



Glennys Doane expanded her flower sales business to include a monthly subscription delivery service during the growing season.

Flower Grower Sells Bouquet Subscriptions

Glennys Doane has a new spin on Farm-to-Table. Instead of food, she grows flowers for the centerpieces. Her Prairie Field clients subscribe for one or two bouquets to be delivered each month from May through September.

"I have been growing flowers for 3 years and sold them at farmers market venues. After the first year, I wanted a different model for marketing," says the Downs, Kansas, grower.

She lives in a rural area, 85 miles from a larger city, but has found great support in her community. Some subscribers are businesses that display the flowers in public areas. Many clients are friends or people who treat themselves with flowers or give them to others. One customer has her monthly bouquet delivered to someone different each time.

Doane grows about 1/4 of an acre of flowers on the Doane's grain farm and has plenty of room to expand. She plants many kinds of flowers to ensure something is blooming throughout the season. Along with common varieties from ageratum to zinnias, she likes to surprise her clients with flowers like Ammi, which looks similar

to Queen Anne's lace and comes in white, purple and chocolate.

"The sunflower is my staple. And I'm a great forager," Doane says, explaining she tucks in branches of choke cherry blossoms, sprigs of milo, and fall foliage plants, depending on the season.

"I never promise specific flowers," she says. "I'm never sure what I will have, and I never know about the weather." One thing she always does is make her bouquets generous and full.

She follows a rotation, delivering her bouquets in about a 60-mile radius from her farm home. The one exception is an 85-mile trip to Hays, where she meets up with a friend for coffee. She charges \$75 for monthly bouquets and \$125 for bimonthly subscriptions. She also creates \$20 bouquets for individual orders. Bouquets come with food packets and instructions, and they should last a good week, Doane says.

Every bouquet is different, arranged in a variety of vases.

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Photos show before and after of metal lawn furniture refinished using Jim Deardorff's system.

He Started A Lawn Furniture Refinishing Business

After retirement, Jim Deardorff switched from sandblasting and painting farm equipment to refinishing metal lawn furniture. He says it's a low-cost business that almost anyone could start.

"I use a system I perfected for farm machinery to paint antique lawn furniture and collectibles," says Deardorff. "Every town has homeowners with old metal lawn furniture. My hometown has a population of 10,000, and I never run out of work."

Deardorff emphasizes the low cost of getting into the business. He has a Deere air compressor that cost about \$1,000. Blast media costs him about \$20 for a 55-lb. bag. He notes that with a simple containment system around the blasting area, media can be reused as many as 20 times. While he has the professional sandblasting equipment from his previous career, he recommends a small blaster from IBIX priced at \$2,560 (www.ibixusa.com; ph 727 322-4611).

"A friend brought over his IBIX EasyBlast 6, and we used it on a wooden desk chair," says Deardorff. "We used

garnet beads that took the finish off but didn't affect the wood at all."

Deardorff recommends following his procedure when refinishing metal lawn furniture. "First, I sandblast to remove old paint and rust," he says. "Second, I apply an extra thick coat of oil-based primer. Third, I top coat the primed metal with an oil-based finish coat with a urethane hardener. Finally, I apply a coat of Perमानon, a German nano-coating, for extra protection."

Deardorff advises his customers to reapply the Perमानon yearly to maintain shine and prevent rust. He says it waterproofs paint when used on an annual basis.

"You can buy Dustless Blasting Equipment for \$46,000 and get into that business for around \$100,000," says Deardorff. "Or you can do what I'm doing and set up a lawn furniture business for under \$5,000."

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Farm Couple Started Profitable Tea Business

In 2011, Thomas Steinwinder was sitting in a Shanghai, China café drinking a cup of tea when he was asked, "Where do you grow tea in the U.S.?" Steinwinder told the questioner that the U.S. imports most of its tea, but he didn't have an answer as to why the U.S. doesn't grow its own tea.

After he returned to the U.S., he and his wife, Hillary, began researching tea plant growing. That research eventually led to them launching Longleaf Tea Company on southeast Mississippi farmland that's been in Hillary's family for 5 generations.

"We spent 7 years researching tea farming, processing, climate requirements, and market needs," Steinwinder says. "We planted 1,200 plants in October 2018, another 1,000 in 2019, and now have more than 3,000 plants in the ground."

Steinwinder says growing tea plants requires 4 key ingredients. They need acidic soil that's well-drained, at least 50 in. of rainfall per year, and lots of sunshine. Their farm location at Laurel, Miss. satisfies all 4 requirements.

Longleaf's tea plants are coupled in rows that gradually form into thick hedges. Tulip Poplar trees are planted among the rows to provide the mottled shade that tea plants require.

Most of the world's tea, whether it's black, oolong, white or green, is produced from the tea plant *Camellia sinensis*. Tea leaves are harvested every 2 weeks from March to October by "hand plucking" just the top 2 leaves and a leaf bud on new growth. Black tea is processed from leaves that are withered, or left to wilt for several hours, then rolled to bruise the leaves. The bruising releases enzymes that oxidize compounds in the leaf tissue, causing leaves to turn dark brown. With green tea, leaves are steamed after a short withering step.

Although most of the world's tea is still plucked by hand, mechanical harvesters



Tea leaves are hand-picked and hand-sorted at the Long Leaf Tea Company farm near Laurel, Miss. Thomas and Hillary Steinwinder spent 7 years researching tea production and now have more than 3,000 productive tea plants in the ground.

are making inroads. Steinwinder says he will begin experimenting in 2023 with an Australian harvesting system that mimics hand plucking. He and his wife envision their tea plantation becoming an "agrotourism" stop in the future for people willing to pay to visit a tea plantation.

Asked his advice for people who might want to start a growing tea, Steinwinder says, "Because of the capital outlay and huge time commitment, you'll feel like you want to quit for the first 3 or 4 years. We went through all that, and now that the plants are maturing and our internet orders are growing, it's becoming a really fascinating enterprise."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Long Leaf Tea Company, Laurel, Miss. (www.longleaftea.co).

Cheese Trail Leads Visitors To Indiana Producers

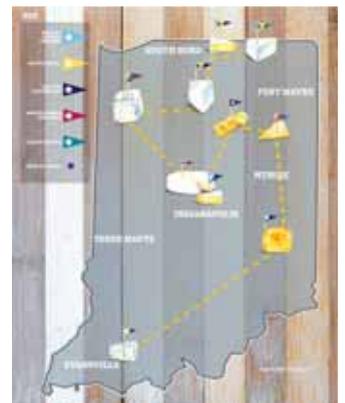
Follow the cheddar brick road! That's the slogan for a fun, new way to find locally made cheese in Indiana. The American Dairy Association of Indiana came up with the Cheese Trail to connect consumers with producers.

"People have contacted us and said they didn't know cheese was made so close to their home," says Brooke Williams, director of communications for ADAL.

Since June, cheese lovers have been able to go to www.indianacheesetrail.com and click on 10 cheese producers on an Indiana map. Information and a video about the cheesemakers pop up to explain who makes the cheese and where and when it can be purchased. Many offer a variety of products. Some add to the experience - like watching the cheese being made or seeing cows up close and personal. An Italian cheese shop lets customers create their own charcuterie boards.

"This is ongoing. We've made it a choose-your-own-adventure type of destination," Williams says. "When we pitched this to creameries, they were so excited to be part of the cheese trail."

The ADAL began the process by working with members and getting lists from the board of animal health. They spent time at the 10 businesses/farms that were interested



The American Dairy Association of Indiana created an online "Cheese Trail" map to highlight its member producers and encourage agritourism.

to create the short videos. It's something that could be done with growers of other products in other regions, Williams notes.

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