



BEGONIA SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Growing Begonias

Info. Sheet 7

Staking and Training

Staking, training and tying the taller growing Begonias is so important. If we are lucky, the stems will grow in just the right position and will only need supporting, but sometimes they are difficult. Two or three stems may grow close together, leaving open, bare spaces while some stems decide to grow horizontally. This can be remedied by GRADUALLY forcing the stem into a more desired position.

Insert a strong stake into the soil at the base of the problem stem, on an angle so that the top of the stake is approximately where the preferred position of the stem would be. Using long ties gently pull the stem into position. Check weekly and hopefully the ties can be shortened until the stem is naturally growing up the stake.

Depending on the length, diameter and type of stem it may have to be tied every ten to twelve centimetres to properly support it. Use the green tie-wire and always have the 'knot' towards the centre of the plant.

Staking should always be as inconspicuous as is possible. The large stemmed, tall-growing canes will require fairly strong stakes to support the weight of large leaves and blossom. When put in situ the stake should be considerably longer than the stem so that the stem can be tied as it grows.

Most bamboo stakes are tapered and the thinner end should always be uppermost. A few days before the Show, if necessary, this upper piece of the stake can be cut off just below the top set of leaves, giving the stem good support without the stake showing above the foliage. For smaller plants with slimmer stems there are finer bamboo stakes about 60 to 70 cm long which are ideal.

Unfortunately many of the green coloured bamboo stakes will lose their colour quite rapidly and a cream stake is very obvious. The solution is to give the stakes a coating of green paint before using. Preferably, a suitable green.

This staking and tying is not a job to be left until the last week or so. A hastily staked and tied stem is usually obvious and sometimes incongruous. While checking, staking and tying also remove old, tatty leaves and blossom.

Keep a check on the dwarf canes, shrublikes and semps. No matter how healthy and nice, a ten centimetre stem poking out of a plant does not add to its beauty. If removed now, new growth will soon fill the space. Blossom is soon spoiled during the hot weather and will not recover, so should be removed. If the flowering stem is cut back to a growing tip it will re-grow and bloom during the cooler Autumn weather, when the blossoms will remain lovely for a longer period.

TUBEROUS

Check the ties on the fleshy stems. Tuberos are inclined to have bursts of growth and a stem can be 'ring-barked' while your back is turned.

Spray preventively for Begonia mite. 20 mls of Pestoil to 1 ltr of water, saturating all growing tips. Use Pestoil ONLY when the forecast temperature is less than 30 degrees. (If that happens). Remove all flower buds until the plants are in their final pots --15cm, 20cm

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