

**Tuberous** (arguably the most beautiful of all flowers), and **Semi-tuberous** (mostly from South Africa), included in the one grouping as growth habits are somewhat similar.

And I add a ninth group, **Elatior**, which are basically semi-tuberous cultivars which have been specially developed for indoor use, which flower in all seasons and are called variously Hiemalis, Cheimantha or Elatior.

### **Recognition**

Begonias are readily recognisable by two characteristics:

1. The leaves are mostly asymmetric, and
2. each plant carries both male and female flowers, with the female having a prominent three winged ovary behind the flower. The flowers, except for the double flowered tuberous, have two to four tepals and yellow stamens and anthers. (There are, as usual, some exceptions to this general rule)

### **Life expectancy**

Begonias, like all garden plants, eventually 'wear out' and need replacing. Some of course are longer lived than others and it is necessary to be aware of this 'life' when planning a replacement programme. I have given in each of the following sections an indication of the life expectancy of each group within the begonia family so that you will be sure to have new plants ready for the garden when the old ones retire. These suggested times are merely advisory but it's a good thing to have a start point when planning anything and I know that as your experience increases you will come to know exactly for how long each begonia in your collection will grow at its best.