



photo by Julie Vanderwilt

Begonia 'Splotches'

by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia 'Splotches' is classified as a trailing-scandent cultivar. This defines it as part of a group of plants which either trail or climb. Some varieties can do both if the growing conditions are right. The cross is *B. solananthera* X *B. limmingheana* done by the late Leslie Woodriff who lived in McKinleyville in Northern California. He released the plant in 1978 and has ABS registration number 701.

Its female parent *B. solananthera* is a commonly grown species from Brazil that has very fragrant cream-white flowers with red centers.

The male parent *B. limmingheana*, also from Brazil, was described and published by Morren in 1866. Later it was determined that the same plant had been first published by Vellozo as *B. procumbens* in 1831. That means that *B. procumbens* is its real name and that *B. limmingheana* is taxonomically a synonym. The flower color is described as deep coral. Both parents bloom profusely during winter-spring.

The flowers of *B. 'Splotches'* are pink, edged white and the ovaries are white with pink wings. Interestingly, the plant blooms profusely in the spring and summer, unlike either of its parents. The flowers are not fragrant.

Its most striking feature, however, is its variegated foliage. When grown in the shade, its foliage is medium green with light green splotching. Grown in very strong light the splotching takes on flecks of pink and light red along with the light green. All in all, it is a very striking plant.

There are very few other variegated begonias that we can grow. Ones I am familiar with are *B. manicata* 'Aureo-maculata' and *B. manicata* 'Aureo-maculata Crispa' from Mexico. They are plants with erect rhizomes.

Another plant is the fabulous *B. 'Midnight Sun'* (*B. 'Jill Adair'* X *B. unidentified species* [mk#3]) hybridized by Byron Martin of Logee's Greenhouses in 1980. It won Best New Introduction in a national show shortly after its release. It has dark-green leaves with pinkish variegation that fades to white and then dark green as the leaves mature.

The last I am familiar with is *B. 'Templinii.'* It is a mutant of *B. 'Phyllomaniaca'* introduced in 1901 by H. G. Wolfgang of the Templin Company nursery of Calla, Ohio. The outstanding feature of *B. 'Templinii'* is that it has a combination of variegated foliage and adventitious growths on its leaves

B. 'Splotches' is most commonly grown in hanging baskets. People report its stems can hang five to six feet. It can also be grown on trellises and totem poles if you are willing to take the effort to tie it or pin it. In hanging baskets the one cultural problem that needs to be anticipated is that previous year's stem will lose their leaves and a two- or three-year-old plant can be very leggy with all the growth two feet below the pot hanging from brown, woody stems. It is important to pinch the plant vigorously when young to make many branches so that it can be kept full when older. That is done by pinching about a quarter of the branch tips every couple months during the growing season.

This plant is relatively pest-free and mildew resistant.

