

Begonias and Their Culture

M. B. Templin, Calla, Ohio

BEGONIAS derive their name from a noted French patron of science, Michael Bégon, who lived between 1638 and 1710. They were first introduced into England in 1777. Are indigenous to Asia, South Africa, Mexico, Central America and South America.

There are hundreds of species known, of which about 150 have proved to be of value. In recent years there has been a great improvement in many plants, but few have been improved so rapidly as the begonia. Many hundred varieties are known and are in cultivation, but the number worthy of general cultivation and dissemination does not exceed a few dozen. For horticultural purposes begonias are usually divided into three general classes: (1) Fibrous-rooted, or winter blooming; (2) Tuberous-rooted, or summer blooming; (3) Rex, or ornamental leaved.

FIBROUS-ROOTED

The first class embraces the flowering begonias, so-called in florists' catalogs. The variety, brilliancy and beauty of their foliage, and their remarkable free-flowering quality during the winter, combine to make them one of the most desirable and most popular plants. As pot plants for the window, garden and conservatory they have few equals. While they are exacting in their requirements, these requirements are simple and easily supplied. They respond very readily to intelligent treatment. Most varieties are rapid growers, a few months—or at most a year's—growth will produce beautiful specimens from cuttings. They are among the most satisfactory plants for the living room.

Among the most popular varieties that appear in florists' catalogs and in local greenhouses, are the following: Alba perfecta, Argentea guttata, Diadem, Metallica rubra, Sandersonii, Thurstonii, Vernon, etc., with new varieties of merit being added from year to year. One of the most valuable of the recent introductions is Begonia Templinii. By all who have seen it

it is acknowledged to be the most beautiful. It is positively new and distinct in its class. The accompanying illustration, made from a photograph, gives a fairly accurate idea of the characteristics of the plant. It is an upright, vigorous grower; leaves varying in



Begonia Templinii

length from six to ten inches, with wavy margins; glossy, metallic green, profusely and irregularly blotched and variegated with various shades from creamy white to golden yellow, beautifully tinged and flushed with flesh-pink, deepening towards the edges to the richest crimson; under side bright coppery crimson. It possesses the most remarkable combination and blending of colors ever found in a begonia or any other plant. The flowers are a beautiful pink. As a bedder, when exposed to partial sun, it is wonderfully effective.

Gloire de Lorraine is a grand and wonderfully profuse bloomer that is being illustrated and described in glowing terms in magazines and trade papers. Unfortunately, however, it does not give satisfaction under ordinary house culture, being especially adapted for forcing in greenhouses and conservatories.

Flowering begonias, as a class, are of very easy culture. A soil compost consisting of three of good loam to one of thoroughly rotted manure and one of sand, will produce excellent results in growth and flowers. Cuttings taken from a healthy growth will root readily in sand, if given bottom heat. With reasonable treatment as to light, moisture, fresh air, and repotting when needed, they soon become fine plants.

TUBEROUS-ROOTED

The second class, tuberous begonias, were introduced about 35 years ago from the South American Andes. When first grown in the United States it was thought they would be a fitting companion for the geranium, but this was an error, as they would not withstand the dry atmosphere and hot sunshine. They require partial shade to come to perfection. During the past few years

the improvement in size, texture and coloring of leaves, and the size and colors of the flowers, has been phenomenal. The flowers are of enormous size, often five to six inches in diameter; the petals are thick and wax-like, and often creased and wrinkled most beautifully. In addition to the beauty of the flowers the foliage has been so improved that it is difficult to find two plants alike as to foliage. They bloom very freely all summer. They may be propagated from seed, but the most satisfactory way is to buy tubers from some reliable florist.

Their culture is very simple, and they are exceptionally fine either for pot plants or for bedding, being easily raised and requiring but little care. The soil should be composed of rich loam, leaf-mould and sand, and should be kept moist, but not wet, and always well drained. They succeed best in a partially shaded situation well protected from strong winds. Tubers can be procured in both single and double varieties, in shades of rose, red, yellow, and pure white. Start tubers from February to April.

REX BEGONIAS

Rex begonias are grown expressly for the beauty of their foliage. The original type, introduced from Asam, India, was first illustrated in Flore des Seres, published in Ghent, Netherlands, about 1857. From this type, by crossing with a few other species, and then from hybrid seedlings from their progeny, they have been so improved as, in some instances, almost to have lost resemblance to the original, except as to habit of growth.

In no other class of plants are the rich metallic shades and various colors so satisfactorily blended, while the size, color, and form of the leaves are of the greatest variety. Some show bright green, pure silver, bronze and velvety green; others have a distinct zone of bright, rosy-plum color; and others a



Rex Begonia