

# Begonia

## Show Classifications

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### Begonia Show Classifications

Begonias come in all sizes, shapes and colors. For show purposes, the American Begonia Society subdivides begonias into seven broad classifications, based on their growing habits. This is a convenient subdivision, because plants with the same growth habits often require similar growing conditions and care. The major classes of begonias are:

Rhizomatous: The largest number of species begonias are rhizomatous. These plants have a thickened stem with short internodes, which usually runs on the soil surface. Leaves come from the rhizome; rising above it, to form the plant. These plants usually flower in the winter and early spring, (January through May) with small white or pink flowers hanging on tall inflorescence that rise in the middle of the plant.

Cane-like: Cane-like begonias are characterized by a strong upright stem with long internodes, and look very much like bamboo. Many cane-like begonias will to attain either an upright growth pattern, or can be made into a hanging basket plant, depending on the growers pruning techniques. These plants are very popular with local growers because they are easy to grow and flower heavily in the spring through fall (April through October). Flower colors range from bright red, to orange, to pink, to white and all shades in between.

Shrub-like: These plants are very similar to the cane-like plants, except they easily branch along the main stems. These plants make good hanging baskets and many bloom spring through fall.

Rex cultorum: This is the brightly colored, big leafed begonia plants sold widely in the winter time. These plants are also rhizomatous, but because of their high commercial value, they are classified separately. These plants are beautiful, but difficult to grow because too high or too low a temperature, even for a short period of time. will cause the plant to go dormant, losing all its leaves. Many rex cultorum never recover from this dormancy in ordinary home growing condition.

Thick-stem: These plants grow tall and upright, with thick, strong stems. Many grow to five or six feet in home care. Some branch frequently; some never branch. Many have leaves only at the very top of the main stems; some have leaves throughout the stem. These plants tend to bloom with very small white blooms in mid-winter.

Trailing/Scandent: These plants resemble vines. They grow downward (trailing) as a hanging vine, or climb upward (scandent) with a clinging vine habit. These are favorites for hanging baskets. Most bloom in the spring and summer and have small white flowers.

Tuberous: These plants have a tuberous growth below the soil surface from which the stems emerge. These plants require low temperatures for proper growth, and don't seem to adapt to our southern climates. The "Rieger" begonias are of this type; beautiful, but very difficult (read that as impossible) to grow in Texas.

For begonia shows, each of the above classifications are broken down into 5 to 38 subclasses as differences in leaf size, color, shape, etc. are accounted for. A complete listing of a typical show schedule, showing over 100 subclasses, can be found in the National section.

Bill Claybaugh, 10/20/2004

Source: American Begonia Society, Astros Branch, Houston, Texas <http://begoniahouston.org/>