



photo by Julie Vanderwilt

Begonia brevirimosa Irmscher by Morris Mueller

Begonia brevirimosa was described botanically 90 years ago by Edgar Irmscher. It was discovered in New Guinea at an altitude of 3,000 feet and is listed in the section *Petermannia* (Klotzsch) A. DC., which includes both *B. bipinnatifida* and *B. incisa*. It has also been called *B. 'Exotica'*. There are two forms in cultivation with one exhibiting more red in the foliage and is identified as *B. brevirimosa* 'Edinburgh'. This was a clone of the species collected and sent to the botanic gardens there in the early 1950's.

The Thompsons in their **BEGONIAS: The Complete Reference Guide** classify it as shrub-like, distinctive foliage, unusual surface and/or unusual coloring. It can get quite tall in cultivation . . . sometimes four feet. Scott Hoover reports it grows to six feet in the wild. Because of this and the fact that it does not get very bushy, it needs to be staked. Leaves grow to

about six inches in length. While the Thompsons classify it as 'For the Collector,' my experience is that it is easy and fast growing.

It requires high humidity and warmth (72°F minimum). Thus, it is either grown as a terrarium plant or in a high humidity greenhouse.

The red in the leaves is slightly raised and rougher than the green portions of the leaf. Unlike many shrub-like begonias, this species can be started from leaves, a characteristic shared by many other shrub-like begonias from the areas in and around Southeast Asia. It can also be grown from stem cuttings. It roots readily and in my experience, the old stem responds with a new shoot. Many people report that stem cuttings can be difficult and that new plants started from leaves are more vigorous. That has not been my experience.

The flowers are pink, sporadic and sparse. The literature shows no hybrids using *B. brevirimosa*.

