



photo by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia 'Amelia'

by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia 'Amelia' is a cane-like begonia that is a low-growing plant that gets to no more than two feet in height with four to six inch leaves. I hybridized it in 1987 by crossing B. 'Tom Ment' with pollen from B. *maculata* var. *wightii*, the 'Polka Dot' begonia. B. 'Tom Ment' is also a low-growing begonia with salmon-pink blooms and profuse spots on the leaves. B. *maculata* var. *wightii* is rather tall growing with quite a bit of space between the leaves. Its flowers are pure white. The spotting on its leaves is quite pronounced and the spots are larger and more regular appearing than spots on most other canes.

The plant was named for my mother. There were two other plants from this cross that were named. They were B. 'MaryAnn Flunker' and B. 'Catherine.' B. 'MaryAnn Flunker' is a sturdier plant that grows taller like its male parent. The leaves are a much lighter green color and slightly larger than those of B. 'Amelia.' It also has the pronounced spotting characteristic of B. 'Amelia.' B. 'Catherine' is a very small plant that grows no taller than a foot in height.

B 'Amelia,' like its sister seedlings, branches readily from the base and makes a bushy plant without too much effort. Because of its relatively short size, it also makes a great subject for a basket. In fact, the very first

time (and maybe the only time, now that I think of it) that I won Best in Show was with a basket of B. 'Amelia.'

Most begonias seem not to be too affected by cultural conditions. In other words, leaf and flower color are pretty standard from plant to plant wherever and however they are grown. B. 'Amelia,' however, can be quite variable. I personally have grown it where the flowers were nearly white, just barely flushed with pale pink on petal edges. With more light, the flowers were an intense, clear pink. Once on a convention tour down south at Mary Sakamoto's house, I came across a brightly spotted cane with leaves six to eight inches long that were nearly a blackish green. The spotting really stood out. Mary told me it was B. 'Amelia.'

Culture is basically the same as for other canes. The soil mix should be loose and well-draining. Fertilizing should be done according to package directions during the growing season which is spring through fall. If grown as a houseplant in the winter, it is better grown under lights where 'longer' days can be provided.

Toward the end of summer B. 'Amelia' can develop the dreaded powdery mildew. Regular spraying with a systemic fungicide like Bayleton works wonders. Other pests seem to leave it alone.

