

BEGONIA CHATTER



Astro Branch American Begonia Society <i>4513 Randwick Drive</i> <i>Houston, Texas 77092-8343</i> <i>(713) 686-8539</i>	<i>Next Meeting:</i> DATE: November 1, 2020 TIME: PLACE: CANCELLED PROGRAM:
NOVEMBER 2020 ISSUE	www.begoniahouston.org

MEETING CANCELLED!

Here we go again! Please forgive me but it feels like it could be a scene out of the movie "Ground Hog Day" starring Bill Murray. I'm feeling like a broken record here!

As I reported last month the report I got from West Gray was perhaps the facility will open November 6th.....then there came the up-tick in COVID cases. We can't take any chances and will be very cautious again this month. We are looking forward to December and trying to work something out to get together and meet if our facility is still closed. Please stay tuned! Please continue to stay safe and well.

Please pick up the phone and call your begonia friends or send them an email. Everyone loves to hear how other begonias are growing. You can even make someone jealous by including a picture or two.

Happy Growing!
Tom



Begonia X benakensis
'Pink Form' recently purchased
at Home Depot.

WEATHER FORECAST FOR NOVEMBER 2020

According to the United States Weather Service, Houston, and the surrounding areas fall in Region 7 of the National Weather Map. Here is what they predict for November.

Our temperatures will be slightly below normal and our precipitation will be near normal. Our average temperature should range from 45 degrees in the North to 56 degrees in the South. Our coolest temperatures for November will be November 7th & 8th, 11th thru 14th, 16th, 22nd thru 25th, and 29th & 30th. Our warmest temperatures for November will be November 2nd thru 5th, 10th, 16th thru 19th, and 27th & 28th. The best chance for scattered showers and thunderstorms will be around November 6th & 7th, 10th thru 12th, 21st thru 23rd, and 28th thru 30th. It will be windy at times especially in the North.

*(The weather forecast above has been taken from the **Farmer's Almanac for 2021**)*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

Happy Birthday wishes to all our member born in the month of November.

Mike Bragg	November 4 th
Gail Warren	November 10 th
Donna Williams	November 30 th

"Take a few moments to remember all the good things you've seen and done, ways you've grown, and things you've learned. Celebrate your memories and your dreams....everything that has made you the wonderful person you are"

"Happy Birthday"

PRUNING, PLANNING AND TRANSPLANTING

November

1 st & 2 nd	Taurus
5 th , 6 th & 7 th	Cancer
14 th & 15 th	Scorpio
18 th & 19 th	Capricorn
22 nd , 23 rd & 24 th	Pisces
28 th , 29 th & 30 th	Taurus

December

2 nd , 3 rd & 4 th	Cancer
11 th & 12 th	Scorpio
15 th , 16 th & 17 th	Capricorn
20 th & 21 st	Pisces
25 th & 26 th	Taurus
30 th & 31 st	Cancer

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

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

(The pruning, planting, and transplanting dates above have been taken from the **Harris Farmer's Almanac for 2020**)



Begonia incarnata (Link & Otto)
from **Begonia Portraits**
by Alice M. Clack

Begonia x benariensis Big Begonias

In 2004, I reported on Dragonwing begonia and went into some detail describing its hybrid origins. At the time it was a major breakthrough in large bedding begonias for bold landscape plantings. I predicted its reign would be short-lived as it was replaced by something similar but wearing the “new and improved” mantra. The BigTM Begonia series are the new, hot item in the bedding plant world that may even do their part at floral détente.

Begonias are a large, diverse group of plants scattered in the tropics throughout the world. Begonia specialists divide them into eight distinct types, with the fibrous rooted types (the wax begonias) the most common group used for bedding plants. The wax begonias (*B. x semperflorens-cultorum*) we grow in gardens today are the product of almost two centuries of hybridization.

Evolutionary biologists like to believe that species A begets species B which begets species C and so on down the line. Their evolutionary tree concept assumes that new, more successful species arise through natural selection from predecessor lines. It seems to me that a better model would be to liken the appearance of a new species to the flow of a massive river system such as the Mississippi. While you start with one small water course (ie one species), other tributaries dump their input into the main channel over time until the assemblage of genetic traits produces what we recognize as a modern species.

In the case of wax begonia, the starting point was *B. cucullata*, which was accidentally introduced into Germany from South America in 1821. In 1878 *B. cucullata* var. *hookeri* and *B. schmidtiana*, and *B. roezlii* in the 1880's, added their genes to the stream that would eventually become the modern wax begonia. Over time, mutations were found and used that added bronzeleafed forms (France, 1890's) to the genetic flow of the river.

In 1894, Germany's Benary Seed Company, the developers of the BigTM Begonias of today, released their first hybrid seed to the gardening world. The company, and understandably so, favors the *B. x benariensis* name for these hybrids, but most others lump them under the *B. x semperflorens-cultorum* name. The BigTM Begonias from Benary, and a competing line the WhooperTM Series from Ball Seed Company, appear to use polyploidy (increasing the number of genes in a cell) techniques to increase size characteristics of the plants.

These new, bigger begonias look a lot like the older, more familiar wax begonias, only larger. Blooms are 3-4 times – often as much as 2 ½ inches across – larger than standard wax begonias and currently available in pink and red colors. The leaves are available in bronze or green forms and are similar in shape to the wax begonia but larger in size. Plants grow to 20 inches tall and wide instead of the more common 8-10 inches of the originals.

The Big™ Begonias are adding to a kind of floral détente because flower beds using these big, bold plants are seen in the front of the White House, Windsor Castle in England, near the Kremlin in Moscow and in Tiananmen Square where the smiling face of Chairman Mao overlooks the display.

These plants are ideally suited for use in full sun or light shade in ground beds or in containers. They are easily grown in any well-drained, organic matter rich soil with moderate fertility. For best results keep the plants uniformly moist during the summer and fertilize monthly during the growing season to keep them growing. Plants may be grown from seed but growing begonia from seed is best left to professional growers. These big hybrids are early to bloom and are available from nurseries along with most mid-season bedding plant offerings.



From the University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture, Research & Extension, “Plant of The Week”

TENTATIVE PLAN FOR DECEMBER

We will meet at the West Gray Multi-Service Center if it is open and restrictions are not outrageous for our December meeting. Our alternate suggested plan is to meet in the Butterfly Garden located in Matzke Park, 13110 Jones Road 77070.....telephone number 281-353-8100. Norchester Garden Club has had a couple of meetings there and found it very satisfactory. Feel free to Google it to see the location and if you would like to meet there should the need arise. Please call Tom @713-686-8539 (if no is one available please leave a message you will receive a return call) with comments or questions. This is only a plan in the works at the moment and subject to change. We are searching for a way to be able for us to meet before the year ends. If the tentative plan is too far out for you to drive and you know of a park that might be closer in and safe and clean (restrooms would be a plus) please let me Tom know so it can be considered.



Begonia ‘Di-Erna’
from *Begonia Portraits*
by Alice M. Clark.