

## CHAPTER 9

### A PLANTING GUIDE -

### MANY HINTS WHICH MAY BE OF USE.

#### **Location, location!**

Begonias are infinitely variable and come from many diverse regions of the world, so it is to be expected that they will grow in many different locations, and deciding just where to plant a particular one is often not easy. The general rule is that the lighter the leaf colour the more light will that begonia need or tolerate. This is not an infallible guide however, and you would be well advised to experiment to find the right spot for each plant. This is best done with the begonia still in its pot by placing it where you want it to grow and seeing how it tolerates that position. The begonia will soon let you know if it's not happy there. This is of course not only applicable to begonias – a similar search for the ideal location should be made for any plant new to your garden.

A great many begonias will tolerate and in fact benefit from some direct sun with morning exposure being less severe and therefore preferable. If a begonia is growing tall and lanky it may be that it requires more sunlight. I have often been surprised at the amount of sunlight many begonias need for I have always had it emphasised to me that they are succulents and as such need lots of shade. This is not so in very many cases.

In areas prone to frost begonias can be grown to advantage in containers which can be put under cover during winter. All the cover generally needed can be provided by a shade house, and I have seen huge tubs of bedding begonias (*semperflorens*) growing in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales where the protection of several conifers was sufficient to give the necessary protection from frost. I have also seen cane-like begonias growing in open gardens at Tamworth, an inland town subject to quite heavy frosts, where the growers quite happily informed me that, although their begonias lost leaves in winter this did not kill them, and when the frosts nipped off the top half of the plant this merely saved them the trouble of pruning! Severe frosts however will kill begonias and winter protection is essential in those areas.

#### **Hot and Dry?**

Begonias need humidity, the ideal being in the order of 60%. They will however tolerate a wide range above and below this and still perform extremely well. I have seen them growing in many inland areas where the grower has provided local humidity, often in the form of dampened sawdust floors in shade