

APPENDIX D to *'Down to Earth – With Begonias'*

THE THINGS I HAVE LEARNT –
USEFUL FACTS AND TIPS WORTH REMEMBERING

Keep your garden disease free

Vigorously growing plants are able to resist diseases (and pests) so the first and most important part of any garden management plan is to encourage this by correct and timely fertilising, watering, pruning and weeding.

Secondly, isolate all new plants and plant material coming into your garden area until you are sure that they are disease free, and always select strong, healthy looking plants when buying new ones.

Acclimatise

When you buy a plant you would be well advised to ask your nurserymen where it was propagated as this will determine whether it will be immediately happy in your garden. A local product will most often be suitable for immediate planting whereas one from any distance (and this may include imported plants in some countries) may require a period of acclimatisation. Even plants originating just a few kilometres away may come from an entirely different micro-climate to that in your own garden.

Planting

Begonias look best when several are planted together. Plant them closer than you think they should be. Mass planting of the one type is the best way to produce an eye catching garden feature, but bear in mind the size they will achieve at maturity. Always ask your supplier for this important information.

Folklore

As with many things to do with gardening a great volume of folklore has grown up over the years regarding begonias – ‘they are very fussy plants’, ‘must be grown in a glasshouse’, ‘they are all shade lovers’, ‘don’t over-water them’, ‘only for the experts’, ‘won’t grow in the garden’ and so on and so on. Forget all this, ignore it completely and start growing them as garden plants with an open mind! The folklore, most often fallacious, refers to pot-grown specimens in Europe (where it was generated), not to my concept of begonias as landscape plants *par excellence*.