



THE ROYALTY OF HOUSEPLANTS

REX BEGONIAS

HISTORY

The Rex begonia was first cultivated in England in 1856. The begonia soon became one of the more popular potted plants because of its ease of care and bright, cut-leaf foliage.

Since then, new varieties, color choices, and leaf patterns have been bred, earning it the appropriate nickname, the "painted leaf" begonia. The word "Rex" also means "king" and Rex begonias live up to their royal name with a dazzling array of jewel-like colors and foliage. These gems can adorn your windowsill or provide a bright focal point for your table. Some types have foliage as much as two feet wide, and each has a particular striking pattern, typically composed of variations of red, black, silver, pink and green. Some are smooth, while others have leaves covered with fine hairs and dimples that give them a curious rough texture.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DETAILS

Rex begonia's leaf shape can be rounded, ovate, or blade-shaped with deep serrations. There are even miniature species. The maturing plant may produce small white or pink blossom clusters, like a wax begonia. Later, the plant will put out underground stems called rhizomes, from which new plants will arise. It can be grown in shallow pots, as its root system is not deep.

CARE

Give a Rex begonia high humidity and medium light. Too much sun can fade or burn the leaves. Try small plants on a north-facing window sill, or in an east or west window, with filtered light. Show off larger varieties on a table near a bright light source.

Rex is quite adaptable to most environments. Normal room temperature is fine, but these begonias can go ten degrees lower at night. Use a light potting soil high in humus, and keep it about as damp as a well-wrung sponge. Try not to overwater, and keep air circulating through the room to avoid mildew.

Fertilize every two weeks in spring and summer, then discontinue until a flush of spring growth appears.

Rex may go dormant in autumn and either stop sending up new leaves, or even drop its leaves and 'go to sleep.' Simply keep the plant slightly moist until the seasons change and new growth appears.

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