



photo by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia 'Dejah Thoris'

by Patrick Worley

The unusual name comes from the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. He wrote a series of books with an earthly adventurer transported to Mars. Dejah Thoris is the name of a Martian Princess in the series.

The parents of this cross are unnamed hybrids of my own one of which I still grow. The female parent, which I nicknamed B. 'Solid Silver,' has a shiny silver leaf and has strong antecedents that are rich in the silver leaf genes that I was after.

The other parent, a crested spiral leaved hybrid provided the leaf shape and form. I started with many hundreds of seedlings. I usually discard any that don't appeal early on, but in this case nature took a hand. A freeze took so many of the other seedlings only a very few survived, B. 'Dejah Thoris' being one of them. I liked the silver pink that is so prevalent on the young leaves which are very showy.

As the plant matures the sheen stays and the rosy color diffuses throughout the leaf. B. 'Dejah Thoris' blooms in the spring with small white flowers in clusters above the foliage. It has become a lovely plant for me. I tested it for 5 years and then sent cuttings to Florida where Tim Anderson grew it, as usual, to perfection. I hadn't seen it in a long time and when I visited him noticed the plant where it stood out from many of the other lovely plants that he grows.

Another round of accidents, freezes, a stroke and

other assorted life trials ensued and I lost all of my plants. Tim sent me starts of a half dozen of my hybrids and other plants that he had been testing for me.

For whatever reason, it takes me a long time and a great deal of testing to see if a plant is worthy, and best of all, survives the rigors of different climates, growers and disease.

Begonia 'Dejah Thoris' has proved to be very nice. I nearly lost it again in my last move, but a small piece of rhizome survived and has come back well this year.

I have it in a 3 inch pot as well as several leaf cuttings down. The 3 inch plant should be back to full size by next spring. As with all plants with crested and spiral leaves, one must take care not to get too much water on the leaves. If one waters in the evening, the water may not evaporate and cause mold and leaf rot.

The plant itself is compact and easily grown in a 4 inch pot. I use a soilless mix, the standard modified Cornell mix with 2 parts peat moss, 1 part vermiculite, 1 part perlite and a teaspoon of dolomite lime to each gallon of mix.

It did well outside under 50% shade and made it through a mild winter with protection from too much cold rain. It seems to be doing very well in the small greenhouse that I constructed and is excellent under lights. I use a slow release fertilizer in all of my soil mixes, adding more every spring.

