

begonias (semperflorens), the Rex begonias, some of the rhizomatous group and some of the cane-likes, especially on new-grown stems. Prevention is the best treatment and free circulation of air when growing indoors is essential. There are some very effective semi-systemic preventative fungicide sprays on the market, and these should be applied as soon as the 'mildew season' arrives and before the first sign of mildew attack. Organic methods of combating mildew include dusting with sulphur powder or spraying with wettable sulphur. I have it on good authority that another effective organic treatment is to spray with full cream milk, diluted 9 parts water to 1 part milk, although I have not personally tried this. There is another remedy I have heard of using bi-carbonate of soda diluted at the rate of a teaspoon to a litre of water. These organic treatments may leave a powdery residue on the foliage. Once mildew has taken hold it cannot be removed from leaf surfaces and affected foliage needs to be pruned out to restore the plant's good looks.

### **Botrytis**

This is a greyish mildew which first attacks leaf litter and other dead plant matter, and if not dealt with will spread to living plants. It occurs mostly in potted plants kept indoors or in shade or glass houses. Again prevention is the best cure and to this end it is important to keep the surface of the soil or potting mix clear of all debris and to ensure free circulation of fresh air through the growing area. It can be treated with a suitable fungicide or by the use of organics such as sulphur powder or spray as for powdery mildew.

### **Mites and Thrips**

Mites and thrips sometimes attack begonias, especially when they are grown in confined conditions such as shade or glass houses. The indications are leaves curled and crisp and a brownish effect along the main veins on the back of the leaf, whilst the tiny mites can be seen with a good magnifying glass on the backs of the leaves. Two treatments are available - either discard the plants entirely or spray with a suitable chemical which your nursery can recommend. Discarding and destroying the plants, if practicable, is the best way to go and they should be enclosed in a plastic bag and disposed of through the garbage system. Do not put them on the mulch heap.

### **Other Insect Pests**

Begonias, along with most other garden plants, may at times be attacked by aphids and other sucking or chewing insects. The presence of aphids is readily seen because of small black ants which will