



Press:

Montgomery County Town & County Living, Summer 2004

Article:

“A Business of Passion”





Press:

Montgomery County Town & County Living, Summer 2004

Article:

“A Business of Passion”

H O M E

A BUSINESS OF PASSION

SANDY AND ANDREW WELSH TURNED THEIR MANY INTERESTS INTO PASSIONFLOWERS, THEIR HOME AND GARDEN SHOP FILLED WITH THEIR UNCOMMON FINDS

BY SANDI PACHUTA

Sandy and Andrew Welsh are passionate about their work. In fact, the couple love their work so much that they decided to name their home, garden and herbal store in Skippack, Pennsylvania, Passionflowers.

The Welshes decided to open their business about eight years ago. Andrew, a designer/contractor, already had a thriving landscape architecture business, when he and Sandy decided to convert the old barn located behind their 1915 home into a store.

“I enjoy art and thought it would be a great idea to sell garden art and sculpture,” said Sandy. “We live in such a rushed society today; people are looking for tranquility. Customers are looking for a place to rest without a lot of maintenance,” added Andrew.

The couple met as teenagers, and, later, in 1965, Sandy, from Worchester, and Andrew, from Flourtown, got married. Andrew started his landscaping business in 1968, designing residential gardens in the local area. Later, in the 1980s, Andrew worked with the legendary landscape architect George Patton, helping him design city gardens and other landscape features at Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania and the Bersy Ross House.

Andrew’s love of landscape began with the influence of his father, investment banker and botanist Robert Fraizer Welsh. Sandy’s artistic eye and flair for garden art were inspired by the interest of her mother, Myrtle Hughes, who happened to be an interior designer.

The Welshes opened Passionflowers in June 2003. The process of restoring the barn took several years. “We installed the floor from bricks from an old livery stable in Center Pointe and bought barn beams from a farm in Trooper,” said Andrew. Sandy faux painted the walls in warm colors to give the barn a rustic feel. “We use a propane fireplace to heat the barn, and it actually works quite well,” said Andrew.

The Welshes also used ingenuity in figuring out what to sell in their shop. “We’ve been able to bring a lot of interest

continued on page 100



Joel Zanka



Press:

Montgomery County Town & County Living, Summer 2004

Article:

“A Business of Passion”

Home

continued from page 75

to our shop through our love of travel. We knew we wanted to open the store, so over the time we were restoring the barn, we'd bring back products to sell in our store from the trips we would take," Sandy said. Some of the Welshes favorite destinations include Seattle, Nova Scotia, Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. "The shop is a fun thing for us to do, a nice transition into retirement," said Sandy.

"Natural landscapes are popular these days," said Andrew. "I enjoy using stone and the sound of water in a garden because the movement of water is relaxing, and real stone adds character and feeling to a garden," he said. The Welshes say that grasses and perennial plants and flowers are also favored choices among their customers.

"Some customers come in looking for a garden art item to inspire how they are going to design their garden," said Sandy. "Or, we can help you come up with a plan and then provide support on how to make it the best garden possible." The Welshes agree that many garden enthusiasts over-plant and overgrow their garden with too many items. "By using garden art, you can add texture and interest to a garden without over-planting," said Sandy.

Whether you are looking for a gift for someone else or just a little something for yourself or your garden, you are sure to find something unusual at Passionflowers. Many of the garden art pieces in Passionflowers are one-of-a-kind pieces, such as French roof tiles that hold candles or Moroccan lamps, which can be used indoors or outdoors. Some pedestals, birdbaths and planters are reproductions of antique designs. "These pieces are great for the person who is looking for something that is really different," said Sandy. For a whimsical touch to your garden, the Welshes also have garden art sculptures, such as an excited looking dog and a colorful rooster from one of their favorite artisans, Killbride from Vermont.

Other popular garden art items include copper spinners from California that move naturally with the wind, gourd spinners that are painted bright colors, driftwood sculptures and colored glass objects that hang.

Aromatherapy candles, hand creams, laundry powder and herbal tinctures make up another part of the shop. "If you have guests coming and you want your sheets to smell fresh, we offer a variety of laundry powders and powders you can sprinkle right on your sheets," said Sandy.

Sandy is an herbalist who earned her degree while studying under David Winston at his Herbal Therapeutics School of Botanical Medicine in Washington, New Jersey. In fact, the name of the shop is derived from the actual flower called a passion flower. "The passion flower calms the mind and helps you relax," said Sandy.

At the shop you'll also find one area that has medicinal herbs in it. "Each herb has its own energy to it," said Sandy. Sandy does case studies on customers and finds out what's ailing them before she suggests what medicinal herb may help them. Sandy says she always puts a few drops of the herb echinacea in a cup of water and drinks that before she gets on a plane. She feels this helps her from picking up common colds and viruses while traveling. Sandy also recommends the herb chamomile for those who may experience digestive problems and dandelion root for noshes.

In addition to herbs, Passionflowers features a unique brand of soap, Sea Hag Soap from Vermont. Popular scents include Sea Lavender, Sweet Grass, and Enchanted Garden.

Unusual water buckets, framed garden photography from Sellersville native Denise Romano Bright, antiques, such as a French wine holder and an array of jewelry can also be found at Passionflowers.

"We get a variety of customers; many are based in the local area and are always curious to see what's new inside. Others are from Bucks County and even Allentown," said Sandy. "Some are looking to pick up a gift for a party that afternoon, and others come looking for that special touch for their own garden," she said.

Passionflowers is located at 3843 Skippack Pike in the Village of Skippack, Pa.; 610-584-4590. Hours are Wednesday-Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. ♦

Sandi Pachuta is a freelance writer based in Wyncote, PA.