

begonia rex



BEGONIA REX 'CELIA'

BOTANICAL NAME

Begonia rex cultorum hybrids

(be-GO-ni-a)

COMMON NAMES

Rex Begonia, King Begonia, Painted-leaf Begonia, Beefsteak geranium

DESCRIPTION

Begonia rex encompasses scores of hybrid varieties notable for their colored and patterned foliage. These *Begonias* are rhizomatous, spreading into new plants on thick stems that creep along or just below the soil surface. Their leaf shapes are usually broad and asymmetrical with toothy or lobed margins, and their colors, patterns and sizes are widely varied. Foliage colors include combinations of silver, gray, purple, green, red-brown or bronze. Small, inconspicuous pink or white flowers appear on some *Begonia rexes*.

DECORATIVE LIFE

With proper care, these foliage *Begonias* can live for years.

AVAILABILITY

Foliage *Begonias* are available year-round.

in-store and consumer care

WATER Keep the soil moderately moist, allowing it to dry slightly between waterings. In winter, water the plants more sparingly.

LIGHT Bright indoor light is required, but *Begonia rexes* should be kept out of direct sunlight. These plants do well in fluorescent light.

TEMPERATURE Average warm indoor temperatures are appropriate, between 65 F and 75 F. *Begonia rexes* should not be exposed to temperatures below 60 F.

HUMIDITY *Begonia rexes* do best in a humid environment, but their leaves should never be sprayed with water because this can cause leaf spotting. Use



B. REX 'HER MAJESTY'



B. REX 'IDALIA'

a pebble tray or a humidifier, or cover the plants with a plastic tent at night.

FERTILIZER Feed plants regularly, using a well-balanced houseplant fertilizer. Feed the plants semi-monthly during spring through fall, when plants are actively growing, and monthly during the winter.

PROPAGATION *Begonia rexes* can be propagated through cuttings of the tips, leaves or rhizomes.

PESTS AND PROBLEMS Aphids, red spider mites, mealybugs and powdery mildew can be problems for these *Begonias*. Overly cold and wet conditions can promote problems.

LEAF PROBLEMS Brown-tipped leaves are caused by a lack of appropriate humidity. Yellowing leaves signal too little light or too little or too much water.

PRUNING As flowers appear, pinch them from *Begonia rexes* in order to keep new leaves from growing smaller.

REPOTTING Use a light, fast-draining potting soil (such as that for African violets),

fun facts

FAMILY *Begonias* make up their own family, *Begoniaceae*, which includes more than 1,000 species worldwide and 10,000 recorded hybrids. In addition to the *Begonia rexes*, there are other foliage *Begonias* in the rhizomatous group; the genus *Begonia* also includes fibrous-rooted and tuberous-rooted groups.

HOME SWEET HOME Rex *Begonias* are native to tropical and subtropical Asia, Africa and North and South America. The original *Begonia rex* was found in India, but it no longer exists; today's colored foliage varieties are hybrids of this original.

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus is named for Michel Bégon (1638-1710), the governor of Haiti, who introduced the plant to Great Britain.

BRILLIANT SHOW *Begonias* with colored leaves require good light to maintain their coloration. Low interior light levels may cause the leaves to become more green. The plant's maturity also affects its coloration.

and replot these plants about every spring. Potbound plants will lose their brilliant colors. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
 Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
 The Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifenet.org
 The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual,
 by Barbara Pleasant
 Handbook of House Plants, by Elvin McDonald
 The Houseplant Encyclopedia, by Ingrid Jantra
 and Ursula Krüger
 The House Plant Expert, by Dr. D.G. Hessayon
 Society of American Florists' (SAF) Flower & Plant
 Care manual

Reach Foliage Plant of the Month writer Amy Bauer at abauer@superfloralretailing.com or (800) 355-8086.

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