

<p style="text-align: center;">PART 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PLANTING AND</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROBLEM SOLVING</p>

CHAPTER 8

PREPARING TO PLANT

The Garden Bed

Beauty is most often achieved only through hard work, as with the world's great works of art, grand monuments and imposing buildings. So too with gardens - work is needed to prepare the beds, and to plant, cultivate, feed, pamper and prune the plants. Begonias are no exception and before you reap the promised riches you must prepare the growing areas; not that begonias are so very fussy for I have seen them growing equally as well in heavy clay and sandy loam, in the well mulched and tended beds of the Royal Botanic Gardens and in the somewhat neglected gardens of those of us who have reached an age where hard physical work is just no longer possible. However, there can be no doubt that the better the preparation of the garden bed the better will the begonias grow.

Most prefer locations which are semi-shaded and provision must be made to provide this. A natural tree canopy is of course the most desirable, and suitable trees should be planted if not already existing. If this cover is not immediately available, or whilst waiting for trees to grow, a temporary canopy can be readily provided using shade cloth of 50% to 75% rating. Many, however, such as the cane-likes, prefer long periods of sunshine each day.

It is desirable first and foremost that, no matter the type of soil, the garden bed be well drained. Begonias abhor wet feet; come to think of it, what plants do not except waterlilies and rice? Neglect them if you must, forget on occasions to water them or feed them, but never let them stand in waterlogged growing media. The best and most effective way to achieve a well drained garden is to raise the beds, using borders if necessary, but simple heaping up of the bed is usually sufficient. Difficult gardens may require a drainage system which is in most cases a relatively simple task but one accomplished only with that hard