

# Foxcroft Resident Collects Begonias by the Hundreds

"Begonias are my hobby," says Mrs. George W. W. Barton of East Surrey, Foxcroft. Thirty years ago Mrs. Barton began the study of begonias and became so fascinated that she became an outstanding collector and authority. She has been called upon to write countless articles and give numerous talks on the subject over the years.

The Bartons recently moved into second floor where she grew and their home in Foxcroft from Flint. developed as many as 187 different in their Flint home, Mrs. Barton species of begonias at one time had a balcony greenhouse on the It is a hobby requiring a great

deal of time and is literally worth its weight in gold, too, as a single ounce of begonia seed costs \$3,000. The seed is almost powder fine and an ounce will produce millions of plants.

Mrs. Barton's collection came from all over the world and from coast to coast of the U.S.A., having been purchased during her travels to these places. In the course of 30 years, she estimates she has invested between \$75,000 in the plants. Some special varieties come as high as \$10 a single plant.

"Begonia collecting," she writes, "creates one of the most absorbing and fascinating hobbies in the world. I know, because I was in-oculated 30 years ago when a

kind neighbor gave me a little wax-leafed begonia, covered with tiny pink flowers. "This started an interest which led to voracious study. It has influenced every vacation trip here and abroad to search out different specimens, widening friendships to every state in the Union."

"As F.H. Everett of the New York Botanical Gardens aptly stated, 'Of all special plant growers, begonia collectors are by far the most enthusiastic.' Begonias were named by the Franciscan monk and botanist, Charles Plumier, to honor Michel Begon, then governor of Santo Domingo and marine administrator for France. This first genus was named begonia was discovered in

1649 in Jamaica. From that date on through the 18th century, kings of Europe sent out doctors, explorers and botanists to search the world for new specimens, principally for medicinal and economic uses. These plants were brought back to European gardens to be catalogued and registered. "Under the genus name begonia," Mrs. Barton explains, "we have four species: the tuberous, bulbous, fibrous rooted and rhizomatous. Today there are around 1,200 species established and over a thousand variations in kinds awaiting registration."

At an elevation of 10,000 feet in the Andes mountains was discovered the first small single flowered yellow tuberous specie. In Chile, Peru and Bolivia were found others which became the parent plants in producing the double gigantic blooming tuberous begonias in a wide variety of colors and forms we know today.

From China, Africa and the Island of Socotra in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa and Madagascar were discovered bulbous and semi-bulbous begonias. From India came King of Begonias—the Rex, a rhizomatous specie whose variegated leaves often with a metallic sheen or overlay, are famous and popular for leaves alone, whether or not they blossom.

The Rex varieties number in the hundreds as hybridized develop new color combinations, new leaf textures from pebbly crinkled or twisted-like, cork-like, to sizes from miniature to gigantic.

"I have seen Rex begonias growing in California which attain a leaf dimension of 12 to 16 inches in length and almost as wide," Mrs. Barton said.

"Cane-stemmed begonias of the fibrous root species have silver-spotted or splashed leaves and large masses of pendulous blossoms. These attain tree size in California or Florida where the growing season is out-of-doors in lathe houses never ceases. Some types are 15-20 feet tall with leaves a foot long and half as wide."

The ever-blooming fibrous root of begonias are the most popular in Michigan as house plants or used in yard borders or beds in summer. Mrs. Barton said:

"The leaves may be red, bronze, green, or green and white spotted. The colors of flowers, single or double, range from white, pink, to rose and deep red and of all varieties."

The New Hampshire hybrid discovered by Dr. Holley and the gorgeous cascading blossomed hybrids of the late Ernest Lodge of Danielson, Conn. are Mrs. Barton's favorites.

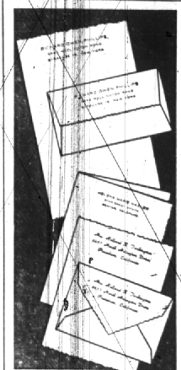
These hybrids were discovered as mutations among acres of begonia plants grown in a field. These mutants were potted up and only cuttings taken to assure that the same strain be perpetuated.

January 20, 1955 THE BIRMINGHAM ECCEMTRIC Page 3  
"Never will my love of begonia wane in interest and gradually when space is made available here, I will again replace my favorite specimens."

## 'Symphony Night' For Area AAUW's

"Symphony Night" for five branches of the American Association of University Women will see many of the reserve block of 150 seats occupied by members of the Birmingham branch.

Mrs. Howard B. Green, in charge of local ticket sales, said the concert featuring Robert Casadesu, will be scheduled for 8 p.m. Jan. 29 in the Detroit Masonic Temple.



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MR. AND MRS. J. H. LA FOUNTAIN, JR.

## Bride Selects Taffeta For Presbyterian Rites

Mr. Joseph H. LaFountain, Jr., left last week for Frankfurt, Germany, following a honeymoon with his wife, the former Marilyn Cain.

Given in marriage by her uncle, J. Stewart Farmer of Sylvan Lake, the couple exchanged vows in the First Presbyterian church of Royal Oak with the Rev. R. G. Rieman officiating at the candlelight ceremony.

Marilyn is the daughter of Mrs. Dorothy A. Cain of Tonawanda drive and Wilfred S. Cain of Tampa, Fla. The bridegroom's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Joseph LaFountain, Sr., of Royal Oak.

A draped taffeta apron formed a buckle back on the waitz length bridal gown. Her fingertip veil was held by a crown of pearls and brilliants.

The brides' sister, Beverly Cain, was maid of honor, and Gale Cronkrite was bridesmaid. Their

dresses were of emerald green satin and net and they wore tiaras of yellow forget-me-nots centered with brilliants. They carried colonial bouquets of yellow mums and roses.

Jean LaFountain, sister of the groom, was flower girl in a floor length gown of yellow taffeta. She carried a nosegay of yellow roses.

Jerome LaFountain was his brother's best man. Guests were seated by James Higgins and Clark Bird.

Mr. Cain wore a dressmaker suit of pink with matching accessories and the groom's mother chose navy. Both mothers had corsages of orchids.

The new Mrs. LaFountain is making her home with her mother while her husband is overseas.

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