

Things are Bloomin' on High Street

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Sofia Ortiz

As I approached Bloomin' Wild yesterday afternoon, I was overcome with the feeling that I had just stepped into a film. The florist came to High Street in Chestertown this past April with a quiet, but nonetheless cinematic charm. Outside the storefront, racks of tomatoes and herbs, palettes of both annuals and perennials stand on either side of the ever-open door. Inside are tables covered with small arrangements of succulents in glass bowls, petunias in clay pots and a large display case in the far corner, holding even more elaborate arrangements.



Amy Hague at Bloomin' Wild Florist & Gifts

Just beyond the register is a high-top wooden table, where the flowers are chosen and placed. Shelves crammed full of baskets are stacked almost to the ceiling. Amy Hague, the owner, brought us two chairs to sit down on a rainy Tuesday. As we watched the strollers-by, Amy reflected on how she came to open her store.

Growing up locally, Amy is no stranger to floristry, having learned from family members the art of growing and maintaining a flower garden, not to mention the patience and respect involved with producing anything

of value. She has spent much of her life tending vegetable and herb gardens, both personally and commercially. For the past several years she and her partner, Jennifer McPherson, have been growing produce in a greenhouse and selling it to local farmer's markets.

Amy laughs mentioning that she still keeps a garden for herself at home.

I asked her how she came to 335 High Street as I took a seat on one of the chairs.

"We just watched the neighborhood." Out of eight vacancies, she explained, Bloomin' Wild's current spot was the most accessible, and had the best possibility of foot traffic. She and Jennifer really wanted a place where people would feel free to walk in and browse around.

This is reflected throughout the store. Her sprawling plants out front adorn her door, which even on that rainy Tuesday, was still wide open. Sitting down, Amy still seemed to be taking note of the people just beyond the frame who were rushing about.

At this point in our conversation, two customers came in out of the pouring rain and were both immediately drawn to the display case. Amy took this opportunity to check on two employees in the back who were preparing flowers to be put outside. The first woman brought a small basket filled with vibrant yellow flowers to the counter. I noted a slice of lemon included in the bouquet she had chosen. Small touches like this are everywhere in Amy's shop. She later admitted it wasn't real, but that it added a splash of color nonetheless.

Watching this interaction, I am reminded of the film *Chocolat*, which follows a young woman who moves to a small town and makes her own chocolate, eventually opening up her own business. The same kind of warmth and patience go into the consideration of each plant. Even small touches such as the fruit make the flowers stand out from the shelves.

So far, Amy and her team haven't dipped their toes into too many major events around town, but that, she says, is just a matter of time. As a new business owner with a respect for her process, she tells me that weddings and other catering aren't too far off the mark from where she intends to go. There's certainly a demand in town for such a place, and the summer has barely even begun.

"Do you plan on expanding into larger orders and catering events?" I ask on my way out the door.

Amy smiles. "Definitely. We're going big!"

Bloomin' Wild

335-A High Street

410-778-5300

amy@bloominwild.net