



photo by Mike Flaherty

## Begonia 'Lomita Lady'

by Brad Thompson

Begonia 'Lomita Lady' is a superba cane that I hybridized in 1997 by crossing B. 'Lana' with B. 'Lady Mary'. It was first shown and released at the 1999 ABS National Convention in Westchester, California. It is considered a superba cane because it has superba parentage on both sides of its family tree. Its female parent B. 'Lana' shows the cleft leaves which distinguishes superbas from the other cane types.

While most superba canes are usually medium to tall-growing plants, B. 'Lomita Lady' can easily be kept low growing with a single yearly pruning. It will grow tall if allowed to, but is more versatile than most other superbas because they only bloom if allowed to grow to full height. Also, while most superbas don't make good hanging baskets, B. 'Lomita Lady' can be easily trained to make a great basket begonia.

With a relatively hard pruning each spring B. 'Lomita Lady' will grow to be about a foot tall in a season. It has bright green, cupped, cleft leaves with some silver sprinkling. It is a very heavy bloomer with large clusters of rose scented, hot pink flowers. It is rarely out of bloom and usually only stops blooming when pruned. The blooms can be so profuse

as to nearly obscure the foliage. Unlike many other everblooming begonias, B. 'Lomita Lady' also branches well and makes a full, compact plant easily.

B. 'Lomita Lady' is of easy culture. Being versatile it can be used for nearly all specialized growing methods such as baskets, trellises, standards, or any of the other ways begonias can be grown.

It does well in any well-drained soil mix. It has very few bad traits. It is not prone to powdery mildew like many canes are. It can, however, be prone to leaf drop if you have a bad botrytis season. Because the leaves of B. 'Lomita Lady' are slightly cupped, it is more botrytis-prone since the leaves can hold moisture during cold, wet weather.

B. 'Lomita Lady' is the culmination of years of crossing to achieve superba begonias that were low, full-growing, and everblooming. B. 'Lomita Lady' combines the best qualities of hybrids created by Belva Kusler, Irene Nuss, and Margaret Lee. It is also proving to be a prolific parent that passes on its best qualities. It is also a very good begonia for novice begonia growers. I consider B. 'Lomita Lady' one of my personal favorites of the hybrids I have done. That is why I gave it the 'Lomita' moniker.

