



photo by Julie Vanderwilt

Begonia carolineifolia Regel

by Morris Mueller

B. carolineifolia was described by Edward Regel, a Swiss botanist, in 1852. Amazingly, even though it is an easy-to-grow plant, little has been written about it. It is placed in the Section *Gireodia* and is native to Southern Mexico and Central America.

The plant is an upright rhizomatous with palmately compound leaves (looks somewhat like a palm frond). It does not branch freely and becomes quite large when well-grown. It does well in the usual fast-draining, moisture retentive mix good for most begonias.

Flowers are pale pink and are produced in late winter and spring. *B. carolineifolia* is easily confused with *B. thiemei* 'Purpurea' as they both have a reddishness to their petioles. *B. thiemei* is a much greener plant. Both *B. thiemei* and *B. thiemei* 'Purpurea' are harder to

grow for me. *B. carolineifolia* is just a less demanding, sturdy plant. The 'Purpurea' variety used to be known as *B. macdougallii*.

B. carolineifolia has been used for several hybrids as both a pollen and seed parent. Leslie Woodriff used it as a seed parent (female) to create *B. 'Carol Mac'* by crossing it with *B. thiemei*. Michael Kartuz also used it as a seed parent with *B. ludicra* (rhizomatous) to create *B. 'Silver Star'* and with *B. wollnyi* (also a thick-stemmed) to create *B. 'Star Frost.'*

As a pollen parent it was crossed with *B. manicata* (rhizomatous) to create *B. 'Verschaffeltii'* by Regel himself in 1853. Woodriff used its pollen on *B. conchifolia* var. *rubrimacula* (rhizomatous) to create *B. 'Madame Butterfly'* and on *B. 'Red Planet'* to create *B. 'Nightmare.'* For me, those hybrids in which *B. carolineifolia* was the female parent are easier to grow.

