



Columbia Nursery

Planting & Care Guide for Begonias (Zones 3–5)

General Guidelines

- - Types: Wax begonias, tuberous begonias, rex begonias (foliage), and fibrous begonias
- - Sunlight: Partial shade to dappled sunlight; some varieties tolerate morning sun
- - Soil: Light, well-draining, humus-rich soil; ideal mix is 2/3 potting soil and 1/3 peat moss
- - Hardiness:
 - Grown as annuals in Zones 3–5
 - Tubers can be lifted and stored over winter
- - Containers: Ideal for pots, window boxes, and hanging baskets

Selecting & Starting Tubers

- - Purchase tubers in early February; choose large, firm ones with no rot
- - Upright varieties are best for containers or garden beds; cascading types suit hanging baskets
- - Wait for pink buds to form before planting
- - Store in a warm, dry paper bag until sprouting begins
- - Fill flats with 2/3 potting soil and 1/3 peat moss
- - Place tubers concave side up, cover with 1/2" of soil, and water thoroughly
- - Keep flats in bright, filtered light (not direct sun) at 60–70°F

Transplanting to Final Containers or Beds

- - Transplant when first two leaves are developed
- - Use the same soil mix (2/3 potting soil, 1/3 peat moss)
- - Plant tubers 2" deep; handle gently
- - Continue to grow indoors until all frost danger is past
- - Outdoors, select a bright but shaded site—not deep shade or full sun
- - In-ground spacing: 12" apart

Watering & Fertilizing

- - Water only when the soil surface is dry—check with your hand
- - Avoid watering foliage; water soil directly and deeply, without soaking
- - Indoors: Feed weekly with 1/2-strength 20-20-20 water-soluble fertilizer
- - Outdoors: Feed every 2 weeks with full-strength bloom booster (10-50-10)

Ongoing Care & Maintenance

- - Remove spent blooms and yellow leaves to keep plants tidy and blooming
- - Turn containers weekly for even light exposure
- - Monitor daily for moisture—especially in hot or windy conditions



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Overwintering Tuberous Begonias

- - Stop watering in late fall when plants yellow and die back
- - Let plants experience one light frost before digging up tubers
- - Remove dirt and stems; dry in a sunny window for several days
- - Store in paper bags with vermiculite in a cool, dry location (40–50°F)
- - Dust with bulb dust to prevent fungal disease
- - Check monthly and discard any soft or moldy tubers

Quick Tips for Zones 3–5

- - Start tuberous varieties early indoors for best blooms
- - Rotate containers to promote even growth
- - Use containers to bring begonias inside if early frost threatens
- - Combine with shade-loving companions like coleus or impatiens for dramatic color
- Begonias offer rewarding beauty and color in cool northern gardens—especially when grown from tubers you can reuse year after year!

Planting Schedule for Zones 3–5

Activity	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5
Start tubers indoors	Late Feb to mid Mar	Early Mar to late Mar	Early Mar to early Apr
Transplant outdoors	After June 1	After May 20	After May 10
Dig & store tubers	Before Sept 15	Before Sept 25	Before Oct 1

Common Problems & Solutions

Problem	Likely Cause	Remedy
Leaf spot/mildew	Excess moisture, poor air	Space plants, avoid overhead watering
Drooping leaves	Over or under watering	Adjust watering schedule
No blooms	Too much shade or nitrogen	Move to brighter spot, reduce feeding