

# Begonia Festival to end after 65 years

*Begonia Festival*  
Last event set  
for Sept. 1-4

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OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

**CAPITOLA** — The Capitola Begonia Festival will return for its 65th annual event from Sept. 1-4, but it will also be its last.

The festival's committee made the announcement Tuesday.

Golden State Bulb Growers, which grows the begonia blossoms in Marina, is retiring from the business of growing begonias, but has agreed to donate the blossoms for the festival for one last time.

"We are grateful that the Brown Ranch Family (Golden State Bulb Growers) has agreed to grow begonias for the festival for one last year, our 65th anniversary," said Begonia Festival President Laurie Hill.

According to Golden State Bulb Growers, its AmeriHybrid Begonias are the only begonia tubers presently bred and produced in the United States.

"For me, nothing can replace the excitement of bringing begonias to Capitola," Hill said. "Anyone can throw a party of events to fill the Village, but only the Begonia Festival can fill it with begonias and six decades of memories.

"I am grateful for the friendship, memories and everything that this festival has taught me about Capitola and the value of community."

Hill said she joined the festival board in 2002, during a time when the all-volunteer festival committee planned to end the



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian file

**A begonia-covered float moves slowly along Soquel Creek during the annual Capitola Begonia Festival's Nautical Parade in 2016. This year's festival, taking place Sept. 1-4, will be its last.**

festival at its 50th anniversary.

"They assigned me to work in the Soquel Creek to help direct the Nautical Parade of begonia-covered floats. I was hooked," she recalled. "Three of us — Eddie Ray Garcia, Lin Banks and myself — along with a trace few others, vowed to energize and continue the tradition."

While many things have changed about the festival over the years, one thing has not.

"Our focus has always been the joy of bringing begonias to Capitola and the Nautical Parade," Hill said.

Capitola Mayor Stephanie Harlan said she is "very sad"

about the ending of the festival.

"I think we are all feeling a loss at this point," she said. "It was really a wonderful activity for a lot of families."

Harlan said it is too early to say if another event would replace the Begonia Festival in Capitola for Labor Day Weekend, but added that festival organizers were unwilling to continue the event without begonias.

The four-day event, held during Labor Day Weekend, typically features a horseshoe tournament, a fishing derby, a sand castle building con-

test, activities with begonias and more, capped off with the Nautical Parade, where begonia-covered floats drift along Soquel Creek.

For the final festival, Hill said organizers are looking to use the 65th anniversary as a way to thank all the volunteers who "have worked tirelessly over six decades to perpetuate this unique community tradition for Capitola."

Organizers are also collecting attendees' memories of the event. Comments can be submitted at [begoniafestival.com](http://begoniafestival.com) or by email at [begoniafestival@gmail.com](mailto:begoniafestival@gmail.com).