

Begonias

Begonias are fascinating in their diversity, form and variety. Select the best varieties for your situations with help from our growing tips.

Fibrous or Wax Begonias

These begonias have fine hair-like or fibrous root systems. They are the most commonly used begonia types, as they excel as bedding plants. Their foliage is very shiny or “waxy” and is crowned all summer with clusters of many small flowers in shades of red, pink, white and bi-colors. Although often grown in the shade, their true leaf beauty is most apparent in part sun, when bright light brings out the red and bronze coloration. They are drought tolerant, easy to care for plants. If growing begonias in the shade, take care to water them early in the day so that the foliage is dried by night. Stem rot can result from excess moisture held next to the stem by the closely packed leaves.

Tuberous Begonias

These begonias are spectacular, shade-dwelling flowering plants. They are available as either started plants or dormant tubers. Tuberous begonias are available in a fantastic selection of pastels, vibrant ruby shades, and even bi-color. They lend themselves to pot or basket culture.

Pot the tubers in a rich, well-drained soil. Keep them fed consistently. Locate them in a spot where they get no harsh afternoon sun. The soil should be kept moist, then allowed to dry just slightly before the next watering.

If you started your begonias from tubers, you may keep them over the winter. Gradually reduce the amount of water in the fall and allow the plants to go dormant. Unpot the tubers and store them in a bag of dry peat moss or vermiculite in a cool, dry place at 40° to 50°. In early spring, bring the tubers out of dormancy and start them growing by placing them in pots of fresh soil. Moisten the soil thoroughly and press the tuber, with the concave side up, into the soil so that it is just visible.

If you buy one of the new hybrid seed-grown tuberous types, like the “non-stop” or “Clips” varieties, you may have a tuber large enough to save if you have followed the directions for consistent feeding and watering. Follow the directions above for inducing dormancy.

Sunlight:

2-5 hours, east or west exposures

Water:

Allow soil to dry between thorough waterings

Fertilizer:

Once a month with 15-30-15 or every fifth watering

Rhizomatous Begonias

These begonias are prized for their foliage. Rex begonias are the most popular examples of rhizomatous begonias. Their beautiful markings seem luminous in the light. These begonias need bright light with 2-5 hours of direct sun (indoors or out). Allow the soil to dry slightly between thorough waterings. Keep plants consistently fertilized. They do well in a shady spot in containers over the summer. These begonias can be very long lived, surviving for years with proper care. Most have pretty, soft pink flowers for several weeks out of the year. Rex begonias also grow well under fluorescent lights.