



photo by Julie Vanderwilt

Begonia 'Crestabruclii'

by Morris Mueller

This fascinating plant was hybridized almost 70 years ago in California by Glen Lewis in 1938. The cross is *B. manicata* 'Crispa' X *B. heracleifolia* 'Sunderbruchii.' It is the first hybrid which shows this remarkable crestedness on the edges of the leaves. There is an earlier plant, *B. 'Bunchii'*, which shows this crestedness, but it is listed as a sport of *B. 'Erythrophylla'* found by Lloyd Bunch in 1914.

The Thompsons, in their book *Begonias: The Complete Reference Guide* classify it as rhizomatous, large-leaved, crested margin. It blooms moderately with small pink flowers in late winter. They also recommend it as 'For the Collector.'

It deserves its nickname of the

'Leather-leaf Begonia.' It is a large plant. Its leaves are heavy and thick, roundish, with a bronzy-green color and wavy, curled, crested edges and sparse red hairs.

Like its female parent *B. manicata* 'Crispa' it is particular about its watering. It needs to dry out between waterings. I find this true of all the crested-leaved hybrids that I grow such as *B. 'Essie Hunt'*, *B. 'Nagare'*, *B. 'Beryl'*, and *B. 'Munchkin'*.

B. 'Crestabruclii' is one of my favorite plants to grow. This is in spite of its unfortunate habit of wanting to go dormant in the winter, and its reluctance to get growing in the spring. It is at its best in the late summer and early fall where I grow it under lights.

