

MOLES SEEDS

Begonia (Tuberous)

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ051

Begonia tuberous types have large, generally double blooms in a much wider colour range. They are used for formal bedding, Summer pot plant sales, and in hanging baskets. Their weather tolerance is excellent and in Winter will form tubers to survive the Winter once the foliage dies off, but are generally grown as annuals.

They are grown the same as for semperflorens, except have a much earlier sowing time (December-January) as they can take 20 weeks sowing to flowering.

Retail Sales

Sell in 4 packs and 10cm pots. They are versatile, tolerant of rainy weather, long flowering season so ideal for bedding, baskets and containers.

Variety Selection

Nonstop (one of our best sellers) is the standard bedding series, as well as the 'On Top' series. Both are also grown as pot plants.

Another best seller, the Illumination Series, is probably the best trailing Begonia, with a true cascading habit and an abundance of 5cm double flowers that spill over baskets and window boxes in a spectacular display of colour.

Programming the Crop

Sow tuberous varieties in December-early January, for sales late May-July.

Propagation and Growing-on

Annual. Sow the very fine seeds (70,000 per gram) onto the surface of a free-draining, open, seed sowing compost, which should be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain.

Seed can be mixed with a little silver sand to make even sowing easier. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Pelleted seed is available for sowing into plug trays; this allows easier sowing and placement of the seed – full details in the catalogue. Light will improve germination (10 hours at 10 ftc (108 lux) is sufficient). Germination takes 2-3 weeks at 22-24°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

After around 5 weeks the temperature can be reduced to around 18-20°C. Growth is very slow in the early stages, and supplementary lighting rigs are advisable to provide 'assimilation lighting' for more rapid early growth, particularly with these earlier-sown tuberous varieties.

Where the day length is shorter than 12 hours, young tuberous begonias will begin to form little tubers, which slows growth, so use the lights to extend the day length, or to interrupt the night period for a few hours.

After around seven to eight weeks, they should be large enough to handle and moved on into large cell trays, then grown on for around six weeks before being planted into 10cm pots, or 4-pack trays for bedding sales, or into baskets where required.

Growth regulators can be used (according to the manufacturers' guidelines) on Begonias to ensure a compact habit where required for pack production

Pest and Disease

Maintain good air movement through the crop, and water in the morning rather than the evening to keep the foliage dry and lessen attack by Botrytis. Pay good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean bench tops to avoid damping-off diseases, and check for the presence of pests such as aphids, whitefly, spider mites and thrips, spraying accordingly. Powdery Mildew may affect the crop – monitor for white patches on leaves. Do not over-water the crop.

Information provided for guidance only, a s c ultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.

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