

unsightly), and don't tie it too tightly as the stem will expand rapidly during initial growth. Florists' tape is particularly useful for tying tender young begonias - it stretches and is self adhering. To use it, take a piece of suitable length, stretch slightly and pass around stake and stem then twist the ends together. The tape will stretch as the stem grows and will fall away after several months. Florists' tape is readily available from wholesale and retail haberdashers and your local florist may oblige with a roll which will last a long time. Keep a watch on any staked begonias to make sure that the tie is not cutting into the plant stem. Remove the stake as soon as the natural growth is strong enough to support itself. Be extremely careful if staking *B. luxurians* in particular as it, like many begonias, has a brittle stem which will snap if tied at the base only with the top part free to sway in the wind.

Some of the ground covers (the trailing/scandent group) can be trained very successfully as climbers, and *B. convolvulacea* in particular makes a wonderful trellis cover; however it has no natural means of self-support and must be woven through its support and tied as necessary.

The tuberous begonias always need staking and the blooms, which can be up to 15 cms (6 inches) across or larger, also need support in the form of a specially made wire stake. Be most careful when inserting stakes near the base of the plant as it is quite easy to damage the tuber.



*B. luxurians*