

grow and not spoil the look of the plant. Tips may of course also be pruned and the topmost node should produce a new shoot to continue the upward growth of the stem.

The care of begonias throughout their growing season includes the removal of discoloured or diseased leaves and dead stems and branches and general tidying up to keep them looking their best.

Repotting

Begonias grown in pots, tubs, baskets or window boxes need to be repotted regularly and it is suggested that this is best done every second year. Generally the best time to repot is after flowering, or in the spring, so that new growth will quickly establish the plant in its new container. The reasons for repotting are twofold - on the one hand the modern potting mixes 'wear out' rather quickly with the mulch content breaking down to such an extent that it no longer does its job, and on the other hand the begonia itself may have outgrown the container so that it needs more room for its roots and better support for the plant itself. This is especially so in the case of cane-like begonias which need enough space to ensure that new growth from the root system has room to develop.

Turn the begonia out of its old container and remove as much of the mix as possible without damaging the root system. Begonias in small pots will need to go into one size larger at least to accommodate the roots but those in large pots or tubs may be repotted into the same container by trimming the root system so as to fit with room to spare. The plant needs to be firmed into its new mix but not heavily tamped down, and then watered in. Top up the mix if watering causes it to subside.

The rhizomatous types need special attention when repotted. If they have grown well beyond the edges of their old pots the growing tips should be removed and used as cuttings to produce a new pot of begonias. Quite often the remainder of the plant after this tip pruning should be discarded if the rhizomes are very old and worn out at the original start point, for rhizomes grow at the tip and die back at the rear. Use several of these tip cuttings to each new pot and plant them around the outer edge, facing inwards, so that they will grow across the pot towards the opposite side. When they reach that point their tips should be removed to encourage lateral growth. A well filled pot of begonias will result.