



photo by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia 'Silver Jewell'

by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia 'Silver Jewell' is a hybrid of two humidity-loving plants *B. pustulata* and *B. imperialis* from Mexico. It was created by Susie Zug in 1957. It was registered as #136 with the American Begonia Society.

The Thompsons, in their book *BEGONIAS: The Complete Reference Guide* classify it as a rhizomatous plant with foliage that is distinctive and pustular. Pustular foliage is defined as having minute elevations. In other words, it is not smooth and glossy but the effect is not because of hairs on the leaves. It's like the leaves are textured like velvet.

As mentioned, both parents require high humidity and the recommendation is that they be grown in terrariums for best results. This is the recommendation for *B. 'Silver Jewell'* although many growers have

notable success growing it on the bench in a greenhouse. The pictured plant was grown by Branch member Donna Murrill in her greenhouse in Chico.

It flowers moderately with white flowers off and on throughout the year.

The pest to watch out for is mealy bug. Alcohol swabbing when found or a systemic preventative can be used to control them.

Remember, that if grown in a terrarium, do not use a heavy mix. And never use more than a couple inches in the bottom. Too much mix runs the risk of turning sour. Personally, I use New Zealand sphagnum moss moistened and tossed in my standard soilless mix of peat moss, perlite and vermiculite with a little charcoal. This leaves the medium totally open and plants grow quite well in it.

