

What Begonia was that?

'*I'll remember that*' is an often used and seldom realised vow, but it is nice to be able to tell enquiring visitors the names of those beautiful plants in your garden. So, write the names down as soon as you plant them and in such a fashion that you can readily connect the name to the plant. This may entail a simple plan of the garden with plant locations clearly shown or some sort of plant labelling system that doesn't spoil the look of the garden. The use of aluminium tags buried next to the plant and loosely wired to it, together with permanent and attractive labels in the garden itself, is the system in use in the Royal Botanic Gardens and is mostly successful. However, it is strange how often those visible labels are moved by unthinking visitors.

Potted plants also need to be named and one good idea is to put a plastic label in the bottom of the pot before potting up, together with a label in the top of the pot. The top label is easily accessible but also easily lost and when this occurs it is a simple matter to refer to the buried label. Larger pots and tubs are more difficult to label permanently but I'm sure that any gardener can solve the problem.

If using plastic labels for plant names, especially in the open garden, it is best to use an ordinary soft lead pencil rather than a felt tipped pen. I have found that the pencil marking will last much longer.

Effect of light and temperature

The amount and intensity of light, and in some cases temperature, to which begonias are subjected has a marked effect on both leaf and flower colour. Black and very dark green foliage will, if exposed to too much light, fade to a lighter shade, often blotchy and unattractive. It is also apparent with some begonias that high temperatures seem to fade leaf colour, particularly in the Rex begonias. Conversely, the higher the light level, within reason, the brighter will be the colour of the flowers irrespective of the temperature (always remembering that many begonias will not tolerate high light levels). This is markedly so in the case of *B. acutifolia*, an ever-blooming shrub-like, which produces white flowers when grown in full shade but whose flowers become pink tinged in stronger light. When grown in full sun this pink tinge is so intense as to give the appearance of almost totally pink flowers. Again it is important to experiment until the ideal location is found for any particular begonia. This effect of light can lead to some confusion in plant recognition as a plant that according to the references has white flowers just cannot be that plant you are growing which has pink flowers! In fact, flower colour is the least significant factor in begonia recognition.