



By: Nikki Gaskins Campbell

Charming, Historic Inn Offers Friendly Hospitality & Beautiful Native Plants

Nestled in a city known for its small-town vibe and welcoming people lies a historic inn and plant nursery that perfectly adds to Chardon's already charming, friendly atmosphere. For more than a year now, Joe and Amy Goletz have proudly owned and operated Avonlea Gardens & Inn on Fowlers Mill Road in Geauga County. "The current inn was built in 1910. It is a Sears, Roebuck and Co. kit house, so that's a cool piece of history. The original house was built in 1901 the same year as our barn, which is on the property and houses our shop," explained Joe.

According to the couple, the first owner moved the original home to the back of the property where it was then used as a garage. Purchased through a Sears' mail order catalog more than a century ago, the cost to put together the second house, a Victorian-style model, was less than \$800, they said. "If you wanted extra indoor plumbing, it was like an extra \$90. It was really something else," Joe said.

With backgrounds in accounting and information technology (IT), running the inn and plant nursery has come with a bit of a learning curve, but it's been an amazing adventure. A supportive county, wonderful neighbors, and friendly customers have made conducting business in Geauga County a rewarding experience for Joe and Amy. "The folks in Geauga County take pride in their county. They are very happy to fill you in on the history and background. They are very welcoming. It's been great," Joe said.

Avonlea Gardens is willing to give

tours of their inn and nursery. "We've already had the pleasure of hosting members of the Geauga West Rotary Club, Destination Geauga, and many garden clubs. Everyone has been extremely friendly and lovely to meet." The couple is grateful to the previous owner, Mary Slingluff, for giving them the opportunity to purchase Avonlea Gardens (formerly Avalon Gardens) and continue to grow the business she created.

"A few years ago, Mary, the owner of Avalon Gardens, emailed me out of the blue. I had been a nursery customer of hers," Amy said. "She emailed me and said 'Amy, I don't know where you are in your life, but I need a part time worker. Would you be interested?'" Without hesitation, Amy jumped at the opportunity to work for Mary.

Joe and Amy purchased Avalon Gardens in February 2022. "After owning Avalon for 23 years, Mary was ready to downsize. She owned three businesses. She had the inn, which

she ran as a B&B. She had the plant nursery and then she also had a cut flower business, which she kept. Her new business name is Avalon Gardens Farmer Florist." Joe and Amy operate Avonlea with their son, Nicholas, and Mary Trela, a seasonal worker, who the Goletz family considers a "florist extraordinaire." The Inn has a unique, vintage appeal, and is on Airbnb. Guests can rent the upstairs suite, the downstairs suite or the entire house. Individual suites rent for \$135 a night or the entire house for \$250 a night.

"For guests who rent the lower suite, which is called our Bluebell Suite, they get the bedroom on the main floor, a full bathroom, the living room and the kitchen," Joe explained. "Or you can get the Rose Suite, which is upstairs, and includes a king bedroom, a queen bedroom, a full bathroom and a dining room and access through the front door with the porch." Guests are welcome to wander through the serene native plant nursery housed on the same property as the inn. "We always say we like to keep the spirit of Mary here because she built Avalon from the ground up, and she did an amazing, wonderful job," Amy said.

"Business has been wonderful. Not only do we sell retail to customers walking through the doors, we sell wholesale to landscapers. We supply

for a number of plant sales, including the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes and Cleveland Metroparks. We also travel and sell at plant sales ourselves," Amy said. At the nursery, guests will find a variety of sun and shade loving perennials, trees and shrubs, and much more.

Amy spends a lot of time on her computer searching for more native plants to offer to her customers, and answering questions from customers. Under their management, Joe and Amy have focused more heavily on natives, which makes up about 85 percent of their plant inventory.

"We focus on native plants because they support our native wildlife, our native bees, beneficial insects, birds, butterflies, and more. A native plant is a plant that occurs naturally in an ecoregion and has co-evolved with the other species in the ecosystem. A native plant is a plant that has been here prior to European settlement. It has not been genetically altered by man," Amy explained.

When asked what their future plans are for Avonlea Gardens & Inn, they both chuckled. A quick look into their eyes, and you can tell they are clearly full of ideas. "We have a lot of plans, and we'll get there, slowly but surely," Amy laughed.



Visit Avonlea Gardens & Inn Online: <https://avonleagardensandinn.com>