

houses or other growing areas. Water features such as ponds and waterfalls will also suffice to keep begonias planted nearby happy. Pot growing in dry areas is certainly possible by standing the pots over water in, for example, pebble filled trays or saucers of water that prevent 'wet feet'. Glass and shade houses can have humidity levels raised in hot conditions by the use of a simple evaporative type cooler where air is passed through water saturated straw.

I have found that begonias will tolerate a wide range of temperatures, being unaffected by frequent winter lows down to 5° C and highs up to 30° C. Outside these extremes it is necessary to provide heating or cooling as appropriate which of course means the provision of indoor growing conditions in some type of conservatory. However, as I have already observed, begonias are the most amazing plants and have the ability to acclimatise quite readily to local conditions. Experimentation is the way to go - try them out and be as astonished as I have been on so many occasions! Start with some of those which I describe in Annex A as they are all hardy and easy to grow, and go on from there.

Plant them close

Gregarious - *adj.* 1. *fond of company.* 2. *living in flocks or communities.* 3. *growing together in clusters.* (Concise Oxford Dictionary): a description wholly applicable to begonias. In their natural state begonias live in small communities and very few of them have shown an ability to spread beyond these confines; so too in cultivation I have found that begonias do best when planted in clusters. This is especially so with the semperflorens, those wonderfully useful bedding begonias which come in shades of pink and red and white with green or bronze foliage and are used to such good effect in many public plantings. Plant them singly and the result is poor, but plant a dozen or more in a mass and the results can be spectacular. All the other begonias, except the tuberous types which do well in single pots, also seem to do better when planted in company and I recommend that for garden use three at least of any variety be planted as a group for the very best results. All our plantings in the Royal Botanic Gardens have been done in this manner. It is often also preferable for pot culture to plant two or three of any one species or hybrid together or indeed to mix them with several types in the one container.

Seaside locations

I have seen begonias thriving in an open garden on the Central Coast of New South Wales within two hundred metres of an ocean beach where salt spray does not reach them, however I cannot from experience vouch for their behaviour in seaside locations where salt spray is a problem. I suspect that they