



# FLOAT BUILDER'S GUIDE

# BEGONIA FESTIVAL

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We want you to have fun, FUN, **FUN !!!** With a good float design, some preliminary organization and a core group of energetic float builders, you will have a great time building your float and participating in the Begonia Festival Nautical Parade.

We hope this Guide will help you with building your float. It contains the following sections:

1. Design
2. Building Sites
3. Begonia Picking
4. Parade Procedures
5. Sample Timeline

If we can give you one piece of advice, it would be to avoid the temptation of putting things off until the last minute. Just a few hours of planning and construction preparation during June, July and early August will make your float building go smoothly and will give you the confidence that you are ready for Begonia Festival.

The Begonia Festival Committee is ready to help in any way to answer questions and give you pointers in float building. Just contact the Nautical Parade Chairperson.

## DESIGN

You will be provided with a floating platform or barge on which to build your float. It is 8' wide and 12' long. Your float may not extend more than 6" beyond the edge of this platform. The top of the platform is plywood to which you will secure your framework. The framework will support a "skin" of 1" chicken wire to which the Begonia blossoms will be attached. In designing your framework, keep two things in mind:

1. Keep it as lightweight as possible but strong enough to support a lot of heavy blossoms.
2. Like a boat the weight of your framework, blossoms and people need to be reasonably balanced on the barge.

There is no height restriction for your float, but it must be able to pass under the Stockton Street Bridge (approximately 8', but you are responsible for checking this). In years past some tall floats have folded down to pass under the bridge. This is dramatic but requires more work to build.

Most float builders make their framework out of the cheapest grade of ½" plywood which is cut in an "interlocking" pattern which creates a very strong but lightweight framework. These plywood frames can be secured to the barge deck using wood cleats. Solid wood supports (such as 2 X4's) or PVC or metal pipe can be used where more strength is needed. Important tools for this part of the construction are electric jigsaws, cordless screwdrivers and staple guns. Use screws for attachments rather than nails. By designing the pieces of your framework so that they can be transported in the back of a pickup, you can build and store the framework in a driveway until parade weekend when you will bring them down to your building site to install on your barge. Because we must dismantle these floats quickly after the parade, **DO NOT** make your framework from welded steel or rebar.

1" chicken wire is stretched over your framework. The Begonia blossoms are then attached to this chicken wire. Some of the chicken wire can be installed on the framework before it is brought down to the barge. When designing your float, try to maximize the areas where float builders can access both sides of the chicken wire to greatly speed up installing blossoms. Also it is awkward for too many people to work on board the barge at once. Therefore, try a design where "panels" of chicken wire can be decorated with blossoms by teams of float builders on land and then installed on the framework after the blossoms are on. This greatly speeds up the process and keeps a lot of people productive at once.

Remember that Begonia blossoms are relatively large so it is very difficult to create fine details on your float. If you are a first time builder, don't be too ambitious with size or complicated moving parts. You will do better and have more fun with a modest design done well than an unfinished big design.

You may use other plant materials such as leaves, fern fronds, other flowers, etc. on your float, but Begonias must PREDOMINATE. Do not artificially color the Begonia blossoms. It is a deduction to use signs and visible manmade objects as part of the float structure. It is

acceptable to have people on the float, particularly to advance your theme (costumes, theatrical performance, etc.). Their costumes and props do not have to be of plant materials.

All portions of your framework and barge should be covered with Begonias or other plant materials. Remember to cover the exposed edge of the barge (for example, you could staple fern fronds directly to the barge frame). Save all broken Begonia blossoms and petals. Scatter these on the deck and horizontal surfaces of your barge at the last minute to insure complete coverage.

Carefully estimate how many blossoms your design will require. The primary Begonia colors are pink, orange, yellow, light red, dark red and white. There are numerous variations and variegated types, however. White blossoms tend to be quite small, in limited supply and wilt quickly so minimize the amount of white in your design. The dark red color also wilts quickly but turns very dark...almost black....when it wilts. So it is a good choice to use for high contrast design such as lettering or buttons or eyes. You should carefully calculate the square footage of each blossom color on your float. You will likely use cardboard beer/soda flats when picking blossoms so conservatively estimate that one flat will hold ONE SQUARE FOOT of blossoms. You will quickly find you are going to need hundreds of boxes of blossoms.

We have included a sample of the Judge's Score Sheet so you will know what they are looking for and how the factors are weighted.

## **BUILDING SITES**

A few days before parade weekend you will be assigned a building site along Soquel Creek. Most of these are on private property. We have use of these only with the permission and goodwill of the property owners so it is critical that you take good care of the building site and be considerate of the rights and peace of mind of the people who own the site. Take special care not to damage landscaping, fencing, etc. at your building site.

Your barge will be available at your building site Friday afternoon. You can bring your framework to the building site at that time and install it on your barge. Space will be tight so be as efficient and compact as possible. Make sure you leave space for the stacks of boxes of blossoms that you will want to keep damp and shaded during the hot sun of Saturday afternoon. The availability of electricity varies from site to site so discuss this with the property owner. Plan to provide light for working at night. If your site has overhead lights, do not attempt to plug into that system. BBQ and potlucks are permitted at the site Saturday night only.

The blossoms are attached to the chicken wire framework using floral wire (supplied by the Begonia Festival Committee) bent in a "U" shape and inserted through the face of the blossom. The wire ends are then twisted behind the chicken wire to hold the blossoms. This

process goes most quickly using teams of two people – one sticking the blossom on the chicken wire, one on the other side twisting the wire ends. As mentioned before it is awkward having too many people on the barge at once. Therefore, be alert for panels or sections of the chicken wire that can be covered with flowers by teams working on land and then installed on the barge framework. This allows the maximum number of teams to work at the same time. As a head start you can also get some people working in the late afternoon wiring blossoms in preparation for attaching to the float.

Parking is a real frustration so you need to be prepared to have to park some distance from your building sites. Check your site out Friday night and perhaps plan some nearby drop off point where your workers can shuttle the blossoms, etc. to your site on foot. Keep a driver in the vehicle at all times and be prepared to move on. The neighborhood permit parking zones will not be enforced, but all parking meters and time restrictions will be enforced.

Portable toilets will be available near the building sites. There are public restrooms at City Hall, Esplanade Park and the Wharf. Dumpsters will also be available near the building sites. Please bring a garbage can for your site and empty it regularly. You are supposed to be finished with construction by noon on Sunday. At this time you should clean your building site (bring a rake!) and be prepared to make it available to the property owner so that they and their guests can view the parade from their own property. Discuss this with them in advance; hopefully, there will be room for all.

The possession and consumption of alcohol in public areas (including the pathway along the building sites) is illegal. Alcohol is permitted on the private property of the building sites WITH the permission of the property owners. Again, discuss this with them in advance to insure no misunderstandings. No kegs are allowed. Let's all work to insure we have no ugly incidents involving alcohol.

Please observe the following work curfews:

<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>10:00 PM</b>
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>MIDNIGHT</b>
<b>SUNDAY</b>	<b>NO WORK BEFORE 8:00 AM</b>

There have rarely been problems, but you may leave one group member at the site overnight to watch tools, etc. However, all construction, socializing and noise must stop at curfew.

There will be Begonia Festival staff circulating through the building sites. Please contact them if you have a question or need assistance. Please cooperate fully with them if there is a problem that needs correcting.

## **BEGONIA PICKING**

The Begonia blossoms are made available to us free of charge by Golden State Bulb Growers. Without their generosity, there would be no Begonia Festival. They have a substantial investment in these Begonia plants so it is **VITAL** that we do not damage them through carelessness or improper picking. Failure to follow instructions may result in your immediate dismissal from the gardens and the disqualification of your float. We're sorry if this sounds harsh, but it is crucial to the future of the Begonia Festival.

You should start several weeks in advance to accumulate cardboard beer/soda flats to use in picking and transporting the blossoms. These boxes are plentiful and stack well if turned at 90-degree angles to each other. These boxes may be obtained from grocers, liquor stores, distributors, etc. You may want to mark your boxes in some way to avoid confusion at the gardens. As mentioned before carefully estimate the numbers of boxes you need of each color. You will surely require several hundred boxes. Transport the boxes in covered pick-ups or vans. We suggest you have an "official tally person" who has the list of how many boxes of each color you need. That person will be in charge of keeping track of your progress in picking each color and will instruct your group when to stop picking and move to another color. You may want to have one vehicle that circulates around the gardens, picking up your filled boxes.

In picking Begonias, nothing beats good, old-fashioned peoplepower. The begonia gardens are a breathtaking sight, but picking blossoms can be a back killer that gets old really quickly! Try to get a crew of at least 12 motivated adult pickers, and you should be done in 3-4 hours. There is no need to be too picky about your blossoms. They all look pretty good on the float when viewed from 30' away.

### **OK – THESE ARE THE ABSOLUTE NO-NO's**

NO CHILDREN UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE  
NO ANIMALS  
NO ALCOHOL

### **AND THESE ARE THE RULES FOR PICKING**

1. Do not step into or cross the flowerbeds in mid row. Go to the ends.
2. The plants are brittle and easily damaged. Pick the blossom by pinching and breaking the stem approximately 1" from the blossom. **Do not pull** on the stems, as the plants will easily uproot in this sandy soil.
3. If you pick a rotten blossom, drop it at your feet in the aisles between the flowerbeds. Do not leave it amongst the plants (it will cause plant disease).

4. Stay out of roped off areas and leave all sticks and markers in place.
5. You will be entering the gardens along a private, gravel road. Drive slowly and minimize dust.

### MAPS TO THE BEGONIA GARDENS WILL BE AVAILABLE IN AUGUST

## **PARADE PROCEDURES**

Each float entry must provide a completed Float Information Sheet to the Nautical Parade Chairperson by 5:00 PM on Saturday. If you desire to have certain music played while your float passes the judges, please provide a tape cassette or CD along with your Float Information Sheet. **Music only** on the tape or CD – no float narrative.

Sunday morning you will be given two parade number signs. Place these conspicuously on the front and rear of your float. This is your order of appearance in the parade as well as your identification for judging purposes.

Construction should finish by **11:00 AM** on Sunday. The floats will begin staging upriver of the Railroad Trestle at **NOON** and in order of appearance. The parade will start at **1:00 PM**. The River Marshall will tell you when to start downstream. The parade route is under the Trestle, circle in front of the judge's table, under the Stockton Street Bridge, a sweeping turn around the float in the lagoon, back under the Stockton Street Bridge and again under the Trestle to a waiting area upstream.

When the parade is over **ALL** floats are to be taken to the bulkhead area between the Trestle and the Stockton Street Bridge. Any partial dismantling to remove equipment you wish to salvage should be done here. Fish and Game requires us to remove all blossoms and debris from the water so, please, do not throw blossoms and drop pieces of framework into the water.

Festival and City Public Works personnel will do final dismantling of the floats and removal of the barges.

On Tuesday following the parade each float group is required to send at least one volunteer to help clean floating blossoms and debris from the creek. Meet at the bridge at 10:00 AM. If you have a wet suit and booties, please bring them. This work takes about two hours. Your deposit will only be refunded if your volunteer shows up on time.

The Nautical Parade Chair will outline propulsion methods to you.

## SAMPLE FLOAT BUILDER'S TIMELINE

June	Choose a theme. Start design work. Start recruiting workers.
July	Finalize design. Plan framework and estimate materials.
Early August	Purchase materials. Build framework in someone's driveway. Estimate square footage of blossoms by color. Start collecting boxes for blossoms.
Late August	Attend float builders meeting. Finish recruiting workers. Locate pick ups/vans to transport boxes to Begonia gardens. Choose music for float. Finish framework.
Wednesday before Parade	Inspect building site when known and meet owners. Start preparing Float Information Sheet.
Friday before Parade	Take framework to building site late afternoon. Start to install on barge.
Saturday before Parade	Pick blossoms 7 AM. Transport blossoms and equipment to building site. Finish framework assembly. Start wiring blossoms by mid-afternoon. Start putting blossoms on chicken wire late afternoon. Turn in Float Information Sheet and music by 5 PM. Stop construction by Midnight.
Sunday Parade Day	Start work after 8:00 AM. Finish construction by 11:00 AM. Clean up building site. Stage floats at noon. Parade starts at 1:00 PM. Move floats to bulkhead immediately after parade.
Tuesday after Parade	Volunteer from each float group to Stockton Street Bridge by 10:00 AM to help clean up.



## Judges Score Sheet Capitola Begonia Festival Nautical Parade

**Entrant:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Scoring:</b>	<b>Maximum Points</b>	<b>Earned Points</b>
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<b>Theme Development:</b> _____	20	_____
How closely does float theme follow parade theme?		

<b>Originality of Design:</b> _____	20	_____
How much originality is shown by float builders?		

<b>Floral Coverage:</b> _____	20	_____
How much of float surface is covered by begonia flowers?		

<b>Effective use of Flowers:</b> _____	20	_____
How effectively have float builders used flowers to create visual effects?		

<b>Showmanship:</b> _____	20	_____
Have builders added activities or features that appeal to the crowd?		

**Total Earned Points:** \_\_\_\_\_

**JUDGE'S NOTES:**

- Your float may not extend more than 6" beyond the edge of this platform.
- You may use other plant materials such as leaves, fern fronds, other flowers, etc. on your float, but Begonias must PREDOMINATE.
- Do not artificially color the Begonia blossoms. It is a deduction to use signs and visible manmade objects as part of the float structure.
- It is acceptable to have people on the float, particularly to advance your theme (costumes, theatrical performance, etc.). Their costumes and props do not have to be of plant materials.
- All portions of your framework and barge should be covered with Begonias or other plant materials. Remember to cover the exposed edge of the barge (for example, you could staple fern fronds directly to the barge frame).