



BEGONIA SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Growing Begonias

Info. Sheet 1

Pruning and Re-potting

Depending on how many plants one has, this can be quite a chore; but if the grower has an adequate supply of potting mix, a range of clean pots and prepared propagating mix, the task is easier, because a few plants can be tackled when time and/or weather allow.

It is a time for growers to closely examine their plants. The shape, health and vigour of foliage, new and potential basal shoots and, most importantly; the condition of the root system.

Cuttings or seedlings which were potted up late last season may not need any attention. If they are looking good and putting forth new growth, they can be left as is until they need re-potting and perhaps, tip-pruning. If they seem reluctant to grow, fresh mix may solve the problem.

Most of the rhizomatous and spring-flowering trailers are pruned/re-potted when they finish blooming - about November.

SHAPE

This is your choice. The intermediate canes (Bs. Mandarin, Orange Rubra, Lois Burk etc.) and many shrub-likes lend themselves to a low-growing bushy style. Very suitable for a hanging container or squat pot. The bonus being that there is no, or very little staking needed. Severe pruning and early pinching is required to achieve this shape and to force out lower growths to cover the container rim and balance the shape of the plant.

The tall-growing elegant canes should be well pruned and stems staked early so they can be trained into a classical shape.

We sometimes lose Begonias because of unsuitable mix, saline or contaminated water, wrong environment or over-fertilising, but it would be very rare for a plant to die because it was pruned. Be adventurous and have a go. Remove all large leaves, ugly, diseased or spindly growths to give a good view of the plant. Now prune the remaining stems. You may not achieve the shape you desire first off, but experience is a great teacher.

ROOT SYSTEM

Healthy mature plants from last season should have filled the pots with roots. There will be little excess mix and the roots will be a healthy brown, showing cream growing tips. If the plant is to be placed into a larger pot, the sides and base of the root-ball can be lightly teased to encourage the roots to grow into the new mix. When the plant's size needs reducing so that it will fit back into the same sized pot, the root-ball can be reduced or the plant divided. The old mix should be teased or washed away and a third or even half of the old roots removed. This will stimulate fresh root growth, just as stem-pruning does to the plant. The smaller root-ball will enable the plant to be placed deeper into the mix than previously. Always being careful not to damage any emerging basal shoots.

On the other hand, if the exposed roots are very dark, with few, if any, fresh growing tips and there is excess boggy mix, drastic action is needed. Wash the roots clean of the old mix and prune back depending on how large the root system is. The top growth will need to be pruned to compensate for the loss of roots, so that the new root system will have less foliage to service. Plant into a fresh proven mix with extra Perlite to allow more air-spaces for the emerging roots. Do not fertilise until fresh foliage growth indicates that the new root system is functioning.

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