



**NAME**  
BARBARA ERWIN

**COMPANY**  
FOLIAGE WORKS

**TITLE**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

PROFILE **BARBARA ERWIN**

If you would like to learn more about Senior Enterprise visit the website [www.seniorenterprise.ie](http://www.seniorenterprise.ie)



Barbara Erwin, 67, from Northern Ireland set up 'Foliage Works' a local flower growing business in her 60s after her retirement from a full time position as a senior university academic.

Barbara began her working life teaching Biology and eventually became Head of a University College Science Department where she developed a range of in-service courses for Science teachers and a new degree course in Health and Leisure studies. Despite enjoying her job, she longed for the opportunity to turn her flourishing gardening hobby into a career- "During the last few years of working as senior manager, I did a lot of research into the floristry industry and attended several agriculture and rural development courses."

After Barbara took early retirement at 61, she had to put her business plan on hold because of family responsibilities. Barbara had to care for her elderly parents and look after her grandchildren which gave her little time to develop her flower growing business.

Once Barbara no longer had so many family commitments, she was left with the time and energy to turn her gardening hobby into a business and decided to set up 'Foliage Works' in 2011 to utilise her gardening skills. Luckily, Barbara was fortunate enough to have the finances to buy the equipment to get her business up and running and even invested in a polytunnel so that her work would not be restricted by weather conditions.

Since then, Barbara hasn't looked back and maintains that she is as busy now as she was in her 20s. She currently sells her class 1 cut flowers to a local florist and sells the remainder of her flowers from her home in order to make use of everything she grows.

She also grows foliage which is cut and sold during the winter months. Barbara has also branched out into growing Christmas trees which she sells seasonally - she has a selection of two types of tree and also grows smaller ones in plant pots. Additionally, Barbara is in the process of developing a website and has a presence on yell.com. Foliage Works is developing nicely and Barbara is particularly excited about what the future holds for her business.

The Prince's Initiative, a partner in Senior Enterprise, sends out regular newsletters, and as a Prince's Initiative Client, Barbara finds these updates particularly helpful and supports the charity wholeheartedly. "The Prince's Initiative's mission is so worthwhile - we're in an ageing society and there are so many capable people over the age of 50 who just need a bit of support in becoming self-employed. The networking events and courses which The Prince's Initiative runs are such a fantastic idea because having a network of people to share ideas with when you're starting up is so valuable."

Barbara is really enjoying the benefits of self-employment - "It's brilliant doing something you love every day and for me it's fantastic that my job is based at home. Self-employment means you don't resent the time you spend working and can choose your hours which is great as I can spend time with my family who are a huge support."

Barbara's advice to any other over 50s considering self-employment is to research thoroughly and understand the market - "once the foundations and knowledge base are there it means you can make a real go of it and are more likely to get it right."

For more information about Foliage Works, contact [Barbara@foliageworks.com](mailto:Barbara@foliageworks.com)

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> **INVESTING & ACQUIRING**

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