

### **Sun and Shade**

Most begonias like a high light level. Very many of them, when garden-grown, welcome, or at least tolerate, some direct sun at some time during the day. More sun is better than less. If unsure, go for the better lit location. Very dark foliage will lose its colour in bright light - locate these begonias in shade.

Indoor potted begonias benefit greatly by regular exposure to the out-of-doors.

### **Water**

The admonition not to over-water begonias is right for indoor grown ones, but in the open garden they will, and indeed must, accept all that nature provides – but it is so important that the garden beds be well drained. Over-watering is not the same as being waterlogged. Begonia foliage will go a shade or two paler when watering is necessary. For indoor grown potted begonias allow the surface of the mix to dry out between waterings - then water well when you do. Never allow potted begonias to stand in water.

### **Soil**

Begonias are not too fussy as to the type of garden soil they are grown in provided it is well drained and the pH is within acceptable limits, but do enrich garden beds with annual applications of good compost. Pot-grown begonias must have an open and free draining potting mix.

### **pH**

Try to regulate the pH of all growing media to around 5.5 to 6. Check annually as regular use of non-organic fertiliser will, over-time, change it. This particularly applies to potted plants and I recommend re-potting these every two years into new mix.

### **Fertilising**

Begonias are hungry plants. They are fast growing succulents and semi-succulents and a correct feeding program is most important. This is particularly so with pot-grown specimens as modern potting mixes are not good at holding nutrients. When garden planting we add a ration of controlled-release to each planting hole.

### **Pruning**

In order to keep begonias looking spectacular it is important to prune as required to maintain a pleasing shape and plant size. Never hesitate to use those secateurs – especially on the shrub-likes!

### **Temperature**

Although Begonias come from tropical and semi-tropical areas, the natural habitats of very many of them are in the cooler high country. Rule of thumb is that if you are comfortable then your begonias will be too. This is especially true of indoor grown begonias.