

# Sharing the Love Through Leaves and Teas

By Bea Kress



*A various array of plants is offered at Crazy Daisies | Photo by Tony Yosick*

At first glance, it might seem like any other garden center – rows of plants, neatly arranged in tidy rows. But as you begin to explore, you’ll discover that this family-run business is anything but ordinary. For the Cox family, gardening isn’t just a hobby; it’s a way of life. With a deep connection to the community and a commitment to sustainability, Crazy Daisies Flowers & Garden Café transforms the way we think about gardening and family. As greenhouses reopened April 22, the family is eager to spread the love and comfort this year.

Jennifer Cox, the mastermind behind Crazy Daisies, started the business 16 years ago. After nearly finishing college, Jenn strived to find something she was truly interested in. Gardening

had piqued her interest, in which she decided was her true passion. Starting from nothing was no cakewalk. Jenn began to take out credit cards and put up her very first greenhouse, which is still in use to this day. Diving in headfirst, she worked with what she knew and had at the time. Jenn's dream was to grow plants that aren't as commonly seen at a vast majority of greenhouses. She avoided geraniums and petunias her first year, as she thought they were too common. Today Crazy Daisies carry a diverse selection of common flowers for customers who love simplicity.

In the past, Crazy Daisies has worked with local small businesses. Selling locally made jams, honey, oils, and coffee. The idea of implementing a café came from hosting various catering events. The front of the room was set-up as a market, while the back was a kitchen for their catering. "It occurred to us, 'Why don't we use all these fresh ingredients that we are selling to people, put them on a plate, and utilize the kitchen for food service'," Henry, the second oldest of the family, said.

The family-owned business hosts 3 art markets per year. Local vendors bring products designated for each of the seasons to sell. "This year we are doing an all-day music day from 12 to 10. We are doing a vintage market and a brew fest. We really would like to try everything at least once and see how it goes," Henry says, "In the next coming years we have ideas for hot pepper festivals, chili festivals, wine tasting festivals with the local wineries and farms that are in our area." Crazy Daisies also offer vintage skill classes where they invite locals to teach others how to make their own things like butter, cheese, pies, and even macrame.

Garden parties are another unique feature offered where customers have the option to rent out the greenhouses and share cocktails with friends. Workshops dedicated to each season are taught throughout the year to anyone interested. "We even have a couple of yoga groups that come in and do yoga here." Crazy Daisies is proud to grant small businesses an opportunity to expand and grow as much as possible.

On the contrary to what most small businesses faced, Crazy Daisies drastically grew due to the pandemic. As one of the only public spaces with outdoor seating offered, many Syracuse students and other locals were in search of an escape from their homes. Crazy Daisies increased their outdoor seating and obtained their liquor license to safely serve as many people as possible. "It just became like an oasis for a lot of people; to come in and walk around the greenhouses. We did live music then, so they could listen to music and be outside," Henry reflects, "The regulars that started to come here were from every walk-of-life. You have a group of old ladies sitting next to a group of frat boys. Everyone was happy."

Crazy Daisies has accumulated numerous amounts of regulars over the years, who have supported them through their journey. Brianna Covaleski first came across the garden center in 2020, during the pandemic. She thought visiting would boost her mental health and make life feel normal once again. "Even though there was covid, everyone just acted normal. It was so nice to sit and speak to people again, not to mention their food is delicious," she said. Returning year after year, Brianna stated that she has learned so much from the Cox family and their services.

Ashley Papworth originally worked for Jennifer Cox over 20 years ago, babysitting the Cox kids. At the time Jenn ran The Hallow, a pumpkin patch located down the road from Crazy Daisies, where Ashley helped out with from time-to-time. "Over covid I would just walk here, and they were just starting to take off. That's how I ended up working here, I just kind of stuck around," Ashley says. Ashley mainly works front of house in the café. Before the pandemic, Ashley would occasionally visit the family's business. "It started as a little country store and then they started this café. Once they introduced the mimosa flights, it just blew up." Crazy Daisies treats all employees as a part of their own family. "They do such uniquely wonderful things and it's very organic, it's not forced. I could be having a terrible day and I would come in here; all of the people are so uplifting. It's just a good positive environment."