

GROWING BEGONIAS FROM SEED -Two

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Today you will be learning to grow Begonias from seed. Propagating Begonias by seed is a fun and easy way to increase your collection. It is also fun to watch them develop from seed to mature plant. This process can take up to 1 year depending on the type of Begonia. Semperflorens are the fastest from seed to mature plant.

Materials Needed:

- begonia seed packet(s)
- Soilless seed starting mix (Sunshine LC1, Jiffy-mix etc.)
- Perlite
- breathing mask
- 1 ounce portion cups
- Ice Pick
- flat toothpicks
- magnifying glass
- Distilled or purified water
- small bowl
- plant labels
- sharp scissors
- number 2 pencil
- 1 or 2 gallon Ziploc bag
- misting bottle filled with purified or distilled water
- clear plastic dessert container or clear plastic container with tight clear lid
- clear plastic wrap (needed only if your container has no lid)
- rubber band or cellophane tape (only if you need to use plastic wrap)
- Brightly lit area (with no air movement)

Now that you have gathered all the materials you will need go to a brightly lit enclosed work area. If there is a ceiling fan TURN IT OFF. Begonia seed is like dust. Strong air movement can blow the seed away. You are now ready to begin preparations.

1) Mix 50% seed starter mix with 50% perlite in your 1 or 2 gallon Ziploc bag. You may wish to wear the breathing mask as the perlite has a very fine white powder. If it is very dry you may add a small amount of water so it won't be so dusty. A misting bottle filled with distilled or purified water is good for doing this. Close the bag and shake to mix.

2) Take your 1 ounce portion cups and poke 4 or 5 holes in the bottom from the inside out with your ice pick. You will want at least 1 portion cup for each packet of seed you will be planting.

3) Take your scissors and cut your plant labels 2 inches long and 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch wide. You will need 1 label for each variety of begonia you plant.

4) Take your small bowl and add a small amount of water about half an inch or so. Note: At this time you may, if you wish, fill all the portion cups you think you will need to plant your seed with the soil mixture. If you do this place them off to the side so they cannot get mixed up. I prefer to fill each cup as I go along. This way I can be sure not to plant more than one variety in a cup.

Having completed all these steps you are now ready to plant your seed.

1) Fill portion cup with soil mixture just slightly less than full. DO NOT PRESS DOWN THE SOIL LEAVE IT VERY LOOSE.

2) Using your #2 pencil make your name tag (print). For example B. 'Flamingo Queen' if it is a hybrid or B. fisheri, if it is a species. Turn the label over and print the current date. For example 10-23-03. Place label in portion cup filled with soil

3) Open your seed packet and sprinkle a very small amount to seed on the top of the soil. You may use the toothpick to help with this. You do not want to dump the entire packet into the cup. There could be hundreds of seeds and it will be a nightmare trying to transplant them. DO NOT COVER THE SEED WITH SOIL the seed needs light to germinate. After you have planted your seed cup place cup in the bowl of water to soak up moisture. This should be done after each planting. In the time it takes to plant another cup the one soaking will be moist. Remove from water and place in dessert container or other plastic container of your choosing. If you want to plant the entire packet of seed plant in several cups. I always reserve seed just in case something unforeseen happens to the seed I have just planted. Any implanted seed can be placed in its packet in a small jar with a good seal and placed in the freezer where they can stay for quite a long time. Repeat the above for each packet of seed you wish to plant.

Now that you have finished planting your seed make sure the containers are sealed tightly and place on a light stand or in front of a bright window. Make sure that the container does not get direct sunlight. DO NOT open container again unless soil looks dry and then water as you originally did, from the bottom not the top.

Note: It is not necessary to close the dessert container until you have finished. 4 or 5 cups per container if fine. Also you may use the magnifying glass to look at the soil to see how much seed has been planted. The seed will be orange or orange/red in color. Seeds can take from 1 week to two months to germinate please be very patient. You will be amazed at how excited when you do get germination.

FIRST TRANSPLANT

My heart always beats a little faster when I reach this step. Why? Reaching this step means the seeds germinated and are growing well. The first transplant takes place when the seedlings have 1 or more true leaves. They will be transplanted into a larger container in groups of 2 or 3 and placed back into a contained atmosphere conditions to continue growing. Where you choose to

do the transplanting is entirely up to you, as long as you are comfortable and not in the direct sun.

Materials

- * begonia seedling in sealed containers
- * 2 1/2 or 3 inch plastic pot
- * 50% Seed starter mix and 50% perlite mixture
- * flat toothpicks
- * tweezers
- * distilled or purified water
- * dish to hold water for bottom watering.
- * 1 plastic picnic fork or plastic hors d'oeuvre fork
- * clear plastic shoe box or sweater box with clear lid.
- * clear plastic wrap or piece of glass cut to fit shoe or sweater box
- * cellophane tape
- * sponge
- * plant labels
- * #2 pencil sharpened
- * scissors (in case labels need to be cut down)
- * magnifying glass
- * roll of plain white paper towels

If you do not think you have enough soil mixture to transplant your seedlings now is the time to mix more. The ratio is 50% soilless seed starter mix and 50% perlite. This time you will want to moisten the soil mix slightly so it will be easier to work with. Now with slightly moistened soil mix fill several 2 1/2 or 3 inch pots just slightly less than full. **DO NOT PRESS OR PACK THE SOIL LEAVE IT LOOSE!** The reason being when you remove the portion cup of seedlings from its contained atmosphere you will want to work quickly to prevent them from going into anymore shock than is necessary.

Let's get started shall we?

1) Tear off 2 sheets of paper towel as one and lay it on the surface you will be working on. Have handy your tweezers or plastic hors d'oeuvre fork and toothpicks. Pour water into the bowl to be used for watering so a pot placed in it will sit in water halfway up. Finally have prefilled pots within easy reach and sweater or shoe box(s) also within easy reach.

2) Open the container and remove 1 and only 1 portion cup containing seedlings.

3) Gently remove seedlings from portion cup by turning the cup slightly on its side with one hand while taping the bottom with the other. The seedling should pop out easily. Lay seedlings

gently onto paper towels and gently pull apart using toothpicks or hors d' oeuvre forks. If all you have are plastic picnic forks, remove the two outer tines leaving only the two in the middle. The soil mixture should just fall apart with little coaxing.

4) Using your fork or toothpick make a small hole in the center of one of the pre-filled pots, now carefully pick up 2 or 3 seedlings with the tweezers or fork. Gently place in the pro-made hole and gently push soil mix around roots and stem of seedlings. At this time you can plant the seedling deeper than normal so they will stand on their own like planting a tomato plant in the garden. You are planting 2 or 3 plant together because begonias are community plants not solitary individuals. They seem to respond better when planted this way. **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT YOU DO NOT PACK THE SOIL AROUND THE SEEDLINGS . LEAVE THE SOIL LOOSE.**

5) Make your name tag as you had done in the seed planting stage with its name and the date planted on the reverse side. Place in the pot of newly transplanted seedlings as they soak up moisture.

6) Continue the transplanting step, pot by pot. The exception being as soon as the newly transplanted seedlings are moist put immediately into the shoe or sweater box and cover immediately. Do this each time. Do not let them set out any longer than necessary. They will go into shock.

7) When the sweater or shoe box is filled set aside and start another until all seedlings are planted. When finished place shoe or sweater boxes under light on a light stand or in a bright window that does not receive direct sunlight.

8) When the seed are growing in contained atmosphere you do not want to feed them Just keep an eye on them and make sure they do not dry out. At this age they will not forgive.

9) When the seedling are nice a full in their pot the lid may be slowly removed to harden them off. This means open slightly every 4 or 5 days until the lid has been removed. This has to be done slowly or they will die within hours.

10) Once cover have been removed a very light feeding may be given using Greenlight Root Stimulator and Starter Solution. Make this solution very weak and feed every other week or constant feed if you will. Also once the cover has been removed plants may be removed from the boxes so they can be spread apart so they may grow unhindered.

Note: If the sweater or shoe box(s) you are using to grow your seedling does not have a lid or came with a colored lid here is what you do. Take a sponge and moisten the rim all around the box. Now take the clear plastic wrap and tear off a piece two inches or so longer than the length of the box. Carefully place the plastic wrap on the top with the extra evenly at both ends. Now take your tape and secure the two ends by folding around similar to a package. Then place one strip along each of the sides.

Congratulations are now in order. You have successfully grown begonias from seed.