



photo by Julie Vanderwilt

Begonia 'Cowardly Lion'

by Morris Mueller

Begonia 'Cowardly Lion' was registered in 1998 with the American Begonia Society and was assigned #969. Kit Jeans Mounger made the cross using *B. carrieae* X *B. 'Bowkit'* in 1989.

The foliage is classified as distinctive and its leaves grow to eight inches or larger. Foliage color is green to golden bronze with brownish-green veining and is spiraled and lobed. The surface is sparsely haired, a trait passed on from its *B. carrieae* mother. The plant has distinctive leaf shapes and colors that are not necessarily related to age. The petioles (leaf stems) are up to eight inches long

It does not flower freely, but the flower

clusters have many flowers, with the males being smaller than the females. They are held well above the foliage and are white with red spots underneath.

In my experience, this is not the easiest of plants to grow. Because of *B. carrieae* in its parentage, it is fussy about watering wanting neither too much nor too little. If it is kept too wet, the rhizome will rot. If it goes dry and wilts, unlike most other begonias, it will not readily recover after being watered.

Nonetheless, it is worthy of trying. I am on my third plant and have learned enough to keep it alive and growing, but have not yet achieved the status of growing it as a spectacular specimen plant.

