



The long lasting beauty of *begonias*

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Wax begonias grow quickly, are deer resistant and spread to fill in spaces in the garden.

Question: I love begonias. Would they do well in my garden?

Answer: Few plants can compare to the begonia for long-lasting color, reasonable drought tolerance, easy care and memorable impact when used in mass plantings.

Like impatiens, begonias are actually tender perennials (come back year after year) that are treated as annuals (gone forever at first frost). Native to South America, the begonia family, Begoniaceae, contains nearly 2,000 annual, perennial and woody shrub species and hybrids.

Morning sun and afternoon shade is a winning combination for most begonias. Watering is very important for the health of begonias; the soil should remain moist, but not too wet. Water the begonia at its base



Debby Finley
Ask a Master Gardener

to avoid leaf spot and possible fungal disease. A complete slow-release fertilizer formulated for annual flowers will be appreciated by the begonias in your garden.

Begonias don't stop working at the end of summer. A begonia can be cut back before frost and used as a houseplant in the winter! Cuttings from spring division, placed in moist soil, root easily and quickly.

Begonias are sensitive to Botrytis blight, powdery mildew and stem rot. Pests like mealy bugs, spider mites, thrips, scales, snails and slugs enjoy begonias as well.



PHOTO BY DEBBY FINLEY

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Wax Begonias (*Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum*), or bedding begonias, are the most popular with gardeners. Fibrous-rooted with fleshy stems, dark green or bronze heart-shaped, waxy leaves, and loose

clusters of single and double flowers, they bloom all the way into fall. Wax begonias grow quickly, are deer resistant, and spread to fill in spaces in the garden.

The bronze leafed varieties are generally more

tolerant of hot, sunny conditions. They withstand drought and heat better than other begonias.

While most people think of wax begonias as exclusively outdoor plants, they also make excellent indoor plants, where they become true perennials.

Angel Wing Begonias (*Begonia coccinea*) are also called cane begonias because of their thick, upright stems, fibrous roots, and pendant clusters of dangling flowers in red, pink, or white year-round.

Leaves are spotted, banded, or splotted with white, and wing shaped, giving them their name. They are popular and well-suited as houseplants but can also be grown outside.

Tuberous Begonias (*Begonia x tuberhybrida*) are another popular begonia and are particularly showy in hanging baskets or in containers where it is easier to control watering. These begonias thrive

with dryer soil and tend to do poorly in very hot areas as they truly do not tolerate direct sun.

Tuberous begonias have wide flowers in white, yellow, orange, red and pink. They die back and must be dug up and replanted each year because they will not survive the winter cold.

Begonias continue to be sought out by gardeners with good reason. Versatile and eye-catching, this easy-to-grow annual is ideal for flowerbeds or containers - inside or out.

Do you have a gardening or insect question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu or 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.