



Unique Garden Centre

TUBEROUS BEGONIAS



Tuberous Begonias are the spectacular superstars of the summer shade garden. Gardeners love them for their magnificent range of exotic flower shapes, brilliant colors and intense quantity of blooms. Even if you are growing begonias for the first time, there is nothing secret or tricky about the task at hand.

They thrive on warm, not hot, days with cool moist nights and protection from hot dry winds and may be grown from seed, tubers or cuttings. Experience is needed to grown from seed, so the novice should begin with tubers. Begonia tubers can be started indoors from late February to late March. Using 4" deep boxes with a moist mix of 1 part vermiculite, 1 part peat moss, 1 part perlite and 2 parts coarse compost, place the tubers concave (hollowed) side up, flush with the surface. Keep the mix moist, between 18-24 degrees Celsius, until 4 to 6 leaves show for each plant. At this stage transfer to the pots carefully, maintaining as much soil about the roots as possible. Tubers should be potted into containers which are three time the diameter of the tuber. The soil mix should consist of 6 parts loam, 12 parts peat moss and 2 parts coarse sand or perlite. Set tubers ¼" deep and pack lightly. Keep the plants moist but avoid wetting the leaves. When flower buds first appear, liquid feed at three week intervals with 20-20-20 or fish emulsion fertilizer. Follow manufacturers directions and always moisten soil before feeding.

If a mass flowering effect is desired, do not remove any flower buds and plant them closer together. If you want the largest flowers possible, repot to a larger container to ensure enough room for roots – a larger root ball will produce bigger flowers. Removing the two outer (smaller) buds in each naturally occurring group of three when they appear will encourage the remaining bud to become even larger. When there are not enough branches on the pendula type of begonia, pinch and remove ½ to 1" of the terminal (tip) growth of the main stem and branches.

When all danger of frost is past, move pots outdoors. Select a site that does not give long periods of full sun, dense shade or wind. Leave the plants in the pots for easy watering and feeding, sinking them to their rims and face the points of the leaves in the direction you want the flowers to show. Stake and tie the plants to protect the stems from breaking.

Begonias are susceptible to powdery mildew. You can minimize the chance of this occurring with good air movement about the plants, ensuring the plants have good soil drainage and avoiding excess watering on the leaves. If powdery mildew persists, treat with a fungicide. Check with our staff for the correct product.

Harvest the tubers for winter storage after the first frost damages the foliage. Cure the tuber by taking the potted plant indoors to a cool location (12 – 16 degrees Celsius), gradually withholding water until the stems are dry and separate easily from the tubers. Remove the soil ball from the pot and gently clean the tubers. Cure for ten days in open shallow flats, until they are callous and firm. Dust with a fungicide/ insecticide powder and store almost dry in fine peat moss or vermiculite in a very cool location (2 – 5 degrees Celsius).