

**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



**Start Tuberous Begonias
In Midwinter**

Are you still overwintering begonias as a houseplant? Some begonias grown especially for their bloom (Tuberous begonias) differ from Rex begonias grown for their foliage. In February start planting the large bulb-like roots called tubers for outdoor growing this spring and summer.

Rex types grown as houseplants have large, hairy leaves with a variety of colored patterns. Their leaves have striking colors of silver, white, green, red and purple. Common begonia types that produce small reddish flowers include the common wax begonia, elephant's ear begonia and spotted angel-wing begonia.

For large flowers, tuberous begonias (*Begonia tuberhybrida*) are best. These are hybrids derived from crossing several South American species known for their sensational blooms. Tuberous begonias bloom from early sum-

mer till frost. The flower color include rich textured hues of pink, scarlet, orange, yellow, salmon and white.

Begin by choosing the large and firmest root tubers. The larger the tuber, the better. Larger tubers produce more blooms on a stockier plant.

These tubers are fleshy storage roots with an "eye" attached to the stem. Place them, round end down, in open trays of moist vermiculite, peat moss, or sphagnum peat. Space three to four inches apart, with the top of the tuber about half an inch below the surface. Water sparingly until they begin to grow. Tubers may rot with too much water. Set trays where they'll receive bright, indirect sunlight with temperatures of about 70 degrees F.

In about a month, each tuber should have enough leafy top growth to be transferred to a 4 to 6 inch pot. A good soil mix can be made from equal parts of vermicu-

lite, peat, sand or well-rotted compost. Good drainage is essential. Set pots in an east window for plenty of light but little direct sunlight. The temperature should be about 65 degrees F and no lower than 60 degrees.

Transplant tuberous begonias into a well-drained shady spots after the last spring frost (May 10). Plant at the same depth as in the pots. Plants should be protected from afternoon sun. Too much shade will create tall and leggy plants. A windy area will necessitate staking. Water and fer-

tilize begonias throughout the summer to avoid bud and flower drop. Use a liquid fertilizer every other week.

Low growing types of tuberous begonias make ideal summer borders by massing into groups of three or more plants. Other pendulous types look great in hanging baskets or window boxes.

Popular double-flowering types like non-stop begonias are my personal favorite. They have a flower three to five inches across. They are resistant to heat and summer drought but require only light

shade. Some pastel colors are included as non-stops. Camellia-flowered begonias, picotee and carnation types also produce double flowers. All are free-flowering with a compact habit.

Over and underwatering tuberous begonias will cause some bud drop. Plants with wet feet are prone to stem rots, powdery mildew and bud drop. Mealy bugs, aphids, white flies and slugs enjoy a waterlogged plant.

Any questions regarding the above article can be addressed to Tom Becker, Penn State Cooperative Extension at (717) 840-7408.

Fun Stuff For Kids At Hershey Museum

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — On February 15, children ages 5-7 can make their own "Frosty The Snowman Cookie" at the Hershey Museum. They will bake and decorate "snow people" cookies with candy hats and scarves without getting cold and wet themselves!

Young "Cat in the Hat" fans (ages 4-6) will want to participate in "Happy Birthday Dr. Seuss" on March 1, where everyone will have a marvelous time celebrating this famous author's birthday with songs, games, treats and more! But don't worry, no "Green Eggs and Ham" at this party!

For the upcoming holidays, 8-10 year-olds, can learn all about St. Patrick's Day on March 15 in "Shamrock Surprise," and even leave with their own edible "pot of gold." Children 5-7 can join in the "Easter Parade" on March 22 and hop in for a celebration filled with rabbits, ducks and chicks. On April 5, creative-minded children will want to take "Paper Capers" (ages 7-9) to make unique and distinctive papers out of all sorts of material, and also make delicious creations in our "Edible Craft Dough Day" (ages 6-8) on April 12.

On April 13 at 2:00 p.m. the

Hershey Museum will be hosting "Music For Children," a free mini-concert by local harpist, Tom Herald, followed by a musical instrument-making workshop for ages 4-12. Pre-registration for the workshop is required, and donations for materials are appreciated. 8-10 year-olds can learn what the turkey, the wolf and the turtle have in common in "Tribes, Totems and The Turtle's Back" on April 19, and on April 26, children ages 4-6 can "Clown Around" in preparation for the Hershey Museum's upcoming event, "The American Circus In Miniature," which opens May 10.

Pre-registration is required for children's classes, and a nominal fee of \$5-8 is charged to cover materials. Members get a discounted rate for these and other programs. For more information, please call (717) 534-3439. The Hershey Museum is a non-profit, educational and cultural institution administered by The M.S. Hershey Foundation and is located at the west end of Hersheypark Arena.



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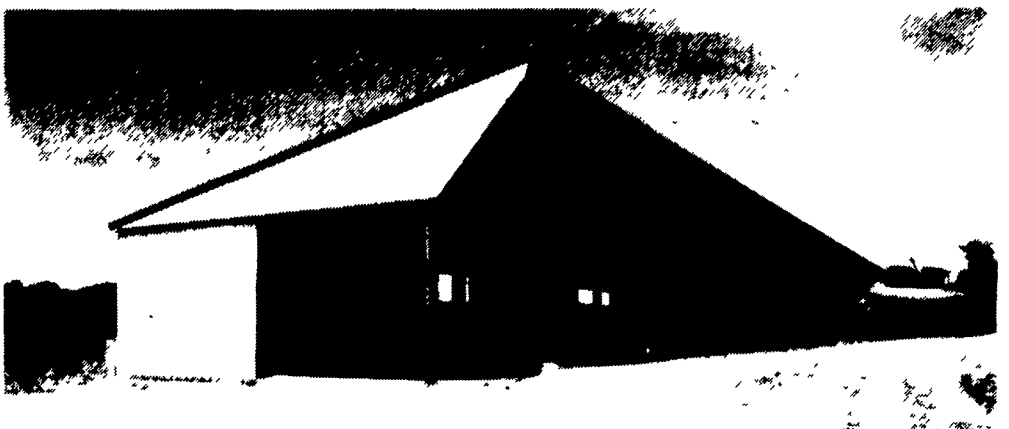
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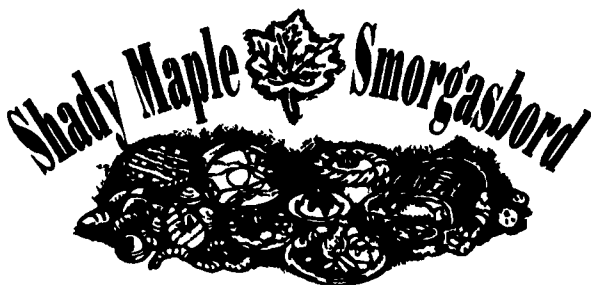
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