

The 2019 Southwest Region/American Begonia Society Get-Together

Friendship, education, the love of begonias, and a good time await you at the Southwest Region/American Begonia Society Get-Together in Austin May 1-5, 2019. The Austin Area Begonia Society Branch is hosting the convention at the Wyndham Garden Austin located at 3401 South IH 35 in Austin (512-774-6427 www.wyndhamaustin.com). A Judging School, colorful tours, and interesting seminars will highlight the events over five days. Registration will begin on Tuesday, April 30, at 5 p.m.

The Judging School will be an all-day event on Wednesday, May 1 with an opportunity to clerk in the Judging on Friday. Even if you don't wish to be a judge yet, it is a great way to learn a lot about begonias from skilled teachers. The cost will be \$40 which will include judging materials and lunch.

Thursday's events will begin with a tour of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center — the State Botanic Garden and Arboretum of Texas. Founded by Lady Bird Johnson and Helen Hayes as the National Wildflower Research Center in 1982, the Center's mission is to inspire the conservation of native plants. It is known for plant conservation, landscape restoration, and sustainable approaches to landscape design. Following lunch at the Wildflower Center, you will visit Miller's Tropicals in Dripping Springs. The greenhouse contains a wide variety of orchids and rare tropical plants.

Saturday's tour is the 42nd Annual Spring Pecan Street Festival, one of the largest, and longest-running, arts/crafts and music festivals in the nation. Everyone can experience the diverse sights, sounds, and tastes of Austin. With much to choose from, lunch will be on your own.

There will be two seminars Thursday evening. Cheryl Lenert will lead a panel with representatives from member branches on the one best growing species and hybrid from each area. Then Dr. Rick Schoelhorn of the Palm Beaches Branch, Florida, a semi-retired plant lover who has worked in both industry and academia in his career, will focus on new plants and new plant introductions. His experience includes seven years with Proven Winners (a national consumer brand of plants), seven years as a professor at the University of Florida, twelve years as owner of an interior landscape company in Colorado, and five years in nursery sales and production in Alaska. Rick is also the author of the book *Florida Hybridizing: A*

History, a new ABS publication which will be available for sale at the Get-Together.

The Friday morning seminars will begin with Stephen Maciejewski on “Exploring for Begonias and Gesneriads in the Wilds of China.” He is President of the DVB/ABS and Philadelphia’s Liberty Bell Gesneriad Society Chapter and co-chair of the Conservation Committees for GS and ABS. Stephen has traveled to Ecuador, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Fiji and Cuba in search of gesneriads and begonias. He is presently planning his first begonia group field trip to China.

Taddie Hamilton, the cheerful volunteer at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden Begonia Collection, will speak about the terrariums at the Garden, their care requirements, and the containers they use. She will be assisted by others from the Garden as we learn also about some of the newer begonias in the terrarium collection.

Dr. Rekha Morris will tell us about “A Selection of Begonia Species from Mexico and Costa Rica.” We know Rekha as a collector of Indian and Central American begonias and excellent photographs as well as descriptions of her adventures in their pursuit. She is the author of the new book *Species Begonias of the Eastern Himalayas of Arunachal India*.

On Friday there will be a Combination Judges/Business Lunch (free to judges and clerks), followed by ABS and SWR Business Meetings, and the swearing-in of new officers. That evening the Plant Sale and Plant Show will be open to Members.

The Plant Sale and Plant Show will be open to the public 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Saturday.

The 2019 Southwest Region/American Begonia Society Get-Together in Austin will be an exciting and memorable event. Make plans to attend.