



Horticulture Feature May 2016

Begonias

There are nearly 1800 species of begonias ranging Central and South America and Africa and Asia. Begonias vary from cool climates to the tropics and from epiphytes to terrestrial. In south Florida rex begonias and tuberous begonias don't perform well outdoors because of our heat and humidity. Many of the cane begonias and tropical types do perform well. Currently *Begonia nelumbifolia* is blooming profusely and if you haven't grown it then now is a great time to plant one. Cutting root easily and soon you can have a tropical looking clump of large rounded leaves and big white balls of flowers. Similarly, *Begonia odorata* 'alba' is a wonderful landscape begonia. Another favorite of mine is *Begonia ricinifolia* named because the large leaves look like the Castor Bean plant's large leaves. *Begonia* 'Pigskin' has a funny name and the metallic looking bronze leaves are crinkly and intriguing. Many metallic looking angel wing or cane type begonias are now popular at nurseries and do well in our gardens. Begonias are often propagated easily from stem cuttings and large numbers can be made from leaf cuttings. Begonia culture is best with very well drained soil on the dry side of moist. They don't tolerate very wet soils or very dry soils. Begonias like regular feeding. Local nurseries that have nice stock are Living Color in Davie and Palm Hammock and Stelmar Gardens in Miami. For more information, see the American Begonia Society at <http://www.begonias.org>



