



What's It's Name?

Begonia vitifolia

Buxton Branch of the American Begonia
Society

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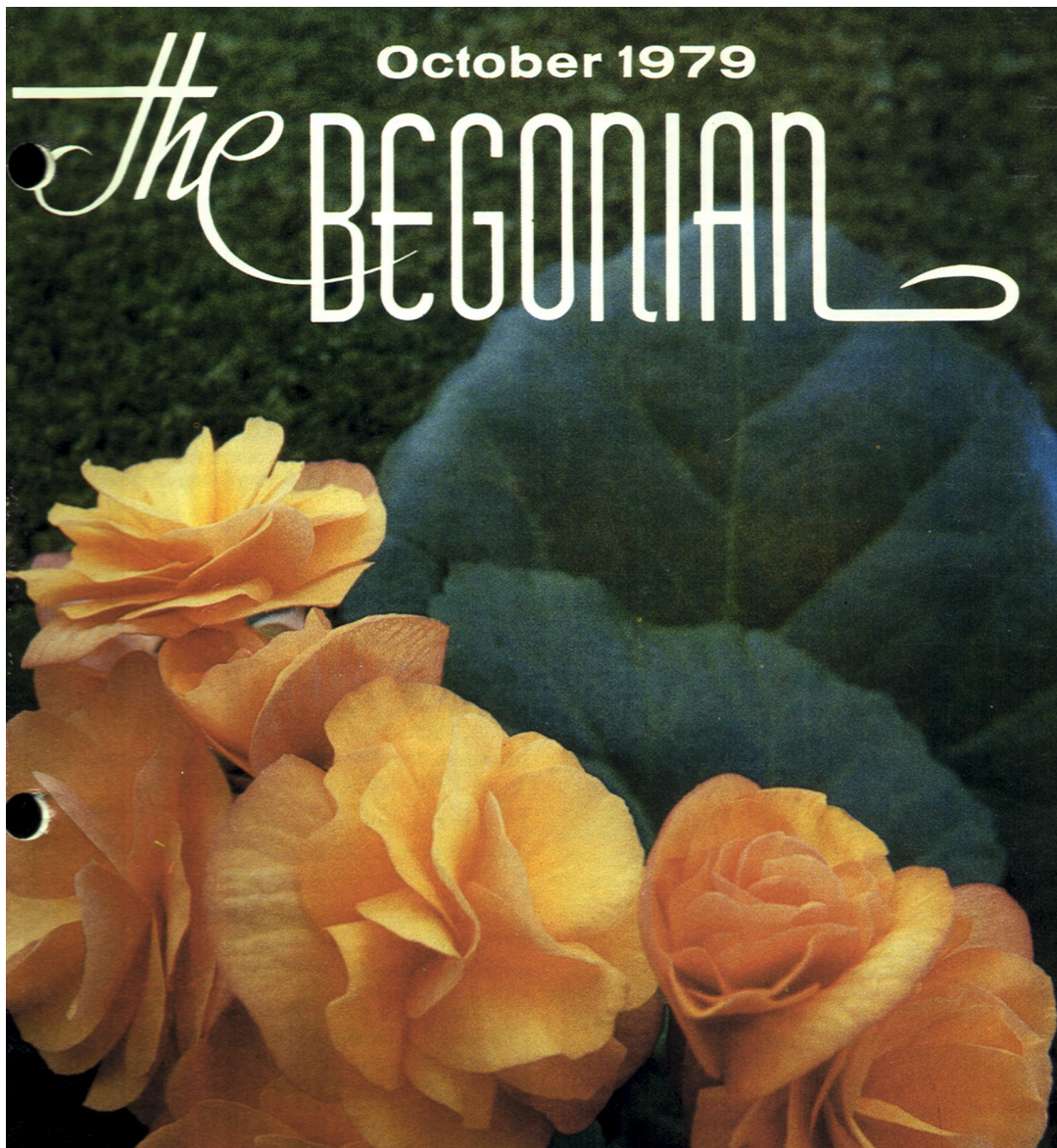
Begonia vitifolia

- Leaves
 - Asymmetrically ovate
 - Deeply lobed
 - Almost visible hairs
- Stipules
 - Large but not persistent
- Petioles
 - terete
- Inflorescences
 - Dichmotous
 - Hundreds of small white flowers
 - Female flowers - 5 tepals
 - Male flowers - 4 tepals
 - Fruit has one large wing
- Stem
 - Thick
 - Can form a small tree

Begonia vitifolia

- First South American begonia to be discovered 1768
- Described in 1791 by Dryander
- Collected by Schott in 1818
- Taxonomy has not been settled
- Thick-stemmed tree-like
- Grows without extra humidity
- Easily propagated by stem cuttings
- Can grow up to 25 feet!





B. vitifolia and other elusive tree-like begonias

J. Doorenbos

Within the genus *Begonia*, differences in growth habit are extreme. On one side we have small, creeping plants (on Madagascar, there are begonias not larger than mosses). On the other hand, there are species which produce a thick trunk like a tree and grow to a height of as much as 12 feet.

In this article I will deal with some species of the latter group, designated in the *Thompson Begonia Guide* as "thick stemmed, (leaves) generally over 6" at maturity." The species to be discussed are from South Africa.

Dr. Jan Doorenbos, one of the world's most highly respected begonia authorities, is a professor in the Department of Horticulture of the Agricultural University, Wageningen, The Netherlands. He is a frequent contributor to The Begonian.

Klotzsch put them in a separate genus, *Wageneria*, but this is no longer recognized.

In our greenhouses these plants, when planted in the ground, grow right up to the roof, giving one the illusion of being in a tropical jungle. Unfortunately, their nomenclature is a jungle, too. So, in two senses, "in the middle of life, I find myself in a dark wood," to cite Dante. In this article, I will try to cut my way through the tangled undergrowth of the nomenclature. I shall talk primarily about *Begonia vitifolia*, but we shall have to go into the identification of other species also.

B. vitifolia was among the species which Heinrich Schott, head of the gardens at Schönbrunn in Vienna, Austria, collected during a trip to Brazil in 1817-18. His discoveries, com-

Begonia vitifolia

Taxonomists

Hooker

Vellozo

Otto and Dietrich

Lindley

De Candolle

Fotsch

Chevalier

Everett

Bessie Buxton

Synonyms

B. reniformis

B. dichomtoma

B. acerifolia

B. palmifolia

B. lindleyana

B. lobulate

B. vitifolia var. *grandis*

Begonia vitifolia

A Final Word

In Tebbitt, M.C. 2005. *Begonias: Cultivation, Identification, and Natural History*. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon.

“A detailed discussion of the tree-like group’s taxonomic complexities appears in Doorenbos, J. (1979) *B. vitifolia* and other Elusive Tree-like Begonias. *Begonian* 46(234-240). However, I must confess to being **more confused** about the identity of these plants after reading this article than I was before.”

Pollen Parent



B. vitifolia or *B. reniformis*

Progeny



B. 'Boomer'

Seed Parent



B. soli-mutata