



Figure 12

Elatior, Cheimanthus and Hiemalis Begonoias

These may all be propagated using tip cuttings taken from a healthy and strong growing parent plant. Ensure that there are at least three nodes on the cutting and treat as discussed above for tip cuttings.

Care during the rooting process

Begonia cuttings need to be kept in an atmosphere of high humidity during the initial rooting process. This reduces the volume of transpiration needed for the cutting to remain alive and thus keeps it as stress free as possible. It is also desirable to keep the leaf surfaces of cuttings as cool as possible and professional growers do this by putting cuttings in an enclosed space (ie a propagator) equipped with a misting system and a source of bottom heat. As has already been mentioned, the cutting medium also needs to be kept optimally at between 20° to 22°C (68° to 72°F), however temperatures outside this range are often tolerated by begonia cuttings. The home grower will have good success by enclosing the cuttings in a plastic 'tent' (ie a clear plastic bag over a simple wire frame) and keeping the containers in a suitable location out of direct sunlight.

The cutting medium should not be allowed to dry out nor should it become so wet as to encourage rotting of the cuttings. Daily attention is called for during these first critical two weeks.

After the first two weeks fertilising of both leaf and tip cuttings can commence. Use one of the many good complete water solubles (analysis in the order of 20:4:14) which are readily available and apply weekly as a foliar feed using a misting spray. This will encourage and speed up the rooting process. Some growers advise that this initial fertiliser be mixed at a half or even a quarter of the recommended rate but I have never subscribed to this theory. Mix according to the manufacturer's instructions and apply as common sense dictates.