

THE RAISES CASTOR OIL PLANTS

Kids Won't Like Woman's Hobby

It's doubtful that youngsters who have had to take castor oil will appreciate the hobby of Mrs. Rita Danese of Warwick -- she grows the rare African plant from which the usually foul-tasting liquid is extracted.

And despite the fact that she uses her old, soapy laundry and dishwater to water the plants, they have grown in eight weeks from tiny seeds to towering 8-foot tropical specimens.

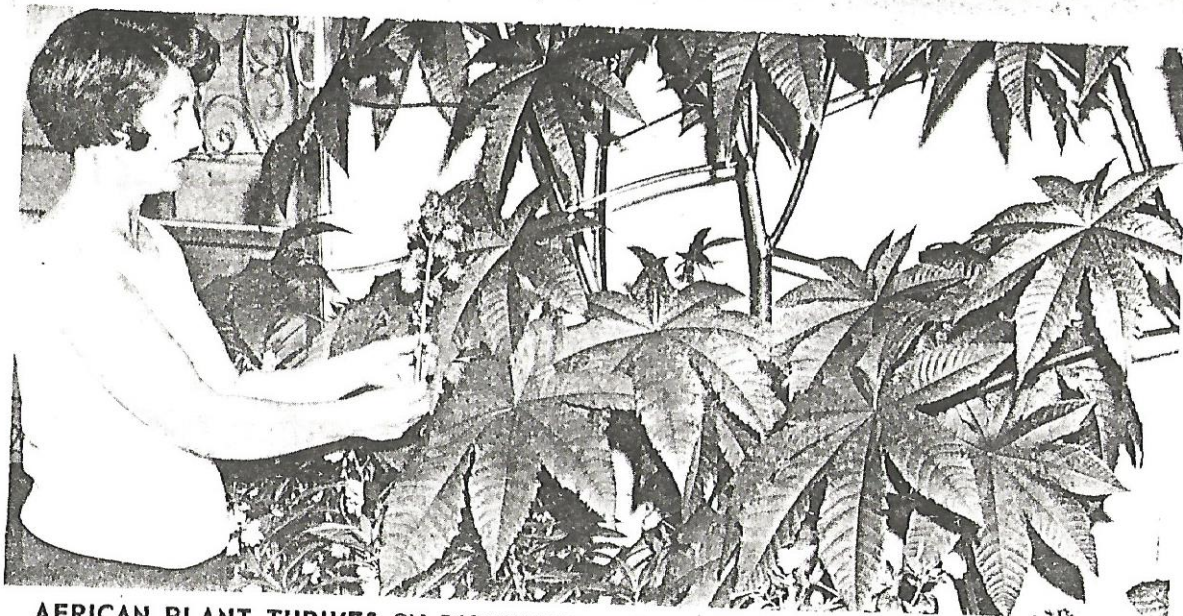
"These giant plants are

called *Ricinus Communis*, but they're better known as castor oil plants," Mrs. Danese explained. "I grow them for the sake of their handsome leaves."

Top Prizes

Her hobby paid off last week. Entering a horticulture competition for the first time, Mrs. Danese copped five blue ribbons, two red ribbons and a white ribbon

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AFRICAN PLANT THRIVES ON DISHWATER — Mrs. Rita Danese of Warwick found an unconventional way to raise rare castor oil plants — she waters them with her old laundry and dishwater. The plant above grew from a seed to a height of eight feet in just 12 weeks. See story on this page.

HOBBY

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at the Rocky Hill Fair.

"I entered hoping to get one small ribbon for my flowers and plants," she explained. "To say I am thrilled is an understatement."

Getting the castor oil plants to grow in her home was no easy task, and veteran plant growers were convinced that the African "Ricinus Communis" would not attain their full growth in the New England climate. Using unconventional methods, Mrs. Danese has babied the two plants to the size where they are threatening to take over her home at 92 Shand Avenue.

'Insect' Seeds

"Before I do any planting,

I soak the seeds in warm water overnight; the seeds look exactly like little insects," she said. "I plant the seeds at about May 15 or after to insure that the frost has passed. After about five days, the seedlings appear and I spray about one cup of cow fertilizer around the soil. But, I always water my plants with the soap water of my washing machine and my dishes. This is the secret to my success."

Mrs. Danese was quick to point out that the African plants present a danger to children. While the flowers of the castor oil plant may be beautiful, they are also

poisonous, if taken internally.

"The best policy is to keep the plant away from children," she said. "I know many people who raise plants of various kinds, and they throw out their valuable dishwater. In just three months, one of my castor oil plants grew to a diameter of three inches and to a height of eight feet. Don't throw that valuable wash water away, use it for flowers."

Mrs. Danese also has good news for children of her neighborhood. She will use the castor oil plants merely as show pieces, and won't extract any of the castor oil for distribution to neighborhood medicine cabinets.

