

**Latin Name/Genus:** *Begonia*

Family: *Begoniaceae*

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Season:** Warm Season

**Exposure:** Partial shade to full shade

**Zone:** Hardy perennial to Zone 6 (typically grown as an annual)



**Timing:** Although Begonias can be propagated fairly easily, most Begonias can be purchased as seedlings from a nursery (vs. grown from seed). Begonias typically do best with 4-6 hours of sunlight or less, indirectly, and temperatures of at least 18°C (65°F), so ensure they aren't planted or moved outdoors until a bit later in the spring.

**Starting:** Begonias like peat-based soils with plenty of organic matter, however basic potting mixes such as those used for African violets will also work well. As Begonias are tropical plants, choosing the best type of Begonia for the environment is important; fibrous and rhizomatous Begonias are best suited for growing indoors, while hardy and tuberous Begonias are typically grown outdoors, either in the ground as annuals, or in containers to be brought indoors over winter. Choose a spot out of the wind, and out of direct sunlight for your Begonias, whether they are potted or not.

**Growing:** Begonias grow best in porous, rich, slightly-acidic soil with a pH between 5.7-6.2; ensure soil is well-drained. Water Begonias thoroughly once per week, waiting until the top centimetre or so of soil is dry before watering again; avoid overwatering as this can cause root rot. Lighting preferences vary between the different types of Begonias: tuberous Begonias in containers require little sunlight, so partial sun is fine; fibrous or wax Begonias planted in the garden will flower constantly in shade or partial shade – too much sunlight might wilt petals or cause petal colour to fade. Indoor Begonias do best in indirect light. Fibrous Begonias planted in the garden should survive cool later summer evenings, but will go dormant once it gets colder, however, most cultivars of Begonias like some humidity (just less than 50%), so if bringing inside over winter, ensure they have humid surroundings, and a consistent temperature range between 18 and 21°C (65 and 70°F) for optimal growth. For potted Begonias, they will occasionally need to be repotted once the tubers or rhizomes outgrow their containers by gently lifting the roots or tubers and transplanting into a larger pot with fresh potting soil, then water lightly.

**Nutrient Preferences:** Nutrient needs vary depending on the type of Begonia: tuberous Begonias are hearty feeders, thriving from a nitrogen-heavy fertilizer (ie. fish emulsion) applied twice per month during the blooming stage; hardy Begonias appreciate a mix of diluted fertilizers with peat moss or compost applied sparingly; and rhizomatous Begonias grown indoors enjoy basic water-soluble fertilizer mixed at half strength or less applied to damp soil in spring to promote blooms – never apply fertilizer when soil is dry.



## Begonia

### *Plant Care Information*

**Blooms:** Begonias tend to constantly bloom as long as their environment is optimal (shade and irrigation), they are fertilized regularly (lightly, using diluted liquid fertilizer), and are deadheaded regularly; if blooms are wilting or turning brown, it may be an indicator that your Begonias are receiving too much bright sunlight.

**Disease & Pests:** Begonias aren't usually bothered by disease or pests, however, root rot can occur from overwatering, as can powdery mildew and stem rot. Common pests that can affect Begonias include mealy bugs, spider mites, snails and slugs – remove these by hand or use a gentle spray from the hose, or insecticidal soap if necessary.

**Companion Planting:** Begonias like neighbouring with black mondo grass, Boston ferns, caladium, calibrachoa, coleus, dusty miller, fiber optic grass, impatiens, lobelia, moneywort, nemesia, Persian shield, petunias, silver nickel vine, St John's wort, torenia, verbena, and yellow corydalis.