

CULTURAL INSTRUCTIONS

TENDER BULBS (TUBEROUS BEGONIA, CALLA, CANNA, GLADIOLUS, ZANTEDESCHIA)

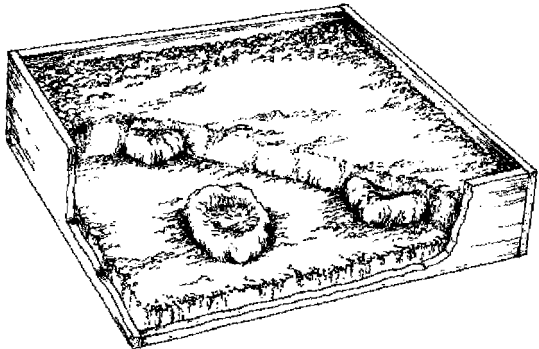
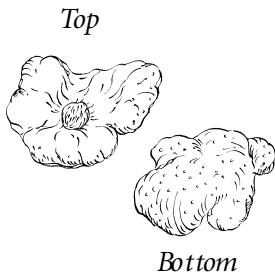
Begonia (Tuberous Begonia)

SPACING: 18", DEPTH: 1-2", SUN: ☉—●

Tuberous Begonias are frost-tender plants that thrive where they receive bright light but little or no direct sun. Given an early start, they put on a glorious display all summer long. We grow our Begonias in pots and hanging baskets, but they can also be planted in the ground (once the danger of frost has passed). Either way, unless you live in a frost-free climate, you must lift and store the tuberous roots in fall to carry the plants through winter.

Starting Tubers in Flats or Pots. To get a jump on a short season, plant tubers on arrival in flats (shallow containers with drainage holes—available at garden centers) or 4-5in pots. The potting mix should have a light texture and be well drained; one of the soilless mixes sold at garden centers, mixed 3 to 1 with builder's sand, meets both requirements. Begin by placing potting mix and sand in a plastic tub or bucket. Slowly add water and stir until the mix is moist but not soggy. Put moistened mix in the container, stopping about 1½in shy of the rim. Handling the tubers with care (especially if they have begun to produce new growth, which is very fragile), place them, concave side up (see drawing below), on top of the potting mix. Space the tubers 2-4in apart in a flat (one tuber per 4-5in pot) and cover them with ½-1in of potting mix (see drawing below). Then water sparingly and place the container in a window that provides bright but indirect light. Keep the potting mix moist but not soggy. To hasten growth, set the container on a heating mat or a radiator (with a few magazines between container and radiator to prevent overheating). Tubers that have

BEGONIA TUBERS



STARTING TUBEROUS BEGONIAS IN A FLAT

Set tubers 2-4in apart on a layer of lightly firm ed potting mix. Cover with ½-1in of potting mix and water lightly. Place the flat in a bright but not sunny window.

not already begun to sprout when you receive them will generally show signs of growth within 2–6 weeks after planting.

Transplanting. After the first two leaves have emerged, transplant tubers started in flats into 4–5in pots or, provided the danger of frost has passed, into a lightly shaded outdoor bed that has been amended with organic matter such as compost or peat moss. Lift and move the tubers carefully to avoid damaging the roots, and set the top of each tuber 1–2in below the surface of the potting mix or garden soil. Begonias planted in the ground should be positioned so that the points of the leaves aim at the viewer, because the blooms will face the same direction. Plants in 4–5in pots should be moved into 7–10in pots when the roots fill the pots. If time and energy permit, a final move to 12in pots will yield especially spectacular plants. Set pots outdoors in a bright but not sunny location when the threat of frost has passed. Tuberous Begonias will not grow well in deep shade.

Staking. When upright varieties are 4–6in tall, push a heavy, 18–20in long bamboo stake (or one of our cushioned, steel Begonia Stakes, item #56110 on our Web site) into the potting mix or garden soil on the side of the plant opposite the points of the leaves. Place the stake a few inches away from the main stem to avoid injuring the tuber. Fasten the plant to the stake with garden twine or soft plastic tape looped in a figure eight around stem and stake. As the plant grows, you may need more ties to provide additional support.

Summer care. Tuberous Begonias thrive in soil that is evenly moist but well drained. Soggy soil can cause the stems to snap off at the tuber. Fertilize plants once a month with a balanced (20-20-20), water-soluble fertilizer mixed as directed, or provide constant feeding with a timed-release fertilizer. Keep plants tidy by removing spent flowers; cut the flowers off close to the stem using a sharp knife.

The only disease that may trouble your plants is powdery mildew, a fungus that appears as white powder on the leaves. Powdery mildew is easier to prevent than it is to cure, and placing your plants in a location where air can circulate freely around them is the best prevention. If you've had trouble with powdery mildew on Tuberous Begonias in the past, you can prevent future outbreaks by spraying with a mild fungicide that you can prepare yourself by mixing one tablespoon of baking soda and 2 or 3 drops of insecticidal soap in a gallon of tepid water. Spray this solution every 10 days during hot, humid weather. Once mildew appears, the only effective remedy is to spray promptly with a commercial fungicide such as Funginex, which is available at many garden centers. Follow the directions on the label carefully.

Overwintering. Allow plants to grow through November (or until frost) to store energy for the next season. Force container-grown plants into dormancy by gradually withholding water. Dig plants grown in the ground with a ball of soil and let them dry out in a shed or on the garage floor. When the stems break free from the tubers, shake off excess soil and allow the tubers to cure in the sun for about 4 days. Then store them in dry peat moss or sand in open flats in a cool (45–50°F), dry place. Replant the tubers as suggested on page 1 in late winter.

Growing Hanging Basket Begonias. Hanging Basket Begonias—varieties with trailing stems—require much the same care as upright Begonias, except that they look

their best in a shallow container that can be suspended from the eaves of a house or from an arbor. One Hanging Basket Begonia tuber in a 12in basket makes for a spectacular and long-lasting display. Please note: If the stems of a Hanging Basket Begonia grow upright and refuse to trail over the edge of the container, plants are not receiving enough light.

If you plan to dry the tubers at the end of the growing season and overwinter them for the next year, please keep these Cultural Instructions for future reference.

Caladium (Angel Wings) SPACING: 12–24" or 1 per 10" pot, DEPTH: level, SUN: ☉—●

Caladiums require warm temperatures to sprout and grow. If planted too early outdoors, they may rot. Wait until soil temperatures reach 60°F to plant in the ground or into a larger container outdoors. Our plants are sent already potted; keep them indoors in a warm spot (at least 75°F) and provide indirect light and water until you can plant.

Caladiums are one of the few bulbs that require shade; their leaves may scorch if they do not receive protection from the afternoon sun. They also need moisture-retentive but well-drained soil, and they benefit from regular feeding in the form of a timed-release fertilizer or occasional applications of a water-soluble fertilizer.

Caladiums are hardy only to Zone 10 (30°F), but the tubers can be dug and stored indoors in colder climates. When the foliage yellows and droops in fall, lift the tubers with the foliage still attached, clean them of excess soil, and allow them to air-dry in a warm, sunny location. When the foliage breaks away freely from the tubers, pack them in lightly moistened peat moss or sand and keep them in a dry, well-ventilated place where the temperature is cool (50–60°F).

Canna (Canna) SPACING: 18–24" or 1 per 18" pot, DEPTH: 2–3", SUN: ○

Wait to plant Cannas until all danger of frost has passed and the soil has warmed to 60°F. To get a jump on a short growing season, start rhizomes indoors by potting up as soon as they arrive and placing in a warm, sunny location. Move them outdoors after the last frost date in your area. Acclimate transplants to outdoor conditions slowly to avoid scorching the foliage.

Plant in average to damp soil. If rhizomes are started prior to planting, they will also grow in soggy soil or even shallow water. Plant the rhizomes horizontally, with the eye (bud) facing up. Fertilize after planting with a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) and again in late July. Remove spent flowers to keep plants looking tidy and to encourage rebloom.

Cannas are hardy to Zone 7 (0°F). In colder climates, they can be overwintered indoors. After the first frost in fall, cut the stems to the ground and lift the clump of rhizomes with a spade or fork. Store in lightly moist peat moss or sand in a dry, well-ventilated place where the temperature is cool (50–60°F). If plants are grown in containers, you may also allow the pot to dry out and then store it in a cool location.

Dahlia (Dahlia) SPACING: 15–24" or 1 per 12" pot, DEPTH: 4", SUN: ○—●

Grow in rich, evenly moist soil. Plant after the danger of frost has passed in spring, setting the eyes (buds), located near the base of last year's stalk, facing up. Gardeners in cold-winter climates can get a jump on a short season by starting tubers indoors in pots or flats 4–6 weeks before the last frost date. Provide support for varieties that

are taller than 24in. Take care when pushing the stake into the soil to avoid injuring the Dahlia tuber. For continued bloom, it is important to deadhead weekly. Fully hardy to Zone 8 (10°F); well-mulched plants often overwinter in Zone 7 (0°F). In colder zones, harvest the tubers after frost in fall. Dig up the entire root system and cut the stems back to 3–4in. Place the tubers (label each variety) in a wooden crate or plastic tub, and cover them with lightly moistened peat moss or sand. Store at 40–50°F. Set tubers outdoors after the danger of frost has passed in spring.

Gladiolus

SPACING: 6", DEPTH: 4–6", SUN: ○

These beautiful flowers grow well in the same conditions that most garden vegetables prefer, which is average, well-drained soil that is slightly acidic (a pH of 6.0 to 6.5). Good drainage is essential. Use a fertilizer that is lower in nitrogen, such as 5-10-5, to encourage flower production rather than excessive leaf growth. Plant the corms outside as early as a month before the last spring frost in your area, or at two week intervals from then until late June in order to produce a succession of bloom. Gladiolus require water throughout the season, so if there is not sufficient rainfall, water deeply once a week (provide 1in of water). To save corms for the following year, dig them up before the first frost date, wash soil off, and cut the stems to within ½in of the corm. Dry the corms for 2–3 weeks in a warm, airy place. Store in mesh bags (or old nylon stockings) at 35–45°F in a well-ventilated area until time to replant.

Zantedeschia (Calla Lily)

SPACING: 12–18" or 3 per 12" pot, DEPTH: 6", SUN: ○●

Plant in rich, moist soil after the danger of frost has passed. Partial shade is required in the South and warm inland areas of the West unless the soil is constantly wet. Plant rhizomes horizontally, with the growing points facing up. In containers, put 3 in a 12in pot and plant just 3in deep. Hardy to Zone 9 (20°F), but an ample layer of mulch applied in fall can get plants through winter in Zone 8 (10°F) and even Zone 7 (0°F). In colder zones, dig the rhizomes when frost blackens the leaves in fall. Cut the leaves off, dry the rhizomes, and store indoors in dry peat moss or sand at 60–75°F. Calla Lilies grown in a pot can be left in the pot over winter. Bring the container indoors in fall and do not water until you want to start growth again in spring.

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