

Tuberous begonia instructions

READ THIS ALL THE WAY THROUGH...TWICE!

Regular and Non-Stop begonia varieties

Tuberous begonias are **not** indoor plants! Plant your begonias outdoors. Use Solenia or Reiger begonias for indoors. Inland areas should use the more heat tolerant non-stop begonias, and buy them as early in the spring as possible. Hot areas: plant lots of ferns, baby tears and other plants to increase humidity. It helps to mist during the heat.

NON-STOP BEGONIAS OR REGULAR GIANT-FLOWERED...WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Non-stops begin to bloom earlier; they also bloom later in the fall. Tuberous Begonias go to sleep (dormant) when the days get shorter and the weather gets colder. If you have outdoor lights that come on each night near your non-stops, they may keep blooming some all winter. Non-stops are easier to grow and are more heat tolerant, they have smaller flowers and leaves but more of them! Non-stops can be used as either semi-baskets or uprights.

Giant-flowered California hybrid types have huge flowers, fancy colors, interesting picotee edges and come in both hanging and upright forms. Giant flowered tuberous begonias **do best in cool coastal areas** in light filtered shade. Both varieties will bloom until late fall.

CARE AND FEEDING

Begonias grow best in a light well-drained humousy soil. If you have the kind of soil that can stub your toes....either plant your begonias in raised beds, large pots, OR improve your soil. Six to eight inches of redwood soil conditioner or other amendments dug into your soil will do wonders. Any good light potting mix is okay for your containers.

If you dug your begonias, be sure to water them lightly as soon as you get home. Put them in the shade until you can plant them (not more than 2 days), and plant them about the same depth that they were growing. Water again after you plant. After that, water your begonias when the soil feels dry to the touch down into the soil a little bit. Keep them moist **BUT NEVER SOGGY WET!** Begonias that were already potted when you bought them are in a lighter soil and will need water more often than the field dug begonias. Watering or misting done before noon will cut down on mildew.

You can begin to fertilize your dug begonias after about 2 weeks. Feed every two weeks for best results. You can use Weidners' 'Good Stuff' mix which they are used to, fish emulsion, or any balanced fertilizer.

MORE INFORMATION

Be sure to stake and tie your begonias. They have very brittle stems and can break very easily. Watch out for powdery mildew and stem rot. Keep a good fungicide on hand and be ready to counter attack. Give your plants a good breezy, airy place with good light to avoid mildew. Stem rot usually comes from too much water. Tuberous begonias like to stay on the dry side, so **don't over water!** The same fungicides will help in both cases, but you must act quickly else it is too late.

Did you know that tuberous begonia blooms are good to eat? Quite sour, but good with fruit yogurt. And, the double flowers are the boys, the single flowers are girls. Usually 2 girls for 1 boy. Just like life!

IN THE FALL, AND REPLANTING NEXT SPRING

Sometime in the Fall, your tuberous begonias will begin to look straggly and tired. Let them go to sleep by gradually withholding the water. **Do not cut it back, let the stem fall off by itself.** It is putting strength back into the tuber for next year. **Now you have some choices.** We'll start with the one that seems to give the best result. A lot is just plain luck, but it does help to keep fertilizing well into early Fall.

#1 Leave it in the pot, lay the pot on its side somewhere in the garden out of the way, and where it won't get too wet all winter. You can also store in the garage, tool shed, or under the house.

#2 Dig out the whole clump of soil, just like you did here in the gardens. Store in a dry spot and in the Spring, water and wait for a sprout.

#3 Dig up the tuber only (no soil) and store in the garage. Wait until there is only a single stem left, then follow the stem down to find the tuber at its base. Dry the tuber well in a sunny spot, store in shavings or peat moss in a box or bag.

#4 Forget the whole thing and just leave it where it is. Lazy gardener style. What comes up, comes up; what doesn't you forget about. Don't do this if you live where it **really freezes.**

IN THE SPRING

Sometime in March or April, your tubers should start to wake up. You can give them one good drink and put them in the warmest spot in your garden. It is warmth and moisture, **not lots of water** that starts the growth. Water gently at first. Too much water will drown your new babies. After your plants are several inches high you can begin to fertilize. ½ strength the first time. Pinch out the tip of basket begonias for more branches.

You can start out your non-stop begonias earlier because they come into bloom naturally at an earlier time. You can try to get your non-stop tubers to sprout as early as January. If you need more information, don't be afraid to ask us.

Finally, what comes up in the Spring, welcome back with joy. Forget about those that didn't make it, Plants and flowers are for giving happiness, not worries.

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