



photo by Mike Flaherty

# Begonia 'Careless Whisper'

by Greg Sytch

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B. 'Careless Whisper' was developed on a whim in the mid-1990's out of a cross between B. 'Cowardly Lion' (rhizomatous) and B. *venosa* (thick-stem). The idea was to create a curly-leaved thick-stem that grows like a rhizomatous. Well, it almost worked!

This award-winning beauty does grow like both, and is easily propagated by leaves or stems like either, but it does go somewhat upright in its growth. I would consider its growth more shrub-like, and if pruned early, definitely not lanky.

It blooms with all the other rhizomatous, which is late winter into spring. Its blooms are mostly a hairy white, perhaps tinged with pink in brighter light. They are held above the foliage. But it is the leaves that create all the buzz.

Gifted with Best New Introduction at the 2000 ABS Convention at Palm Beach, its

leaves are a combination of both parents. They are rather thick like B. *venosa*, yet bronze and brown like 'Cowardly Lion;'. They twist and curl in all directions, usually staying under 5" at maturity, and culminating in a curled leaf like a spiral-leaved rhizomatous.

It prefers dry roots in between thorough waterings. It tolerates most light levels but remains more compact and colorful in brighter light. Dull light brings out more green - while bright light brings out more copper - just like the lioness it was borne from.

Overall, I have enjoyed creating and growing this beauty for years, and most everyone who grows it has little trouble.

Propagate it anytime, and combine small plants together for a really full plant. It has never exceeded two feet for me, so it can fit almost anywhere. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed creating it!

