



photo by Julie Vanderwilt

Begonia 'Munchkin'

by Morris Mueller

B. 'Munchkin' is a great plant if you like the crested margin rhizomatous group. This hybrid of B. 'Madame Queen' X B. *carriæ* was produced at Logee's Greenhouse in 1979. The leaves are of medium size, reddish, and have an eye-lash fringe around the crested of the leaves; on a well-grown plant this feature makes it look like a plush toy. (It's hard to resist not petting it!) As with most rhizomatous, it blooms with pinkish flowers in the spring.

The Thompsons in **BEGONIAS: The Complete Reference Guide** classify this plant as for the Advanced Grower (I guess I am not at that stage yet.) I have tried to grow this plant several times with little to no success, nor have I ever been successful with either of its parents. This is also true for me with other crested leaf begonias such as B. 'Whiskers,' B. 'Dragon Wings' (not the everblooming shrub-like), B. *manicata* 'Crispa' hort., and B. 'Crestabruhchii' (see the back cover of the Jan.- Feb.

2004 issue of *the Begonian* for a great picture of the latter).

On the other hand, success has been somewhat achieved with B. 'Green Queen,' B. 'Losp-tu,' B. 'Wee-Paws,' B. 'Harbison Canyon,' and B. 'Essie Hunt.' My experience with the more difficult crested-leaved plants is that they are very, very fussy about watering wanting neither too much nor too little. If an error is to be made, keep them on the dry side.

As with many rhizomatous, this plant loses a lot of its leaves in the winter, but by early spring new buds are popping out. This is the ideal time to cut the rhizome back, forcing new growth buds along the rhizome. This will help insure a fuller plant later in the season.

The rhizome cuttings can be rooted if there is active growth and the cut end is allowed to callous over for about 12 hours. New plants can also be started from leaf wedges or entire leaves for any of the plants mentioned above.

