

## THE SHRUB-LIKES

The shrub-like begonias are ideal garden plants. Each of them will form a well shaped and pleasing plant although some will happily grow in a straggling manner, a trait which may be controlled by regular pruning, and many of them are ever-flowering. They benefit from tip pruning in the early stages of growth and pruning for shape as required. They are mostly medium growers in the 30 to 60 cms (1 to 2 feet) range, but a few grow up to a metre (approx 3 feet) tall. Some very suitable shrub-likes for garden use include *Bs. acutifolia* (can be a bit straggly if not pruned regularly, but a wonderful begonia despite that), *cubensis* (a low growing, small leafed type), *listada* (a fabulous semi-shade lover), *venosa* (a sun lover with fascinating felted leaves), *sanguinea* (foliage of deep green with rich red undersides - magnificent!), *fuchsioides* (small leaves and fuchsia like, red flowers), and *foliosa* (the fern leaf begonia, a shade and water lover which looks just right when planted in shade beside a pond). Again I recommend that several of each type be planted in close clumps say 30cms (12 inches) apart to achieve a truly stunning effect in the garden. Keep them pruned to shape as desired, and this may be done at any time without harming the plant, except for *B. sanguinea* which I have found does not like the secateurs and is best left unpruned or only lightly trimmed.

Keep to a practical fertilising program which provides both controlled release fertiliser and dressings of special fertilisers according to the stage of growth (see Chapter 11).

Shrub-likes are reasonably long lived, but it is wise to plan on replacing your garden specimens at, say, five-year intervals. Propagation from tip cuttings is a simple matter but make sure that the cuttings are not too soft as they will quickly rot in the cutting medium.



the shrub-like *B. sanguinea*