

Begonia



BEGONIA X HIEMALIS
RIEGER BEGONIA
'CHARISMA SCARLET'

SHELF LIFE

Flowers may last from five to seven days, but the plants can bloom and last for many months with proper care. Only a few flowers are generally open at any given time per plant.

BOTANICAL NAMES

Begonia X hiemalis (syn. *B. X elatior*), *Begonia X semperflorens*, *Begonia X tuberhybrida* (bay-GO-nee-a hi-e-MAH-lis, sem-per-FLOR-ens, tu-ber-HY-brid-a)

COMMON NAMES

Winter-flowering *Begonia*, Rieger *Begonia*, Wax *Begonia*, Tuberous *Begonia*

DESCRIPTION

Begonias are grown for their foliage and their attractive flowers. They often are used as bedding plants and indoor or outdoor blooming plants. Many *Begonias* have separate male and female flowers. Most of the cultivars in commercial production are complex hybrids of several species. See below left for descriptions of three important groups of commercial *Begonias*.

COLORS

Begonia blossoms range greatly in color including yellows, oranges, pinks, whites and reds. Leaf colors include silver, gray, purple, green, red-brown and bronze.



BEGONIA X TUBERHYBRIDA
TUBEROUS BEGONIA
'NON-STOP ORANGE'

THREE GROUPS

Three main groups of flowering *Begonias* are frequently marketed by the floral industry:

WINTER-FLOWERING, OR RIEGER, BEGONIAS (*B. X hiemalis*) A cross between tuberous and wax *Begonias*, these perennials have large glossy leaves and double or single flowers that come in pink, purple, red, orange, yellow, peach and white. They do well in bright indirect light.

WAX BEGONIAS (*B. X semperflorens*) Grown mostly as annuals, wax *Begonias* are popular for hardiness and continuous flowering throughout the summer. These *Begonias* can be grown in full sun or partial shade. Some varieties have bronze foliage. They also withstand drought and heat better than other *Begonias*.

TUBEROUS BEGONIAS (*B. X tuberhybrida*) These often are used in hanging baskets and are known for their brilliant, large flowers. Tuberous *Begonias* grow best in partial shade. The plants need frequent watering and light fertilizing, but excess of either causes flower bud drop. There are upright or trailing varieties of tuberous *Begonias*.

fun facts

MEANING The "X" in a botanical name means that the plant is a cross between at least two species in the same genus, and in the case of *Begonias*, crosses of many species. The species name "*sempervlorens*" means "ever flowering." "*Hiemalis*" means "of the Himalayan."

FAMILY *Begonias* belong to the *Begoniaceae* family. They are native to many parts of the world but were originally discovered in the tropics and subtropics of the Americas. Many are from the Himalayas.

HISTORY *Begonias* were named for Michel Bégon (1638-1710), who was appointed by French King Louis XIV to make Rochefort the most beautiful arsenal city of the times. Mr. Bégon wrote to collectors and scientists around the entire world, especially the French colonies of the West Indies and the French islands of the Americas, where he served in 1682. Mr. Bégon sent two scientists to study the flora of West India. In 1689, one of them, Charles Plumier, a monk, described a little plant with succulent leaves and round flowers that he named "*Begonia rosea flore, folio orbiculate*" in honor of Mr. Bégon. Today, Rochefort's *Begonia* Conservatory carries on the work of Michel Bégon, seeking to increase its large collection of *Begonias*.

ALLERGY FREE The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology lists this species as an allergy-safe pollen producing plant.

Continued on Page 24

blooming plant of the month

Continued from Page 22

AVAILABILITY

Rieger *Begonias* are available year-round. Wax and tuberous *Begonias* are more available in the spring and summer.

IN-STORE CARE

WATER Do not overwater the plants because leaf and bud drop can result.

LIGHT Plants do best at 50 to 300 foot-candles. Flower stalks elongate and flower color will fade under low light conditions.

STORAGE *Begonias* are chill sensitive. They should be stored above 55 F but can be shipped at 50 F for up to three days without harm.

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Begonias* are sensitive to ethylene gas. Check with your suppliers to make sure their crops have been treated with an ethylene inhibitor at the farm or during transportation.

consumer care tips

WATER Keep the soil moist at all times. Avoid standing water in the pots and on foliage. It is best to water by submerging the pots in a basin of water or add water into the drain saucer. Watering indirectly will avoid rotting the stem and leaves.

LIGHT Most *Begonias* grow well in partial shade, but, in general, they need bright light to flower well. *Begonia* leaves are delicate, so treat plants carefully, and do not use leaf shine or other sprays on the foliage. Turn pots regularly to ensure even growth because the plants tend to grow toward the light.

TEMPERATURE Keep *Begonias* in rooms that are kept at a constant temperature. Fluctuating day and night temperatures damage the flower buds.

HUMIDITY Moderate humidity is required for all types of *Begonias*.

FERTILIZER *Begonias* are not heavy feeders, so fertilizer should be applied in moderation. There are specialty fertilizers for *Begonias*. Follow the directions on the package labels in all cases.

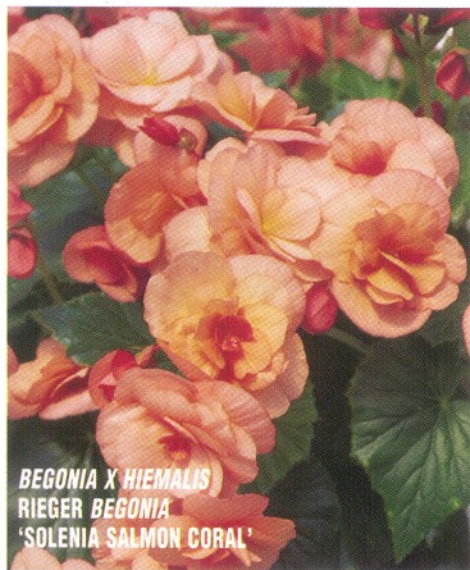
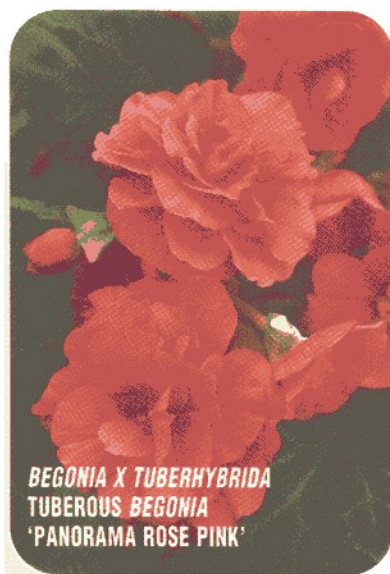
SOIL *Begonias* should be planted in well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter.

GROOMING *Begonias* can grow leggy and should be replaced with fresh flowering stock or cut back to encourage new growth. **sfr**

quality checklist

BLOOMS Remove faded florets from the stems. Don't accept plants that show signs of wilt, rot, mold or yellowing.

PESTS AND DISEASES Disease problems associated with *Begonias* include *Botrytis* blight and stem rot, powdery mildew, and *Pythium* root and stem rot. The major pests of *Begonias* are mealy bugs, spider mites, scales, snails and slugs.



Some information provided by:
Chain of Life Network, www.chainoflifenetWORK.org
SAF's Flower & Plant Care manual

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