



# Newsletter of the Auckland Begonia Circle

## April 2020

Condensed Auckland Begonia Circle Newsletter, due to current unavailability  
of usual printing services

**Due to the coronavirus situation, all meetings  
have been cancelled until further notice.**

### **Update to members**

The magazine for April 2020 was unable to be printed due to the printers closing because of Covid-19, so Graeme Peake together with Elizabeth and Nick Miller have hastily put together some items for an email newsletter.

Covid-19 is the biggest thing to disrupt our tranquil lives for some time. It has meant the cancellation of the April ABC meeting. The Auckland Botanic Gardens are also closed so we haven't got a venue even if we could hold a meeting. Not transmitting this virus is the only tool in the tool-box to contain it. Our social interaction will be affected for some time. Follow good hygiene practice, eat good food, keep active. Covid-19 will not have disappeared after the regulations are lifted but we will be more ready for it. The jury is still out as to future meetings being cancelled.

Gardening at home is one of the outdoor activities we can still do and not contravene the Covid-19 isolation regulations – as long as you do it alone and keep two metres away when chatting to the neighbours over the back fence. I was hoping to plant some nemesia in the flower bed for winter flowering, but Kings Plant Barn and Bunnings both had run out of nemesia seed, so the message was to wait a week until they were resupplied. Now Covid-19 has hit and the shops are shut, so no seed. I cut back rather than pulled out the marigolds and I'm hoping for a bit of an autumn flush. Also a few calendula might come up and fill up the space for the winter.

The cooler nights are slowing growth down in the Begonia house and it is time to be very careful with the watering and not overdo it. It is tuber rot season and allowing them to sit in cold wet potting mix while not actively growing is courting disaster. If you do come across a bit of tuber rot, lift the tuber, wash off the mix, remove the rot with a clean knife, treat the wound with sulphur or fungicide, allow the tuber to dry.

This is the time of year when caterpillars and tuber moths find your tubers a convenient source of food. Some growers apply insecticide especially to the top of the pot for this reason.

A bit of Tarsonemid mite damage can show up at this time of year. The symptoms are a brown russet on the stem and leaf stalk, along with distorted flower buds. As the plants are winding down tarsonimid is not too much of a concern, but still remove and destroy infested material to prevent it overwintering at your place.

Many of our members have had their overseas and domestic travel plans disrupted or cancelled. It must be a great disappointment to them.

Ron Williams had a nasty fall just before the February Show. He was hospitalised, is now getting around and thinking about what begonias to grow for next season. A number of us who live near to him have been babysitting some of his plants, hopefully doing as good a job as he would.

At the last show a plant of *Begonia* 'Amy' was left behind – Graeme Peake still has it. I think it may have been purchased in the auction. Please contact Graeme if you are the owner or know the owner.

At the next meeting we were going to talk about the temporary tenure of the Secretary and Treasurer positions held by Graeme Peake and Noelene Murdoch, also our lack of a President. This will now have to wait for another time.

*Graeme Peake*

Dear ABC members,

What a strange, unsettling week we have all had! The news reports are excellent, but one could become a bit addicted to them! Make sure you get out and tend to your begonias, removing all fallen leaves and petals. Enjoy whatever garden you have – we gardeners are all fortunate that there is always something to do. Find whatever vegetable or flower seeds you have in the fridge or wherever you keep them, and check what might be appropriate now. Prune and tidy. Walk around the block or up the road. Keep warm as the weather cools; keep busy; keep well; be kind.

Nick and Elizabeth Miller, Editors

## Show 2020 review

Another successful Show for 2020 with no major hiccups. There was a good showing of cut blooms with about the same number of entries as last year but overall, I feel the size and quality of blooms was better. The benefits of having an air-conditioned room shone through as the blooms held up very well on the Sunday. The potted plants were down a bit from last year. There was a nice display of hanging baskets. It was very pleasing that there was not too much blank space on the benches, there is nothing worse than looking at black sheets. I look forward to next year and how we can increase the entries in the potted section.

A big thank you to all who helped with the show: those who helped on the Friday and Monday to set up and deconstruct the staging; the sales and door people; the judges and stewards; the lunch room minder where there was a respite for weary feet. A great job done by all.

It is a difficult task getting the roster sorted as to who doing what, and when. Not being able to carry out a roster task means someone else has to fill the blank.

The sales plants area ran very well as always. The quality of plants was very good, this was great to see. There were a lot of plants left for auction. Any ideas on how to reduce the number of auction plants would be appreciated.

## Show results

Congratulations to all winners and a special mention of two new members who picked up prizes in the novice cut bloom class.

### **Results table Class then 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> )**

One cut bloom: Julie Cornwall, Julie Cornwall, Ron Williams

Three cut blooms: Sid Miller, Julie Cornwall, Ron Williams

One cut bloom (novice): Robin Downs, Angelica Cioban, Noelene Murdoch

Flowering Pot: Sid Miller, Graeme Peake, Jenny Hunt

One Pot (novice): no entries

Flowering Basket: Mike Atkins, Mike Atkins, Sid Miller

Pot Species: Jenny Hunt, Jenny Hunt, Jenny Hunt

Pot Gesneriad: Bruce Andrew, Noelene Murdoch, Graeme Peake

### **Trophies:**

Founder's Trophy, Best Exhibit in Show: Sid Miller

Grawyn Trophy, Best cut Bloom: Julie Cornwall

Dalton's Plate, Best pot plant or basket: Mike Atkins

Jose Smith Trophy, Best species or non Begonia: Jenny Hunt

Club Trophy, People's choice: Mike Atkins

## Things to consider for the next Show:

These ideas and any you have can be considered over the coming months. Anything to make the Show more efficient relevant and successful.

1 Make entry by donation or buying a raffle ticket.

2 Re-introduce the Trading Donation table. It would need a committed person to run this for most of the Show. Growing garden bits and pieces is a good way for the Circle to make money.

3 All pot plants that are on display are judged in Classes 5,7 and 8 (flowering pot, basket, species pot) except class 6, novice pot. In effect the judges would find 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> for each class amongst all the potted plants in the room. The owner of winning plants would identify themselves to the stewards. In reality this would not be hard because there are only about four people who put potted plants in the show anyway.

4 No longer requiring a Sales Sheet for sales plants. As long as sales plants have a filled-out sales tag, this is all that is required to put a plant up for sale. Of course, they still need to be a Begonia or Gesneriad and not exceed the 30 per person per day limit.

5 Times for the Show may have to be looked at as the Gardens are getting more anxious about when the alarms are set. A later start on the Saturday and closing half an hour earlier each day may be required.

6 We may need to have another look at eftpos and online banking as a payment system for plants.

*The Show Committee – Peter Booth and Graeme Peake*

# Exporting Begonias to Australia

*Alan R. Baldick*

This is something that I never thought I would ever become involved in. However, I received a call from a begonia grower in 2018 asking if I would be happy to have a grower from Victoria visit me.

Naturally I welcomed him and his partner. What had led to this request was that in 2017 a bush fire in Australia had destroyed all the outbuildings on his rural property. Luckily fire engines were already in his road when the blaze hit like lightning. Firefighters were able to save his house but not the other buildings which included his shade-house containing all his Begonias. While a few (6) survived, he was left with almost nothing. Unfortunately, there is now nobody selling tubers in Australia and obtaining replacement, or any, stock is difficult. Ralph Willsmore did offer help, but he has very limited stock these days. Follow-up enquiries led to a New Zealand grower who was able to export a limited number of varieties to replace some of those lost in the fire. Subsequently there were further enquiries from Australia, a grower looking for a wider range of tubers. He had an import licence which was expiring in October 2019.

This is where I became involved. Unfortunately, the request came at a bad time for me because I had just completed taking orders from my New Zealand customers for the 2018 year. But I promised I would assist when my distribution was completed.

In September 2019 the Australian grower came back to me and he selected tubers from what I still had available, including some that were not available in Australia and a few complimentary ones that I had just started to grow. These tubers were then sent to my local contact, they were cleaned and an appointment made with Biosecurity at Auckland International Airport where they were inspected and the appropriate certificates completed. They were air-freighted to Melbourne and delivered immediately to Victoria's quarantine station. Once again, the tubers were inspected - all passed and were potted into 3-inch (7.62cm) pots. No ifs or buts – only 3-inch pots may be used in quarantine. The tubers were then grown to check that they showed no disease, including viruses!

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020, after 5 months in quarantine, the plants were released and able to be potted-on. Losses were at a minimum and it's obvious they were well looked after during their long stay.

This was an interesting and rewarding experience, to know that Begonias from my shade-house are now growing in Australia, replacing those lost in a bushfire. And the other thing that hasn't escaped me is the "Coals to Newcastle" angle, except this time it was "Begonias to Melbourne" which included some of Ralph Willsmore's beauties... which I procured from him in the first place!

## **TUBEROUS BEGONIAS**

English, Scottish, Australian and NZ named Begonias Standards and Cascades

**2020 Catalogue on request**

**Alan Baldick**

**Note postal address change: 13 Cromwell Street, Mt Eden, Auckland 1024**

**Ph (09) 6306 509**

# Impressions from the 2020 Show

Beautiful flowers! Friendly people.

Visitors coming into the Show expressed surprise and delight at the flowers. There were smiles, 'Wow!', 'Ooh!'; 'are they real?' from a child; lots of photos taken, because it is so easy on modern phones; even a father taking photos of his children beside the flowers.

The displays were less extensive than in some Shows in the past, but the plants and flowers were attractive, and there was room for people to move about. It was a great opportunity for members to stand around and discuss flowers together, or to listen to the experienced growers. The trading area did a lively business, so much so that at least one member went home at lunchtime on the first day to collect more plants to sell, so that the tables did not look too bare. The displays from Alan Baldick and Mary Johnson contributed significantly to the display, with the beautifully presented and labelled flowers an excellent reference for discussion and prospective purchasers. Thanks to the experienced team and some new members who set up and managed the Show.

*Elizabeth Miller*

Future updates will be posted on the circle website: <http://aucklandbegoniacircle.org.nz/>

Other websites for the house-bound: American Begonia Society <https://www.begonias.org/>

National Begonia Society <http://national-begonia-society.co.uk/>

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh <https://padme.rbge.org.uk/Begonia/home>

And many others. Happy browsing.

## **AUCKLAND BEGONIA CIRCLE 2019 – 2020**

Website: [aucklandbegoniacircle.org.nz](http://aucklandbegoniacircle.org.nz)

Email address: [aucklandbegoniacircle@gmail.com](mailto:aucklandbegoniacircle@gmail.com)

Postal address: c/- 14 Keenagh Rise, Dannemora, Auckland 2016

Phone: (09) 272 3631

**PRESIDENT:** position vacant

**PATRONS:** Graham Milne phone (09) 4444795

Kate Wiggins phone (09) 2783337

**HONORARY AUDITOR:** Noel Pascoe

**SECRETARY:** Graeme Peake/Noelene Murdoch (interim)

**TREASURER:** Graeme Peake/Noelene Murdoch (interim)

**COMMITTEE:**

Mike Atkins phone 021 02256561

Gael Dobbs phone (09) 2686358

Robyn Downs (09) 5344994

Jamila Ibrahim phone (09) 2623002

Ian Joblin phone (09) 2981147

Graeme Peake phone (09) 2723631

Karen Rose phone (09) 2673312