



photos by Ed and Millie Thompson

Begonia ampla J. D. Hooker

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B. ampla was collected by Charles Barter circa 1859 in Principe where it was found growing on trees. After Barter died on the expedition, Gustav Mann joined it. He collected this species in Principe, Bioko, and other areas in Tropical Africa at altitudes between 1,000 and 2,000 feet.

In 1871, Dr. Joseph Dalton Hooker, a renowned botanist, described and named *B. ampla* using herbarium specimens by Barter and Mann. The name comes from the Latin *amplus* which means large, abundant; it refers to the fruit, leaves and/or the flowers.

For botanical classification, *B. ampla* is placed in the section *Squamibegonia*. There are only three species in this section at the present time. For horticultural classification, *B. ampla* is with the trailing-scandent.

In 1980, I received seeds of *B. ampla* from Dr. Doorenos of Wageningen, The Netherlands. *B. ampla* was not grown in this country prior to 1980.

The most outstanding characteristic of *B.*

ampla is the large, fleshy, pale orange fruit.

It is berry-like (indehiscent). The woody stems are about one to two feet at maturity. The medium green leaves have red markings along the midrib; they measure five to eight inches. The flowers are white with rose-colored markings.

B. ampla thrives in humid conditions, preferably where the relative humidity is 65 percent or more. The temperature should be 65 degrees or more. Depending on the geographic location where this species is grown it may be difficult to attain that, but this species seems to tolerate temperatures either a little lower or higher especially if there is sufficient humidity.

It should have filtered sunlight. For grooming, it is advantageous to cut the tip when the branches are six to eight inches long and remove the terminal bud on older stems. A regular fertilizing schedule is essential for the health and beauty of the species.

B. ampla is a fascinating species to grow, study, and enjoy. It is one of my favorite species.

