

Semperflorens - The Wax Flowers – border plants

B. ‘Semperflorens-Cultorum’. This is a group name which embraces all the semperflorens cultivars, of which there are a great number. Seed of the most popular is usually available and is probably the best, and certainly the cheapest, way to propagate the number required to make a good display, but seedlings are readily available for most of the year. The semperflorens are often referred to as wax flowers and are best grown *en masse* for the most stunning effect although they are usually used as border plants. Borders look best when the plants are close together and at least three rows deep. They also look wonderfully showy when planted in shallow tubs and window boxes. They come in colours of white, red, various shades of pink and as pink/white bi-colours and with both green and bronze foliage.

The many species from which this group has been developed include the best known *Bs. cucullata* vars *cucullata*, *arenosicola* and *spatulata* and *B. hirtella*.

B. lachaoensis is another excellent border plant, being a low growing shrub-like species. Small mid-green leaves and pinkish white flowers all year make it a valuable garden plant. Needs tip pruning as an ongoing attention to retain shape and bushiness.

Trailing/Scandent Begonias.

B. convolvulacea. A species whose natural home is on the forest floors in Brazil, this begonia can be used with equally stunning effect as a climber, a ground cover or a hanging basket plant. Its small white flowers appear in large panicles from late winter through spring. I have grown this begonia to cover a garden arch some 2 metres tall planting one to each side. Although it has no natural means of attachment such as tendrils, it will twist through a lattice or other support but may need some assistance in the early stages of growth. Use a soft plastic tie such as grafting or florists' tape which will stretch as the stems thicken. It is a rampant grower – do not hesitate to prune hard when necessary.

B. radicans (aka *B. limmingheana*). One of the best for a hanging basket, will produce very long trailers covered with a mass of red flowers in spring. Also makes a good ground cover. Best grown in bright shade with some morning sunshine where possible. Keep well fed and prune to maintain good shape – use tips for propagation.