

GROWERTALKS

Under an Acre

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The Nomadic Lifestyle of Farmers Markets

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Based in Unionville, Indiana, the story of Linnea's Greenhouse began with a passion for houseplants. As a young girl, Linnea Good could often be found exploring the houseplant selection at her local grocery store, seeking out new plants to add to her quickly expanding collection. In fact, she was so passionate about houseplants that her father built a lean-to greenhouse to house Linnea's growing collection.

"I was about 10 years old when I first discovered houseplants," she shared. "I loved watching them grow and learning how to keep them alive."

Pictured: Linnea Good, owner of Linnea's Greenhouse in Unionville, Indiana, found her passion with houseplants.

The small greenhouse provided Linnea with the unique opportunity to see first-hand the positive impact a boost of summer sunshine had on her favorite houseplants. Even at this young age, Linnea was extremely research driven and could often be found exploring which techniques would

encourage the healthiest plants.

Up until this point, Linnea was self-taught, however, her sophomore year in high school presented a unique opportunity to explore her passion in the classroom. Based in the small village of Waterford, Wisconsin, her high school had acquired a small greenhouse that they decided to use for education and a source of revenue. Linnea latched onto this opportunity, diligently working at the greenhouse until she graduated.

"We learned how to grow a variety of plants, including chrysanthemums and poinsettias, as part of a classroom project," she said. The plants were, in turn, sold in a variety of fundraisers, illustrating to Linnea and her classmates the potential profit in the industry.

The high school greenhouse experience solidified that no matter what career she pursued, growing would need to be a part of it. Linnea was dedicated to growing and approached stumbling blocks, like living in a small basement apartment, as an opportunity to explore new methods and techniques. In fact, it was her basement houseplants that launched her journey into the world of farmers markets for houseplants that were propagated and grown exclusively under grow lights.

“My business started off with only four to five houseplants a week, which I sold at a table that I shared with my friend who was selling herbs,” said Linnea. “The whole process was exhilarating. I was able to discover what the public was looking for in houseplants and learn selling techniques.”

She also quickly became enamored with the world of farmers markets and the variety of customers who came into these spaces.

It was around this time that Linnea also began working at a local garden center in Bloomington, Indiana. It was here that she first explored the world of annuals, including growing from cuttings and seeds.

“I did a bit of everything, but one of my favorite things to do was working with the seedlings,” said Linnea. “I loved watching the little plants flourish into larger finished products.”

Despite the positive garden center experience, Linnea’s dream was to be able to work for herself, growing and selling her houseplants. During the summer of 1996, she started to put the plans into place, beginning with building a small greenhouse structure that she used to grow annuals, edibles and herbs.

At first, the sales from the potted plants simply provided a supplementary income to her full-time job. However, it didn’t take long until the work at her new business, which she called Linnea’s Greenhouse, required a full-time commitment.

Enamored with farmers markets and the unique atmosphere that they provided, Linnea decided to continue her nomadic retail career transporting her wares from market to market. In fact, at one time, she was selling at different markets five days a week.

In 2014, Linnea’s Greenhouse added on a 30 by 90-ft. greenhouse to support the growing demand for her products. Having the larger growing space allowed Linnea the opportunity to return to her initial passion, houseplants, while also branching into new areas, including native perennials and carnivorous plants.

“I started growing carnivorous plants five years ago and the venture has been extremely successful,” she said. But the adventure with growing new plants isn’t without its challenges—one time, she used the wrong kind of peat moss for her carnivorous plants and ended up killing the entire crop. However, the failures are often as educational as the successes.

Now, almost two decades later, Linnea has decided to focus solely on the three most profitable markets in the region.

“Everything seems to be doing well; profits are up from last year,” said Linnea. In addition to the markets, Linnea’s Greenhouse sells plants to local garden centers and landscapers, providing the perfect balance to the farmers market sales. She’s also ventured into contract growing, providing products to small growers who don’t have the space to grow their own.

“The contracting side of the business is just getting going,” she said. “But I’m extremely excited about the potential of expanding this side of the business.”

One thing that hasn’t changed over the years is Linnea’s passion for growing new varieties of plants and researching techniques. In fact, she happily shares that it remains her favorite aspect of her career.

“I love finding new plants, growing them and being able to offer these new varieties to my customers,” she said.

For others considering entering into the industry, Linnea emphasized the importance of research, especially if the grower is considering venturing into annuals.

“Getting into annuals is a fast way of leaping into the industry; there is no question that the product will sell,” said Linnea. “However, you have to understand how to grow them to be successful.” **GT**

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