



photo by Julie Vanderwilt

Begonia 'Little Brother Montgomery'

by Morris Mueller

This begonia was hybridized by Martin Johnson in Redwood City in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1970s. It is a sister seedling of B. 'Connee Boswell' which was released in 1978. B. 'Little Brother Montgomery' was released a couple years later.

The cross was B. *palmata* var. X B. *palmata* x B. *diadema*. Of course, this makes both plants rhizomatous, jointed at or below the soil with erect stems. B. 'Connee Boswell' is quite pretty with silver-lavender blends and B. 'Little Brother Montgomery' is a mix of blackish-brown and silver with a red highlight in the umbo (the place where the leaf joins the petiole). Both have star-shaped leaves.

Of the two, B. 'Little Brother Montgomery' seems to be the easier of the two for most Sacramento growers. B. 'Little Brother Montgomery' is less likely to desegment as cooler, darker weather approaches. It also seems to tolerate heat better than its sister.

Both, like most other 'jointed at or below the soil with upright stem' types, can totally lose their upright stems when dormant and remain as rhizomes in the soil. Do not despair as new growth will follow from the rhizomes as warmth and light return.

Propagation is from stem cuttings, leaves, and rhizome sections. I find this whole group behaves very similarly to the rex group in cultural requirements.

Because of this plant's thin leaves, in our low humidity, and high summer temperatures this plant is more likely to wilt as opposed to becoming 'transparent' as most other begonias do when deprived of water. Unlike most other begonias which can show this stress for a few days before suffering harm, B. 'Little Brother Montgomery' should not be water deprived for much more than a day, or severe harm will occur.

This plant, like most others in this growth category, should be monitored for mealy bug and powdery mildew.

