

NEW FLOWERING BEGONIAS.

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IN compliance with the request of a correspondent, conveyed in a letter which has recently been placed in my hands, I have prepared a few notes on the cultivation of the new-flowering Begonias. This has been done with much pleasure, for they are so thoroughly beautiful that they are all more or less entitled to take a high rank amongst flowering plants.

In speaking of the cultivation of the new flowering Begonias, it will be necessary to include several species and varieties which are not, strictly speaking, new. For example, *B. Veitchi* and *B. Boliwiensis* have been in cultivation several years, yet it would not do to pass them by, for until quite recently they have commanded prices which have placed them quite beyond the reach of amateurs of limited means. Now, however, they are comparatively cheap, and those amateurs who have the aid of a heated pit or stove, and take an interest in raising seedling plants, may obtain a stock for a very little money, as they can be all most readily raised from seed, and seed of several can be obtained at the rate of half-a-crown per packet. Perhaps the most desirable course to pursue would be to obtain a moderately strong plant or a dormant tuber of each sort, and during the summer save a stock of seed from as many of the kinds as may appear to the cultivator desirable. If the latter course is pursued, and care taken to fertilize the flowers with pollen from flowers of a distinct colour or character, it is probable that several very beautiful hybrids may be raised. I have raised a very large number from seed, and although a few of the seedlings produced flowers inferior to those of the parents, the majority were exceedingly good, and there was a great diversity in the colours of the flowers of the seedlings; and thus a large stock of distinct varieties was obtained with no expense and very little difficulty.

The whole of the best of the new flowering Begonias, and to these only is it my intention to direct attention, are tuberous rooted; the stems die down on the approach of winter. This is a most important fact, and through an ignorance of it many fine tubers have been destroyed. It is very naturally supposed by those who are not well acquainted with their character, that when the stems have died down the plant has perished, and it is then turned out of the pot and pitched on to the rubbish heap. I have known of more than one or a dozen fine tubers being destroyed under the supposition that the plant was dead.

In commencing with a stock of young plants obtained from a nursery, it will be necessary to shift them into pots one or two sizes larger, and place them in a warm and rather close corner of the stove or greenhouse, as the case may be, to enable them to overcome the check without loss of time, and to start away vigorously from the first. In about three weeks afterwards, if they have made a

satisfactory progress, the pots will be nicely filled with roots, and they may be shifted into larger pots. It will not, in every case, be desirable to re-pot them at the last-mentioned stage, and, as a rule, a six-inch pot will be quite large enough for the plants the first year. If they come to hand nicely established in three-inch pots, they can be repotted at once in six-inch pots, and they will then require no second shift the first year. They will require rather liberal supplies of water when growing freely, but as soon as the foliage begins to assume a sickly appearance in the autumn, gradually lessen the water supply, and finally withhold it altogether. During the winter the pots can be placed under the stage, or in any other position, provided the pots are laid upon their sides to prevent the soil becoming saturated with moisture.

The second year's management will commence by shaking the tubers out of the old soil, and repotting them in clean pots, either of the same size or one size larger. Let the drainage be perfect, and the soil be pressed firm about the tubers, which should be buried about half an inch below the surface. The stove kinds should have the assistance of a brisk bottom-heat, and those succeeding in a greenhouse temperature the warmest corner that structure will afford, as it is essential to success that they should commence to make new growth without any unnecessary loss of time after they are repotted. Until the young growth has made its appearance well above the surface, the soil must be kept in a moderately moist state only, but, after considerable progress has been made, liberal supplies of water will be required, and, after they are well established in the pots in which they are to bloom, weak liquid manure will be of considerable service in promoting a continuous growth, and thus insure a much longer display of flowers, for, provided they continue to make new growth, they will remain in bloom until quite late in the autumn.

A moderately light and airy position in the stove or greenhouse is essential for maintaining a stocky, short-jointed growth, and a neat stake must be put to each to prevent their being broken off, a danger to which they are especially liable. A mixture of two parts turfy loam, one part peat, and one part leaf-mould, with the addition of a liberal proportion of silver-sand; will form a most excellent compost.

In raising seedlings, sow the seed thinly in pots filled with a light sandy mixture, and cover lightly. When of sufficient size to admit of their being handled conveniently, prick them off into small pots, and put several plants in each. Dry them off in the autumn, as advised for the old plants, and in the spring turn them out of the soil, and pot separately, and then manage as advised for the old plants.

The best of the greenhouse kinds are *B. diversifolia* (syn. *Martini*), *B. intermedia*, *B. roseiflora*, *B. Veitchi*; and of those requiring a stove temperature, *B. Bolivienensis*, *B. carminata*, *B. Chambersi*, *B. Chelsoni*, and *B. Sedeni*.