

THE KNICKERBOCKER NEWS

Issued by the Knickerbocker Branch of the American Begonia Society
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The **Next Meeting** is **Tuesday, September 11th**, at **6pm-8pm** at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, 351 East 74 Street, between First & Second Avenues (closer to First), Room 101, which is above the lobby, one flight up.

Program: Rhizomatous Begonias

We will have a discussion on the general culture of rhizomatous begonias: watering, temperature, propagation, light, etc. How do you grow your rhizomatous begonias and what results do you get? If you have a plant to discuss, please bring it in.

Got Plants?

by **Steve Bogart**

Yellow Leaves

Yellowed leaves are a very common plant ailment that comes up in all kinds of discussions. There are several reasons why any plant can develop yellow leaves: age, drainage, disease, infestation, light, drought, or fertilization practices.

As a responsible plant owner, what you need to ask yourself is - too much or too little?

Is the plant really sopping wet or does it look like it has a white crust on the top of the soil? Both of these are symptoms of too much water. The latter instance can also result from too much salt leaching from the soil, either from water, fertilizer, or pets using your plant as a litter box - it happens!

In the case of too little: if you can lift the plant; is it surprisingly light for its size; does it appear droopy; are leaves falling off as well? If so try soaking your plant in water overnight and dumping any extra water in the morning. Also think back to the last time you repotted or fertilized your plant. Has it been more than a year? Your plant just doesn't have enough nutrients in the soil for it to thrive. You can try repotting it; fertilizing; watering with fish tank water (a personal favorite) as it is very high in nitrates which promote strong leafy growth; or if you do not have the resources to do any of these, try at least just a soil refreshment where in a new layer of potting soil is added to the top of the pot.

Do some investigation. Look at the yellowed leaves. Do they show signs of turning brown; are there chew marks or webs; are the leaves sticky; are they bleached looking or a faded yellow?

Browning of yellow leaves may be another trigger for too much water and a sign of rotting.

Anything that may resemble an infestation of insects, chew marks, webs, sticky or deformed leaves, and the bugs themselves, will definitely constitute yellow leaves. Wash all the leaves down with a warm soapy water solution first, to remove any breeding adults and larvae as well as the eggs. Sticky leaves are an ear marker for aphids, they suck the sap from the plant and the sticky substance is left after they are done digesting their food. If not found quickly, black mold grows on the sticky surface. Deformed leaves are signs of pests that like to dine on fresh young foliage such as mites and aphids.

Bleached, grayed or faded leaves are a sign that your plant is just getting way too much light. Move it to an area that is still bright but does get some relief from the sun. Or if you know what kind of plant it is, do some research. Find out what it really does like. Perhaps that plant that you have had in full sun on your porch all summer prefers shade and a daily misting. You never know with some of the new varieties of plants.

Membership Dues

If you did not renew your Knickerbocker Branch membership dues in June, please bring them to the meeting. Dues are **\$18.00** and a check should be made payable to Knickerbocker Branch, ABS. If you are not able to be at the meeting, please mail a check to Treasurer, Howard Berg, 16 Highview Terrace, New Canaan, CT 06840.

Rhizomatous

(The following excerpts are from Begonias The Complete Reference Guide by Mildred L. Thompson and Edward J. Thompson)

The largest group of begonias have rhizomatous growth. It is a varied group of begonias grown primarily for beautiful and interesting foliage.

Many rhizomatous species in cultivation today originated in Central and South America, primarily Mexico. Several of the earlier varieties of hybrid origin were so satisfactory that they can still be found in cultivation. B. 'Ricinifolia' and B. 'Erythrophylla' are the oldest known hybrid rhizomatous begonias. In Germany in 1845 B. 'Erythrophylla' was developed by crossing B. *manicata* and B. *hydrocotylifolia*.

Rhizomes are thickened stems which usually have relatively short internodes. The thickness of the rhizomes varies between less than 1/2 to over 3 inches. The different growth patterns can be divided into 3 main groups: creeping rhizome, erect rhizome, and rhizome at or below the surface of the soil with erect stems. The leaves of rhizomatous begonias are diverse in size and shape, representing different incisions and leaf forms. The size of the leaves ranges from under 1 to well over 18 inches. The diversity of colors and color patterns of the leaves is the most fascinating feature of rhizomatous begonias. All shades of green and mahogany can be found. Most are seasonal bloomers. Usually the blooming season occurs between midwinter and late spring, although there are exceptions. The height of the inflorescences varies within the group: some have flowers that are embedded in the foliage; others have flowers showing slightly above the foliage; others have peduncles (flower stalks) that rise well above the foliage, sometimes several feet.

Light - To flourish outdoors most rhizomatous begonias require a location that has filtered sunlight, or abundant light without direct sunlight. If plants are grown under fluorescent lights, they should be placed under the center area of the tubes. When plants are grown in the living area of the home, they must be placed where they will receive the maximum amount of winter sunlight and/or light.

Humidity - They are not especially demanding as far as humidity is concerned. Although they will thrive when the relative humidity is an ideal 50 to

60%, most of them will tolerate less humidity. Only those with distinctive foliage usually require additional humidity. If growing conditions are excessively humid, there is a risk of rotting, particularly in varieties that have very dense foliage.

New Member

We would like to **Welcome** new member
Gladys Ross
who joined us at the June meeting!

Future Meeting Dates

Mark your calendars for the following Knickerbocker Branch meeting dates for the remainder of 2007.

- September 11
 - October 9
 - November 13
 - December - No Meeting
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Articles/Information Needed

We need your input with articles and/or information for the branch newsletter The Knickerbocker News.!

If you have information on flower or garden shows or exhibits, or any interesting articles from newspapers or magazines, please send to Barbara Berg, either by e-mail or regular mail.

Also you might consider writing an article about your begonias - problems or successes that would be of interest to our members.

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