

I have found the ideal for our courtyard is a beautiful South American species, *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, whose delicate foliage provides just the right degree of shade in the hot summer months and which sheds its leaves so that I, and my many begonias and other plants, can enjoy the winter sun. There are alternatives, of course, and I recall one large garden area in a Queensland semi-tropical region totally covered with shadecloth to provide the required micro-climate for the many begonias grown there. Whilst your tree is growing it is possible to erect a temporary structure such as a shadecloth tent to protect the more delicate of your plantings, an alternative that with the available range of such items is both attractive and useful.

Courtyard gardening should be a mix of permanent plantings and plants in pots and tubs, so that the layout can be changed according to the seasons with those plants in flower having pride of place to show themselves off. Begonias are ideally suited to this type of gardening. Grow several of the cane-likes in large, mobile tubs as feature plants and group smaller pots of shrub-likes around them. Plant several wide but shallow tubs with bedding begonias at different times of the year so that one at least is always in bloom, thus ensuring a splash of brilliant colour no matter the season (prune them close to the roots when they become too leggy and they will go on and bloom again as perfect plants). Try pots of *B. acutifolia* for all year round flowering, fill hanging baskets with *Bs. listada*, *radicans*, *foliosa* or *convolvulacea* for delightful display plants on wall or trellis, plant pots and baskets with maiden hair and other ferns which will soften the display and add a pleasing contrast. Most of the rhizomatous begonias make great feature plants for the courtyard - try a tub of *B. 'Red Dragon'* for a dramatic effect, or use *B. 'Cleopatra'* for a beautiful year round foliage display. Let the eye wander over the list in Appendix A to select other suitable begonias for your requirements, but above all have lots and lots of begonias, both in the ground and in pots and tubs. You needn't, however, be as one-eyed as I - have a mix of plant types to suit your wishes, but do include begonias amongst them.

Many of the above mentioned begonias will also do extremely well on balconies and verandahs and here we can add tuberous and Elatioris to the list. And don't forget those window boxes - ideal places to feature begonias, with the smaller shrub-likes such as *B. cubensis* being ideal for this application.

Above all, have a living, breathing, beautiful garden, be it ever so small, in which you can get your hands dirty when you're so inclined!