



2016: Year of the Begonia

The National Garden Bureau has designated 2016 as “Year of the Begonia.” So how can growers capitalize on this landscape staple that continues to delight gardeners, from Boomers to Millennials?

BY JENNIFER CALHOUN

We all know that begonias are the landscape staple ... from sun to shade, real estate installations to municipal plantings, they work. They work hard, but are these old workhorses really worth all the attention? Absolutely! With more than 1,700 different species, begonias (family Begoniaceae) is the fifth most diverse class of plants.

In 1909, Benary introduced the world’s first F1 hybrid ornamental fibrous begonia ‘Primadonna’ from seed. Since then,

Benary has spent more than 100 years perfecting the begonia. Here are a few trends that we’ve seen along the way.

1. EASY DOES IT

The “lack of time” is cited over and over as the main reason why people don’t garden, or limit their time in the garden. Technology was supposed to make work easier, so people would have more leisure time. The irony is that people may have more leisure time, but they choose to spend it indoors using technology. When they do choose to garden, they want plants that are easy to plant and easy to maintain. They don’t want gardening to be a chore. They want to interact with their garden, and make it a fun part of their lives.

BIG begonias are perfect for these “no nonsense gardeners” because they are such easy plants to grow! They thrive anywhere from full sun to full shade and even tolerate poor soils. Their well-branched habit provides an amazing show of color all season and

A premium basket using Nonstop Joy begonia adds an instant pop of color to any setting.



BIG begonias on display in Chicago

will stand up to the hottest summer days and the worst thunderstorms without breaking open. They are quite drought tolerant, so they don't need irrigation in most areas. This means even the most novice gardener can be an instant success.

We have created a magazine of fun activities, recipes and tips about growing begonias and having fun with them. From making bath salts to a smart phone cover, most projects shown take just 10 to 30 minutes and can be done at home with your family and friends. So have fun with begonias! Go to www.benary.com to download the full BIG Magazine.

2. THE NEED FOR SPEED

Technology has also given us very short attention spans. You can look up just about anything on the internet in seconds. We expect an immediate reply to a text. Most "gardeners" are no longer willing to wait for plants to grow. They would rather buy finished plants in premium containers and "decorate" with them. The mid-sized pot (10 to 12 inches) is probably the most popular because it can be easily moved and tucked into dull corners, on a table or up a flight of stairs.

According to the Garden Media Group, "Wanting to instantly 'set the space' before a party is a key reason people buy plants. They're looking for easy, quick solutions they can personalize."

Premium basket begonias like Nonstop, Nonstop Joy, and Nonstop Mocca are perfect for this instant pop of color. The entire Nonstop family offers well-branched plants with huge, fully double flowers. Their clean, bright colors look great by themselves, in mixed containers, or even shady beds around the patio.

Benary's 'Nonstop Joy Yellow' is the latest innovation for growers and



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retailers. It's tight, mounded habit makes it easier to ship and sleeve making it perfect for growers who have to ship long distances to their retail location. 'Nonstop Joy Yellow' is a 'one size fits all' plant because it forms very nice baskets, is great in

containers, and is also very vigorous and free flowering in beds.

3. BROWNSCAPING IS KING

Brownscaping (cutting back on irrigating lawns and non essentials) is a topic of conversation from

Maine to Washington. According to the Garden Writers Association 2013 Trends Survey, when it comes to conserving water, 30 percent of respondents say they don't water at all. In Metrolina's Home Garden Panel Survey, 14 percent of people

surveyed said that watering was what they disliked most about gardening.

For some, the restrictions are regulated by local government. For others, limiting water use is a personal choice based on environmental consciousness or time and money restrictions. Either way, begonias are a great choice for water challenged landscapes. Since begonias prefer to dry out between waterings, they still thrive even in these challenging conditions. In fact, BIG begonias only need about 1 inch of water per week eliminating the need for irrigation in most of the country, and making them a landscapers' favorite!

4. A THIRST FOR ADVENTURE

Gen Xers and Millennials generally don't like the same things their parents and grandparents like. They want to be unique and explore new trends and new ideas. Benary has utilized the incredible diversity of begonias to introduce innovative flower forms like 'San Francisco'

Begonia boliviensis varieties, such as 'San Francisco', are perfect for young, novice gardeners.



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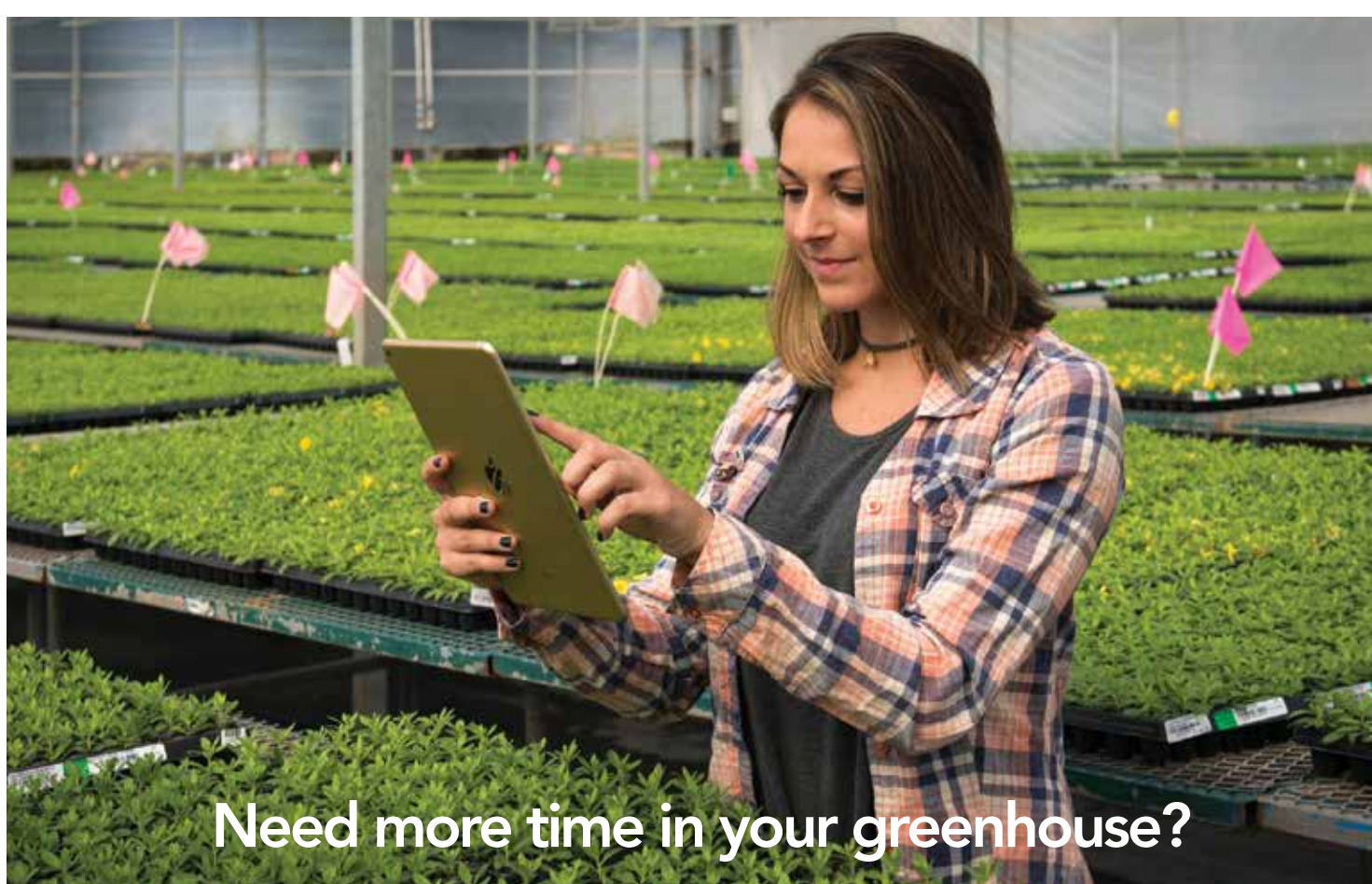


BIG begonias thrive anywhere, from full sun to full shade, and they even tolerate poor soils.

and 'Santa Cruz'. These *Begonia boliviensis* varieties are perfect for young, novice gardeners because they look very tropical and different from traditional wax begonias yet are just as easy to grow. They are not only beautiful, but incredibly heat and weather tolerant. They are perfect for hot, sunny spots where the other tuberous begonias might burn.

No matter what the current trends are, begonias have proven to stand the test of time as one of gardeners' favorite plants. They are easy to grow, and have outstanding garden performance, amazing colors and flower forms. [gpn](#)

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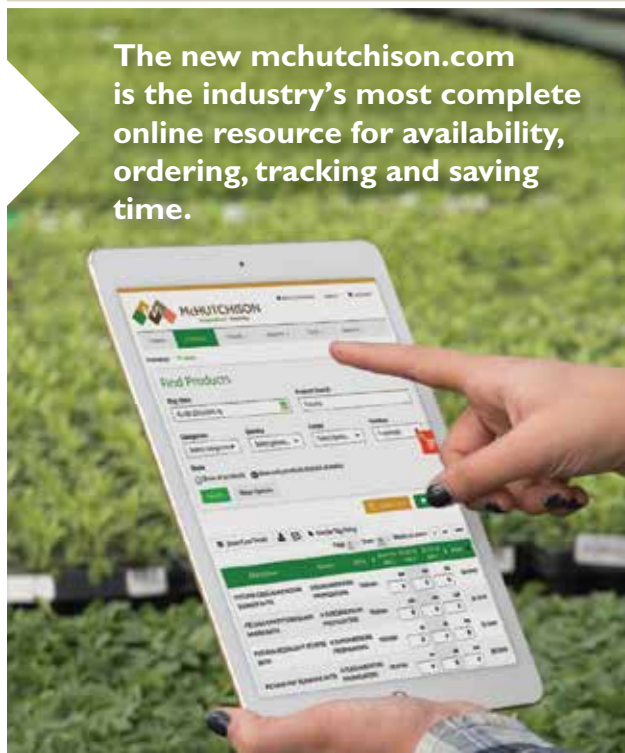
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