

catchers as *carolineifolia*, *luxurians*, *megaptera*, *scharffiana*, *fernando costae*, *manicata aureo-maculata*, ‘Silver Sal’, ‘Green Luxury’ and ‘Caloundra Coast’ together with bromeliads around the base of the *Chilean wine palm*, and *fruticosa*, *cordyline* hybrids ‘Negra’ and ‘Pink Diamond’, and *hosta* providing interesting contrasts. *Pisonia umbellifera variegata*, several *coleus* and some *aspleniums* (Bird’s Nest ferns) help to make a most effective planting.

The central walk runs from the Shrubbery and traverses the Shade Garden which also takes in the western edge of the bed. The walk is bordered by spring flowering rhizomatous: *Bs. manicata*, U054, ‘Erythrophylla’ (Beefsteak begonia), ‘Oyster Leaf’, and ‘Immense’, a bed of *B. listada* sheltering under a tree fern with a large planting of *impatiens hianiamensis* beneath a *brunfelsia australis* providing a beautiful contrast. Others in the Shade Garden include *Bs. acutifolia*, *scharffii* and *scharffiana*, *parilis*, *paranaensis*, and *sanguina* with ‘Silver Jewel’ looking quite stunning set amongst *maidenhair fern*. Other plants such as *cycads*, *blechnums*, *Eucharis grandiflora*, Chinese ground orchids, *bletilla striatus*, *philodendron* ‘Raja Congo’ and many, many more shade lovers complete this spectacular gathering of plants which grow in the depths of the forests and on the cooler heights.

Finally we have the Full Sun Garden across the southern end which we are still using as a test bed for begonias which may like more sun than we are aware of – the results are proving quite remarkable. There’s currently a massed border of *B. ‘Island Gem’*, with plantings of *Bs. acutifolia*, *coccinea*, *minor*, *venosa* and ‘Titan’ complemented by *wisterias*, *agapanthus*, a large *lonicera fragrantissima* and a spectacular *poinsettia*. A number of cane-like begonias are being trialled here and most are responding favourably to direct sun exposure, with old favourites like *Bs. ‘Irene Nuss’* and ‘White Showers’ thriving in the heat, much to our amazement.

Our begonia gardens are by no means finished works, nor are they ever likely to be. New plants arrive and demand garden space, old plants wear out and are replaced, perhaps with something different, our ideas change or are refined and the gardens with them; change is constant but gradual and we strive to keep the gardens in as perfect a condition as the season, the predatory insects, the possums and the ever-present Ibis allow.

Our experience over the past sixteen years in growing begonias both indoors and out in the RBG has shown that they are adaptable, easily grown and drought resistant plants ideal for many gardens, be they small suburban, large estate, local park or botanic gardens in the many regions of the world where heavy frosts do not occur. Frosts are their nemesis for they are succulent by nature and in areas of heavy frost they need winter protection. Their wonderful diversity of form and size, of shape and growth habit, of