



Begonia

Begonia × hiemalis

Six to twelve weeks of double blooms on brittle, juicy stems. Water the soil, never the leaves, and give it room to breathe.

Watering

Water the soil, never the leaves

INDIRECT LIGHT

COOL ROOM

LOW WATER

LONG LASTING

A note on the name. Your page says *Begonia obliqua*. That is a real species — the type species of the whole genus, described by Linnaeus — but it is not grown commercially and is not what is sold as a finished flowering pot. The showy double-flowered gift pot is *Begonia × hiemalis*, the Rieger or Elatior begonia.

DAY TO DAY

Light	Bright indirect — an east or north window, or set back from a south or west one. Direct midday sun bleaches and scorches. Too little light and it stops flowering and gets leggy.
Water	Let the top 2–3 cm dry out, then water thoroughly and drain completely. Water the soil, not the plant — splashing the leaves and flowers invites mildew and leaf spot. The stems are brittle and juicy, so err on the dry side — a little too dry is far easier to recover from than too wet.
Food	Every 2–4 weeks with balanced houseplant food at half strength while flowering. Stop once it finishes and goes into its rest period.
Temperature	18–21°C / 65–70°F is ideal, and it dislikes heat — above about 21°C combined with wet soil is when root and stem rot sets in. Away from heat vents and cold drafts alike.
Humidity	Moderate, but airflow matters more. Do NOT mist a begonia — wet leaves are exactly how powdery mildew and Botrytis start. Use a pebble tray if your air is very dry, and give it room rather than crowding it.

WHEN THE FLOWERS FINISH

Rieger begonias set buds only when nights are long, which is why they arrive in full flower and rarely repeat under normal room lighting — most people enjoy the six to twelve weeks of bloom and leave it there. If you want to keep it: once flowering stops, cut the stems back by half, reduce watering and rest it in a cool bright spot for several weeks, then resume when new growth appears. To bring it back into flower it needs about ten hours of light and fourteen hours of complete, uninterrupted darkness each day for two to three weeks. Tip cuttings root easily in spring and often make better plants than reviving the old one.

IF SOMETHING LOOKS WRONG

White powdery patches on leaves and stems	Powdery mildew, the signature begonia problem, from crowding, stagnant air and damp foliage. Better air movement, stop misting, water only the soil.
Flowers and buds drop before opening	Usually too warm, too dry, or a sudden move into a hot dry room. Somewhere cooler with even watering settles it down.
Stems brown, soft and mushy at the soil line	Stem and root rot from overwatering, poor drainage, or water sitting in the sleeve. Hard to reverse once it starts, so take a few healthy tip cuttings and start a fresh plant from them.
Bleached, faded or scorched leaves with dry patches	Too much direct sun. Move back from the window or filter it.

GROWER REFERENCE

Production and finishing figures. If you are keeping this plant on a windowsill, everything you need is on page one — this page is for the trade.

Media pH	5.2–6.0 for most begonias; elatior/Rieger-specific guidance is to lime to 5.5 with an optimal range of 5.5–6.0. Hold the low end and monitor — prone to iron/manganese toxicity below ~5.2 and iron deficiency chlorosis above 6.5.
Media EC	0.5–1.3 mmhos/cm (dS/m) optimal. Elatior-specific guidance cites 1.7 mS/cm by saturated soil extract against a 2.0 reference. Begonias are salt-sensitive — run the low end and state the method, since PourThru runs roughly 1.5–2× SME.
Substrate	Clean, well-aerated commercial peat-based mix with good drainage and high porosity. Use the cleanest mixes obtainable — begonias are highly susceptible to soilborne Pythium, Phytophthora and Rhizoctonia. Do not reuse media or dirty containers.
Fertilizer	75–150 ppm N constant liquid feed; elatior-specific 150 ppm N with P 30, K 150, Ca 120, Mg 30, S 30 mg/L. Alternatively 2.3 lb actual N per 1,000 sq ft per month from a 3-1-2 or 2-1-2 ratio complete fertilizer with minors. Worth knowing: a UF/IFAS Rieger trial found CRF rates of 4.0, 5.5 or 7.0 g of 14-14-14 per pot had no effect on size, grade, growth, quality or blooming — pushing fertility on this crop buys nothing and raises salt and rot risk.
Light	Finished Riegers grown at a maximum 1,200 f.c. (228 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{s}$) in glass. Typical practice 1,200–2,000 f.c. with 50–60% summer shade to prevent bleaching and heat stress. For interior and retail holding, 150–300 f.c. kept plants usable up to nine weeks versus the standard two-to-three-week rotation.
Temperature	Day 17–20°C / 63–68°F during growth, 20°C / 68°F during short-day treatment; night 20–21°C / 68–70°F optimal during short-day induction — unusually warm nights for a greenhouse crop. Broad tolerance 18–32°C / 65–90°F. Critically, keep media temperature above 21°C / 70°F to prevent root rot.
Relative humidity	Not established as a published percentage. Practice is to control humidity and increase airflow specifically to suppress Botrytis and powdery mildew, managing leaf wetness duration rather than chasing an RH set point.
Irrigation	Drip or sub-irrigation (ebb-and-flood, capillary mat) strongly preferred. Avoid overhead, which spreads bacterial leaf spot (<i>Xanthomonas campestris</i> pv. <i>begoniae</i>) and wets foliage. Moderate even moisture — avoid both excessive dry-down and extended wet periods, particularly on newly transplanted liners.
Photoperiod	Quantitative SHORT-DAY plant, and this is the key scheduling lever. Hold vegetative under long days of 18–20 hours (night-interruption or day-extension at as little as 100 lux). Induce with 10-hour days for 2–3 weeks. Failure to hold long days during bulking produces premature, undersized flowering plants.

DISORDERS & PESTS

Pythium, Phytophthora and Rhizoctonia root and stem rot (the primary crop loss), Botrytis, powdery mildew, bacterial leaf spot. Begonia/broad mite (*Polyphagotarsonemus latus*) causes distorted bronzed brittle new growth and is frequently misdiagnosed as virus or PGR effect. Fungus gnats, aphids, thrips, mealybugs. Premature flower initiation from inadequate long-day lighting; stem breakage; high-salt root injury; iron/manganese toxicity at low pH.

GROWN BY

Bokeestyn Greenhouses Inc.

2085 Fourth Ave, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 6P9, Canada
 bokeestyngreenhouses.com · hello@bokeestyngreenhouses.com
 Three generations of family growing since 1962.

Rieger begonias flower on a calendar the grower controls rather than one the plant chooses — the greenhouse holds them vegetative under 18–20 hour days, then flips them into bloom with 10-hour days for two or three weeks, which is why a plant that flowered gloriously in the shop so rarely reblooms in a lamp-lit living room.

Sources

- NC State Extension, elatior begonia culture
- Premier Tech Horticulture crop tips; UF/IFAS foliage research reports