/unusual surface/unusual coloring. It is stemless. Leaves are light green in color, peltate, asymmetrically ovate, with deeply sunken veins. Petioles and both sides of the leaves are densely pilose. Peduncles are also pilose and as long as the petioles, so that the flowers appear above the leaves. The flowers are a deep golden yellow (description by J. Doorenbos, *Begonian*, Vol. 47, January 1980).

*B. staudtii* must be grown in a terrarium in order to supply the high humidity and warm atmosphere required for its survival. It is not a difficult begonia to grow although there is a problem that happens to many growers: the plant will apparently do fine for a time, then a petiole will develop rot starting at its base. As the plant is very hairy, I suspect this is a condition caused by too much moisture in the growing medium, or by water collecting on the petioles.

Terrarium plants have a small system of their own. The roots take up moisture from the medium, and moisture is given off by the leaves; this moisture condenses on the sides of the terrarium and runs down into the growing medium to start the process over again. Possibly moisture drips onto the petioles, or the medium stays too wet over a period of time and causes the rot. It does not necessarily kill the plant, which will start up again if transplanted into new medium.

**Culture**

**Light:** *B. staudtii* needs a reduced light condition. When growing under lights, place the terrarium slightly off to one side of the fixture; in natural light near a window, place where the sun will not touch the terrarium.

**Temperature:** 70F-75F.

This article was written by Mary Weinbers and was taken from a publication entitled *Mary Weinbers's Begonias*.
September Astro Meeting

Propagating begonias from leaves
More pictures from the September Meeting
Pictures from the September Meeting