

# GROWERTALKS

## Under an Acre

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### Connecting a Community

*Anne-Marie Hardie*



If there were three words that could describe Lynn Coupland, they would be passionate, determined and caring. An optimist at heart, Lynn has weaved together an entire community driven by her quest for knowledge and love for others. It's these qualities that have fostered the success in Lynn's Plants and Things Greenhouse.

It all began 10 years ago when Lynn's father, Bud Jackson, retired from the greenhouse industry in Flin Flon, Manitoba. Lynn, with her husband Bill, decided to buy him out and move the business down to Benito, Manitoba. The fact that neither had previous growing experience didn't stop them; instead, they saw it simply as an opportunity to learn.

Beginning with one greenhouse, the business has now expanded to 10,000 sq. ft. of covered greenhouse with plans of continued growth.

"We love our greenhouse to no end. To me, my relaxation time is to go out there and be creative," said Lynn. Primarily a retail nursery, the greenhouse carries a variety of plants, including annuals, vegetables, perennials and trees.

The learning curve in the first year was steep. "I had aphids in the greenhouse; I didn't know what an aphid was. But my dad was here that week and helped," said Lynn. However, aphids were not the only problem Lynn confronted. Located within a farming community, spray from a farm drifted into the greenhouse, resulting in a loss of several plants. Always seeing the upside, Lynn shares that the experience taught her the importance of keeping the greenhouse fans running when the farmers are spraying.

Three years into the business, Lynn's father moved down to help out, providing that extra hand and much-appreciated insight and experience. To save time and reduce the workload for Lynn, Bud dreamed of owning a Punch 'N Gro machine for planting plugs.

"We would go to trade shows all of the time and his dream was to buy a plug machine. And so when he passed away suddenly this year, I used the money and bought the machine for the greenhouse," said Lynn.

“He just wanted it because he thought it would help everyone out. That was his dream. This year will be the first time using it.”

With no other family around (her two sisters live out of the area), the business is run with just Lynn, her husband and several volunteers. Lynn’s son also assists a few times a year, when Lynn and her husband transport their products up north for additional sales.

Completely wheelchair accessible, Lynn’s business has provided several opportunities to help support her local community. On a weekly basis, adults from community living come in to donate their time in the nursery. In return, Lynn gifts them a product from the greenhouse.

Connecting with the school community is also important for Lynn. Each year she has all the children come in to plant something for Mother’s Day, and the Grade 7 and 8 classes come in a few days a year to work a full day. At the end of their work period, Lynn donates toward their field trip.

“The community, the school has been extremely good to us with all of our foster children,” said Lynn. “I open up the business to the community in part because I love interacting with the students. I’m very interested in their learning and it’s fun to see the kids coming through the greenhouse.”

A foster parent for more than 22 years, Lynn currently fosters four children under the age of 7 and a 33-year-old woman with cerebral palsy, who’s been a part of Lynn’s family since she was 7 years old. Lynn fully believes in giving back and strength in fostering community, her business and family.

Community to Lynn is about family and Lynn truly views her community as an extended family, working together and raising kids together. Volunteers make up the majority of the Lynn’s Plants and Things work force, with most beginning in March and staying with Lynn through the entire season, until the end of July.

With a full household, the growing season is extremely busy, but it’s this pace that Lynn thrives on.

“I get to meet a lot of new people and I just enjoy visiting with the customers and people,” said Lynn. “We learn a lot and it’s a lot of fun.”

At times, life can be a bit of a juggling act: balancing work, a household and childcare. When the greenhouse is open, Lynn has to integrate a variety of childcare, including daycare, respite and sitters.

A recently retired nurse and a breast cancer survivor, Lynn is no stranger to hard work, determination and perseverance. She hopes that the future of Lynn’s Plants and Things includes expansion, learning opportunities and new ways to connect with the community.

“I think it will be different with me not working; I can put more time in the greenhouse than I’ve had before,” said Lynn. “Last year, I just wasn’t up to it. But this year, I’m determined to be up to it.”

In the last 10 years, Lynn has learned a lot—from how challenging watering can be to predicting what products to carry and sell. Throughout her journey, Lynn has had the support of an entire community. In turn,

Lynn has provided them with a second home—a location where they can be fully immersed in the beauty of the world of plants. **GT**

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