



photo by Tim Anderson

Begonia 'Ginny'

by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia 'Ginny' is a shrub-like begonia classified as hairy-leaved, narrow-leaved, with pale pink flowers with red hairs. Its flowers are everblooming and profuse. It was hybridized in 1971 by Watchorn.

Its parents were *B. echinosepala* X *B. 'Margaritae.'* *B. echinosepala* is classified as bare-leaved, small-leaved with white fragrant flowers that bloom summer and winter. The male parent, *B. 'Margaritae'* is hairy-leaved, wide-leaved with pink flowers that bloom spring and summer.

One of the parents of *B. 'Margaritae'* was also *B. echinosepala*. So *B. 'Ginny'* demonstrates the hybridizing technique of back crossing onto one of the original parents to reinforce certain characteristics which in this case included the plant's blooming a lot. Interestingly though, the fragrance of *B. echinosepala* was lost.

B. 'Ginny' is a great plant for both container gardening and use as a landscape plant. It can take quite a bit more sun than many other begonias. That increases substantially the amount of flowers it produces.

The flowers themselves are quite interesting. When they are in their closed 'clamshell' stage, they are white with

noticeable red hairs covering the outsides of the petals. When they open, the insides are pure white. The male flowers open first and the overall effect makes the cluster look pink. This is added to because the ovaries of the female flowers are themselves pink, as are the stems of the flowers.

I have planted *B. 'Ginny'* in the ground in different parts of the yard. In one spot it was on a south-facing wall with overhead protection. In that spot, it withstood 17° during the big freeze and returned in the spring to bloom again. And once it does start blooming in mid-spring it does not stop until frost.

Culture is quite easy. It does well in a variety of mixes and light conditions, with it doing best in a loose, organic mix with strong light (and even a little bit of sun early in the day). Fertilize regularly during the growing season using more high-bloom fertilizer while blooming. And that can be year-round if grown in a container which is brought into the house to a sunny window for the winter.

Another positive feature of this plant is its relative freedom from all pests and diseases. That, coupled with its ease of growth and loads of flowers, makes this a plant that should have a permanent place in even the smallest of collections.

