

Growing Begonia from Seed

Seed harvesting, sowing and more



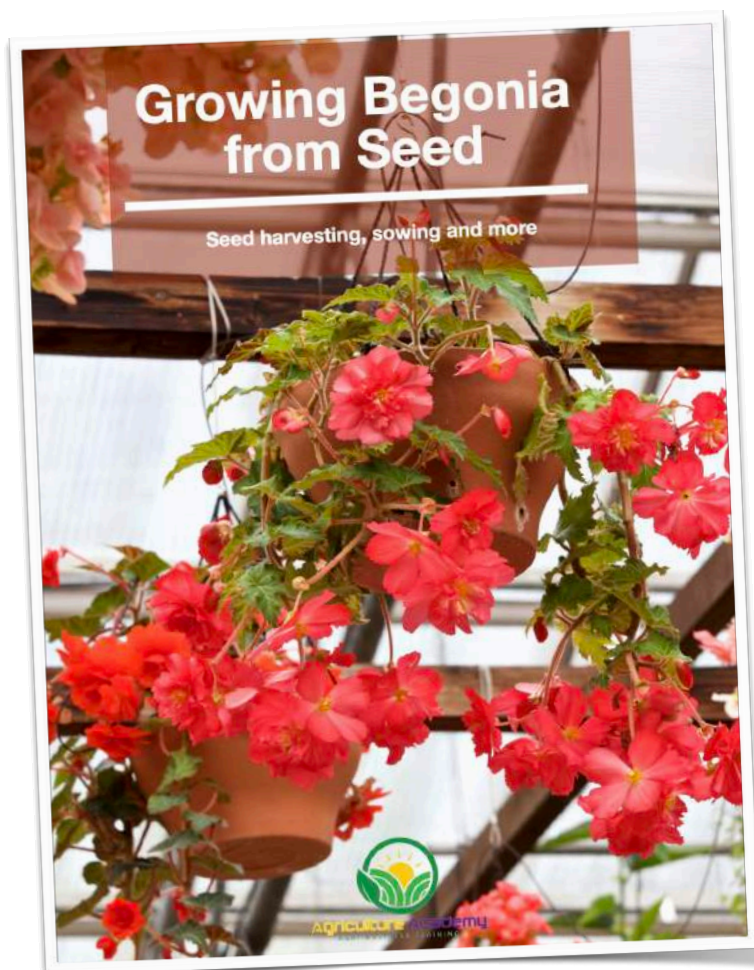
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Growing Begonia Seed

Thank you for downloading this guide!

If you're looking for an easy, cheap way to go from masses of tiny Begonia seeds to thousands of young seedlings, then you have found the right eBook! In this guide we are going to show you the exact steps to follow to grow your own beautiful begonia from seed. At the end of this guide we also offer some expert tips and useful hacks to achieve the best growing conditions for your young begonia seedlings.

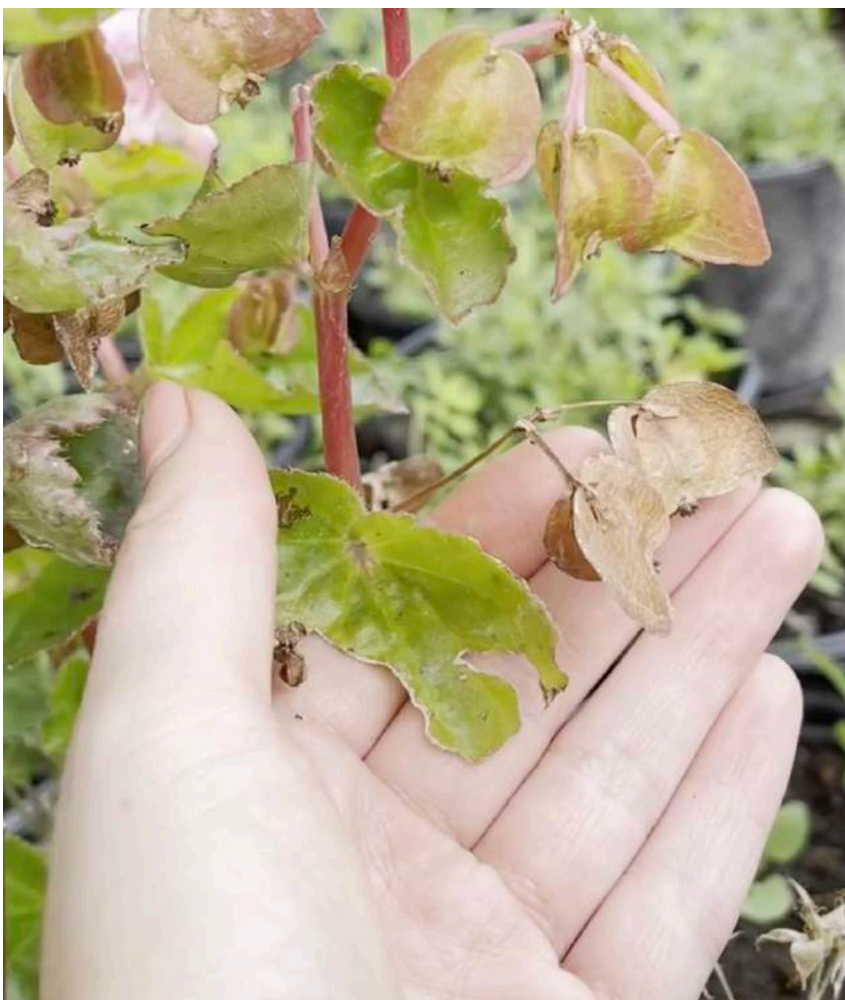
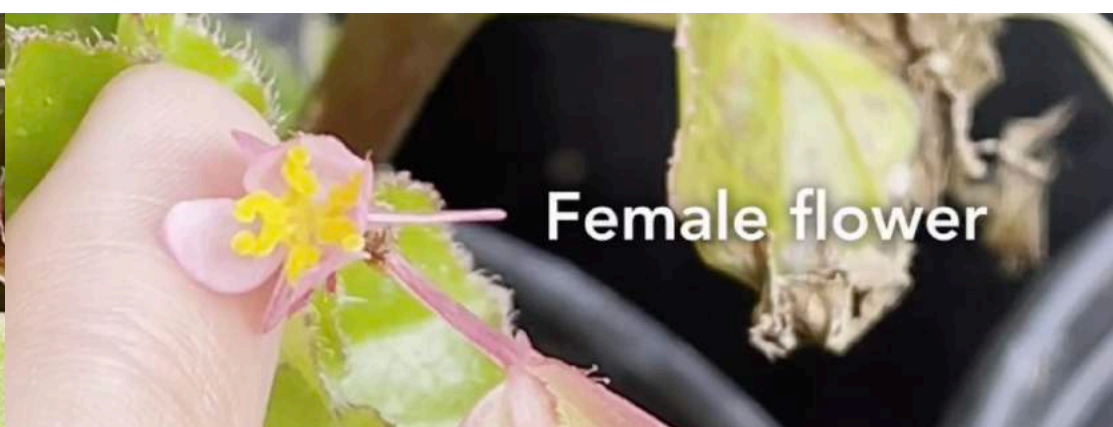
With that in mind, let's get started!



Harvesting Begonia Seed

When in flower, bees and other pollinators just love begonias and help give us seed by pollinating the flowers as they move between the blooms. Begonias are known as 'monoecious dicots'. This means each plant will have a combination of male and female flowers. This highlights the importance of pollinators like the honeybee as they transfer pollen from the anthers of the male flowers to the stamens of the female flowers.

After pollination, the once bright flowers turn brown and papery. This is the time to harvest the seed! Gently cut off the seed pods and keep them in a sheltered pot so the wind doesn't blow away the precious seed.



Sowing your Seed

Once you have gathered your seed pods, you can start gently breaking them apart to reveal the seeds inside. You can see here just how many tiny brown seed are produced by a pod from a single flower. Keep a piece of paper or container under the pods to catch all your seeds. As the seeds are very small, it is best to do this indoors away from any gusts of wind.

As the begonia seed are extremely tiny, you need to make sure the growing medium you use is very fine with no large chunks of material. We used a medium made up of coir, perlite and vermiculite to fill up large flat seed trays. Give the medium a gentle pat with your palms to create a flat surface. You can also give the medium a light soaking before you sow the seed.

To make the sowing process as simple as possible, get yourself an A4 piece of paper. Fold it in half lengthwise, and then seal the one side while you fold a point into the other. Gently pour your begonia seed into this envelope. To ensure you sow the seed evenly, gently shake the envelope so the seed slowly trickles out. Make horizontal, vertical and diagonal passes a few times over to ensure even coverage.



After a second round of gentle watering, you can label your trays and move them to a warm, humid spot. We kept our seed in a mist bed where they received a 20 second misting every hour or so. If you don't have access to facilities like this, check out this simple hack.

Instead of using flats to sow your seed, recycle a veggie punnet. Punnets with plastic lids like these ones make great makeshift mini-greenhouses. If your punnet is made from cardboard, give it a good soak before you fill it with your germination mix. Gently moisten the medium and sow your seed in the same method we showed you earlier. Then simply place the lid back on your punnet and you have just created a useful little greenhouse for your future seedlings. Keep your punnet in a sunny area out of direct sunlight. You can either water the seed every few days just before the soil dries out, or you can sit your punnets in a water bath.

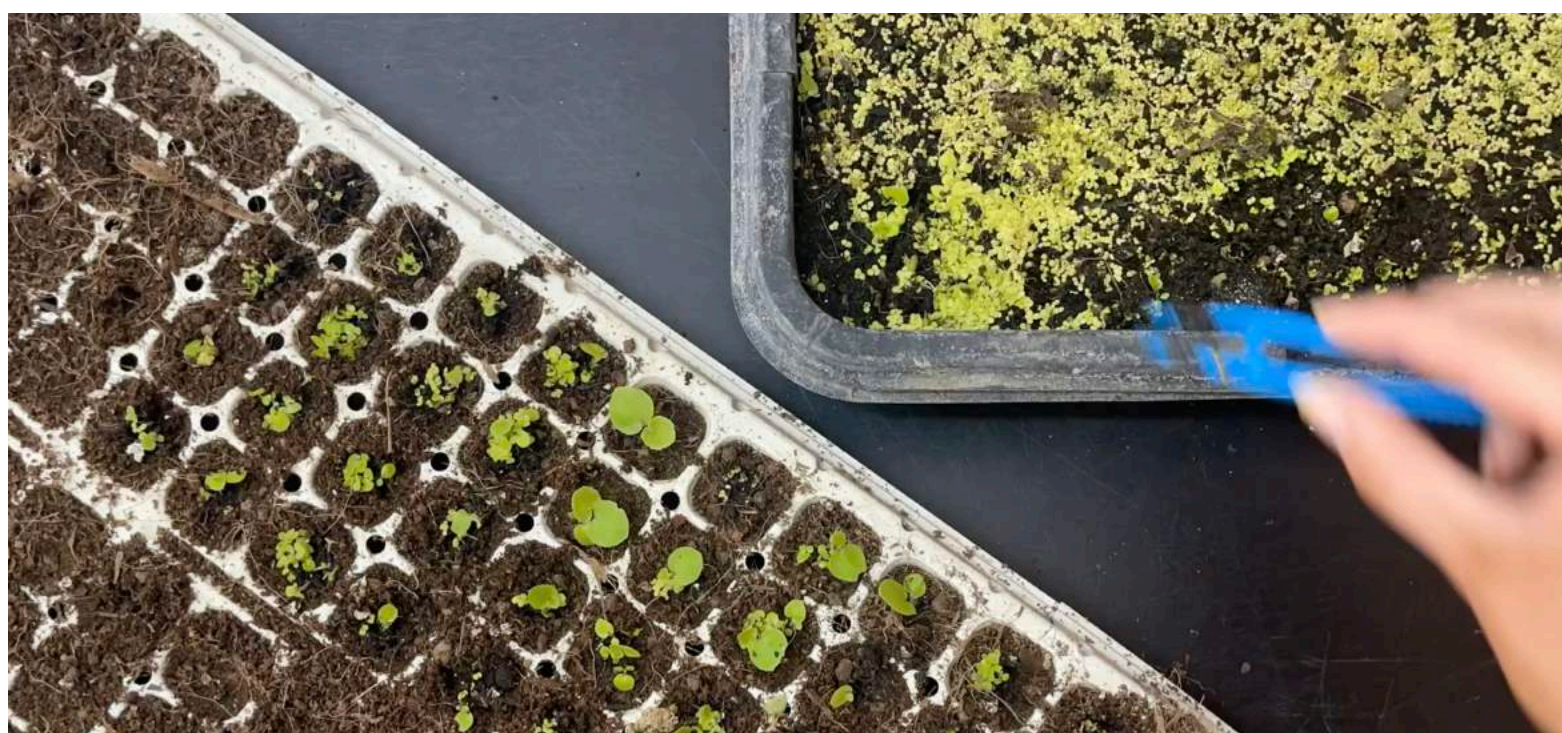
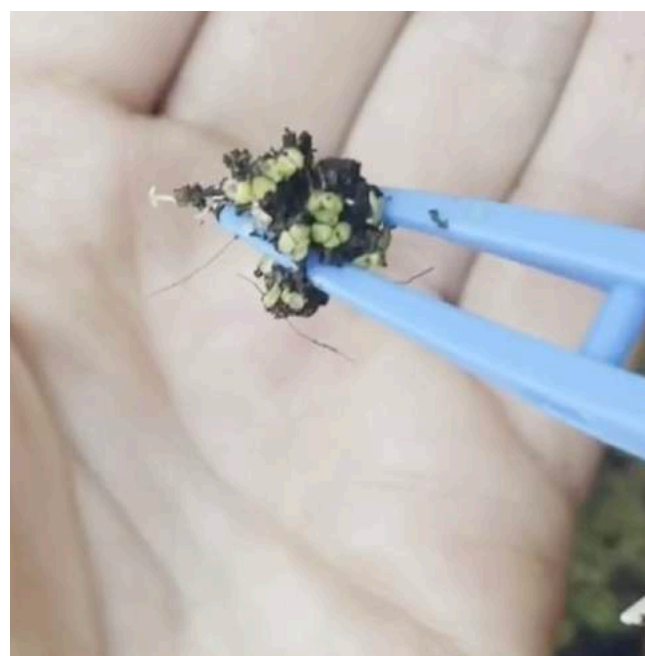


Seed germination and transplantation

After about 2 weeks in the mist bed, this is what our trays looked like (see next page). The begonia seed germinated to create a fine layer of moss-like greenery. And after 6 weeks this is what the seedlings had grown into. At this time, you can think of transplanting your seedlings so they have more room to grow and develop.



To do this, we filled some trays with the same medium. Using a pair of tweezers, pull out a clump of soil. You can either gently tease apart the root system of larger seedlings, or plant a single clump into a cell in the tray. As these grow you can divide them later if you want to plant them into individual containers.



Top Tips for Getting the Most out of your Begonia Seed

Tip 1: As you saw, begonia seed are extremely small. Begonias are light sensitive plants and need light to germinate, therefore it is extremely important that you **do not cover your seed once they are sown**. This also highlights the importance of having a flat surface made up of a fine growing media because if your seed fall too deep into any holes they will not be able to grow.

Tip 2: Begonia seed are very water sensitive and require a wet environment to germinate. Therefore, you must **make sure the medium is kept in an almost saturated state**. This is why it is important to either use automated mist irrigation, or our mini greenhouse hack to prevent water loss.

Tip 3: Begonia are tropical perennial plants. **This means they require warm temperatures to germinate**. To start germination, the ambient temperature must be at least 22°C (72°F). To ensure rapid and even emergence, air temperatures of 28°C (82°F) for 5 to 7 days will be required, this can be reduced to 25°C (78°F) thereafter until seedlings emerge.

Tip 4: When you transplant your larger seedlings, they can no longer rely on the nutrients reserved in their seed and first set of leaves. **You will therefore need to start fertilizing them**. While they are still young, use a half strength solution containing a higher proportion of nitrogen and phosphorous, which will promote leaf and root development respectively. When the plants have matured and are about to enter the flowering phase, switch to a fertiliser that contains a higher potassium concentration.