

Care and culture of tuberous begonias

Most gardeners grow tuberous begonias in pots. Select dormant tubers in mid-winter. Place them in pots filled with a compost rich soil mix. The Sloat Organic Potting Soil mixed 50/50 with compost is ideal. Plant the tubers indented side up and cover with ¼"-1" of the soil mix. Place pots in a well-lit location where temperatures will remain above 65°. Keep soil moist but not soggy. Once the plants have produced two leaves, begin feeding with a half strength liquid food every other week. Fish emulsion or Maxsea 16-16-16 produce the best results. Place plants outside once night temperatures stay above 50°. If you are unable to start tubers in winter due to a lack of indoor space, they can also be started directly outdoors in spring or choose plants in bud and bloom.

If you are planting your begonias in spring, use a soil mix as described above. Choose a location in filtered shade or an eastern exposure. To promote large blooms, feed every other week with a liquid fertilizer ½ strength. Water enough to keep soil moist but not soggy. Plants will bloom late spring to fall.

When plants begin to turn yellow and wilt in the fall, reduce watering and stop fertilizing to prevent powdery mildew and allow the tubers to go dormant. Once the leaves fall off, store the pots in a dry location such as a garage until the following spring. Tubers can also be lifted. Allow them to dry in a cool location, shake off excess soil and store in paper bags.

(Information sourced from Sunset Western Garden Book)



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