

# SEEDS WORTH TWENTY TIMES THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD

**WONDERFUL PRICES OF THE PROGENY OF THE PETUNIA and HER PRETTY SISTERS**

**T**HE seedsman took up a tiny spoon of horn, smooth as a pearl all over, with its cup the shape of a mustard spoon, and no larger, if as large.

Very carefully he dipped it into the little pile of drab powder on the highly calendered paper before him, and scooped up a lilliputian spoonful. He shook it, with gentle solicitude, until the spoonful was rounded off nearly level with the edge. Then he deposited the powder on a separate paper, such as the druggist uses for his preparations.

"That powder might be gold dust from the way you handle it," remarked the interested spectator.

"Gold dust!" the seedsman retorted, disdainfully. "Why, this is worth fifteen or twenty times its weight in gold. Man, this is double-fringed petunia seed, worth \$3 a thousand seeds at retail—\$300 or \$400 an ounce!"

The interested spectator bent over for a



Whether the florists drew their metaphor from inimitable Homer, with his reference to "rosy-fingered dawn," or, whether they discovered the beautiful resemblance at first for themselves, need not matter. It is an exceptionally true comparison, for the new variety of petunia wears, in the most delicate perfection, the rosy flush of the dawning day, perhaps the most fascinating tint man's eyes can look upon.

It came from the north of Germany last season, and won instant favor. Unlike so many fads in flowers, whose triumphs can be counted by the hundreds, and whose quick decline happens almost as frequently, the rosy morn petunia, with its fringed edge and its exquisite pink shadings, has been more popular this year than when it made its cordially received debut.

Remarkable in such an event, its price remains low—only 20 or 25 cents for a package of half a hundred seeds. That makes its price at least \$500 an ounce to the public; but still, at the charges the public is called upon to pay for trivial packets, made out of the 100,000 and more seeds that go into the ounce of the wholesaler, it

is cheap compared with the 50 cents per packet charged for the little imported collection of half a dozen fringed varieties. They sometimes retail at \$1000 for an ounce; while many double-fringed varieties of imported stock sell at 75 cents, or \$1500 an ounce.

Yet the petunia is neither the most expensive nor the tiniest of the aristocratic flower seeds.

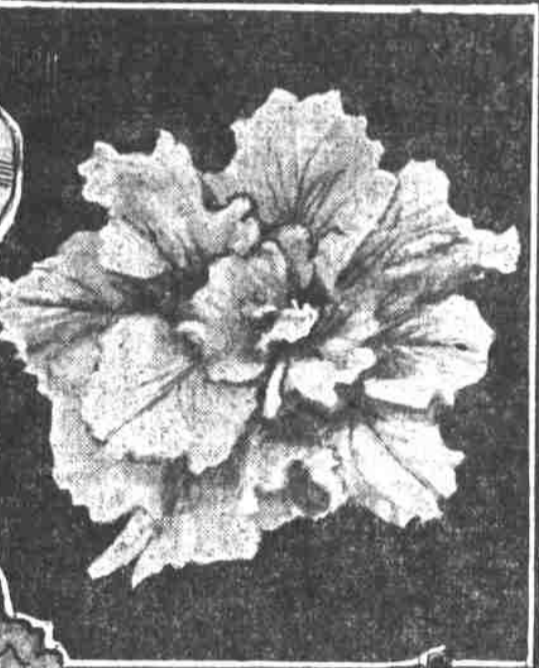
There is the begonia, household word with lovers of fine flowers, to whom its intense vermilion, brilliant yellow and orange, rosy pink and creamy white blooms, measuring as large as six inches across, have appealed irresistibly for years.

Fine as are the seeds of the petunia, those of the begonia are only half their size, almost as delicate as the motes that fly in the sunbeams. In England, where some of the choicest kinds are produced, the buyer will pay \$200 for an ounce, if such a riot of extravagance should occur to him; here, the charges on such seeds are usually double. He would scarcely escape paying less than \$400.

But, abroad, as here, the fine art of the seedsman is called upon to split and divide the ounce, even for the great florists, down to the sixteenth and thirty-second fraction.

All these seeds, from those at \$5 an ounce to those worth nearly \$500, at wholesale rates, are sold in fractions of sixteenths and thirty-seconds. The public enjoys their outcome through the efforts of the professional florist; the very wealthy, through the skill of highly paid gardeners.

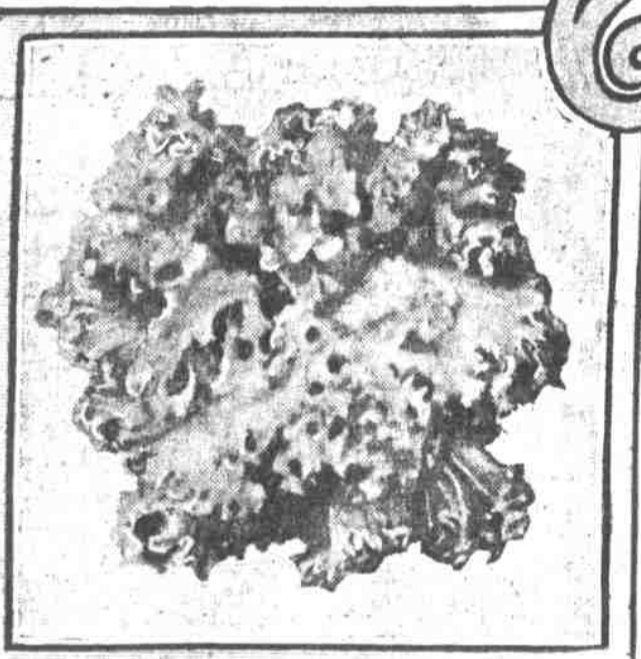
The seed of calceolaria, that strange, pocket-like flower, which comes into bloom in the early spring, with its "tigered" and spotted blossoms, is no larger than that of the begonia. England charges \$100 an ounce for it there, and the price rises to \$250 by the time it is on sale in the United States.



Double Petunia



A Double-Fringed Blossom—Its Seed Worth 300 to 400 an Ounce



Double-Fringed Petunia

Petunias of the Single-Fringed Families

Group of Double and Single-Fringed Petunias

closer look. The seedsman waved him away, in hasty apprehension. "Don't breathe near that pile!" he cried, warningly. "A single breath upon those seeds might cost me \$50 or \$100. This is pretty serious business."

A primrose by a river's brim  
A yellow primrose was in bloom,  
And it was nothing more, no less,  
And it was nothing more, no less.

**E**VEN the primrose of Wordsworth's naturalist is a good deal more to the seedsman. Coarse as they are, in comparison with the immaterial germ lives of the petunia, the seeds of the primrose average 15,000 to the ounce, and the wholesale price is usually 81 per 100 of them, or 810 an ounce—a good deal more than the worth of their weight in gold.

When the retail public indulges in these profit-takers of the floral republic, pretty as they are and coarse as are the seeds, it pays a quarter of a dollar for a packet containing about fifty. So even the seed of the primrose becomes at last worth \$75 an ounce, a valuation beside which virgin gold is cheap.

When it comes to measuring out some of the seeds that hold records for smallness, the anxious seedsman's measured glass was mild in his phrasing. Very serious business it is, indeed, for a very great business, too, all over the United States and Europe.

For these are the master seeds of the floral garden, and they are the seeds of the florists and the gardeners of the very rich, and even by them purchased in the most trifling quantities. The need for a whole ounce of such seeds is experienced only by the wholesalers, whose trade supplies the demands of communities.

When the seeds of the petunia, hundreds of which could be gathered upon the damp tip of one's forefinger, have undergone nature's marvelous transformation under the auspices of the expert gardener or florist, the results are the rarest and most charming products of the realm of flowers; and yet the poorest among those who gaze admiringly upon the conservatories of the rich, where the high-salaried expert brings to bear upon their planting and culture all the sci-

ence gleaned by modern horticulture, can afford to own and enjoy some of them. And that is precisely what the poor and the fairly well off and the passably rich do.

For then, even in their smallest, earliest development, as they stand shyly in their three-inch pots, the plants that have grown from one of those thousand seeds, which cost three for a cent, are worth from 15 to 25 cents apiece—a price at which almost any one with an ambitious taste in plants can own one or two.

By this time an ounce of the double-fringed petunias, which had cost the wholesaler \$150 in the first place and brought him between \$300 and \$400 in the second place, have increased in value to \$15,000, since, grown into plants, at least 100,000 in number, they have a clear market value at 15 cents a plant, as a rule, and 25 cents in many instances.

But the possibilities of the tiny pile of impalpable dust comprising that original ounce of petunia seed were not yet exhausted. Daily cultivation until the plants were on the eve of blooming, in all the brilliant variety of their hues, every one of them was to command no less than half a dollar as its market price. So the final, full worth of the possibilities that lay latent in that dust pile on the paper was \$50,000.

Throughout their history, but especially in New England and New York, the splendors of the petunias may be seen at their height during the mid-summer months. It is almost the only display produced from the whole range of high priced, microscopic flower seeds, that attains its triumph in the summer.

But it is fit to maintain its distinction among all the rich effluences of the season. Few plants equal it in effectiveness for outdoor decoration or for house culture. It maintains a continuous sheet of bloom until killed by frost. The flowers—red, purple, white, yellow and, again, starred in coloring—had a new hue added to their admirable repertory last year. The florists have called it the "Rosy Morn."