



A budding business

Flower farm at Montpelier complements presidential property's ecological legacy

BY JEFF POOLE
Editor

Shop local.
Eat local.
Drink local.
Work local.
Flower local.

On a small patch of land at James Madison's Montpelier, wedged between a wildflower meadow and the new Virginia Thoroughbred Project, there's a colorful plot of flowers growing beneath the hot, summer sun.

Teeming with bumblebees, butterflies and unfortunately some pesky Japanese beetles, the flowers represent the lifetime dream of proprietor Stacey Chapman. The enterprise is named Westwind Flowers, after the road where she and husband, Tom, live in Orange.

"The flower industry is an \$80 billion a year industry, but 80% of those flowers come from outside the United States," she says, ticking off the hard-to-spell official names of the various plants carefully organized on the rolling plot.

Beside the middle of three scenic, green Sears and Roebuck gambrel-roofed kit barns built at Montpelier in the 1920s, Chapman planted six 50 x 50 foot plots of snapdragons, larkspur, sweet William, cottage yarrow, prairie sun, dahlias and lisianthus—which is a great substitute for roses, apparently. Roses don't grow well locally, she explained.

Growing and selling close to home means a smaller environmental footprint and a conserva-



Westwind Flowers at James Madison's Montpelier grows nearly 50 varieties of flowers on a small plot near the Virginia Thoroughbred Project. Pictured, clockwise from top: cottage yarrow, a filler flower, blooms in the field. Flower farmer Stacey Chapman has been working this plot since last fall. Bumblebees enjoy the scabiosa in the garden. A bumblebee visits the blooming snapdragons. A couple of bumblebees investigate a sunflower that towers over the property. One of the signature Montpelier gambrel-roofed barns is pictured in the background.

PHOTOS BY JEFF POOLE

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