

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Photo/Debbie Connelly

Rural Arnold resident Lisa Nelson cuts Snapdragons - one of many types and varieties of flowers that are blooming in her high tunnel - to sell at local farmer's markets. As the business grows, she hopes to sell to local florists.

Dahlia Valley Ranch Is Growing

Lisa Nelson's start-up business is providing fresh cut flowers to local area.

By Janet Larreau

Rural Arnold resident Lisa Nelson is spending a lot of time these days doing something she loves - growing fresh cut flowers and selling them at local farmer's markets.

"I started this business because I felt there was a need for cut flowers in Arnold. I also wanted to expand on my love of growing flowers," she said.

Lisa has always enjoyed growing flowers in her yard and really loved to garden. When she left the (Mills) hardware store, she worked part-time for a short while from home as an administrative assistant. She truly wanted to do something from home that was flexible, filled a need, and was something she really enjoyed. So, during the winter of 2021, she began ordering flower seeds and started a few indoors, and then transferred them outdoors in the spring into a small patch located at the Nelsons'

farm at 80139 Mills Valley Road. With this small start, her business, Dahlia Valley Ranch was born.

"I began selling a few bouquets during farmer's markets, and they really seemed to sell well. At that time, I only had a few varieties of flowers, mostly Dahlias, Zinnias and Cosmos. I fell in love with Dahlias, and so did the customers," she said.

During the past winter, Lisa decided to really expand and purchase a high tunnel, which is a large hoop style "greenhouse." She said everyone always wonders what the difference between a high tunnel and a greenhouse is, and it's simple. A high tunnel is covered in light, 6 mil. plastic and the sides roll up along with the front and back. It is not heated, whereas a greenhouse has a more solid structure and is enclosed so that it can be heated. High tunnels allow the plants to get full sun exposure, but keep them protected from pests, disease, and weather. Lisa's high tunnel measures 30'

wide x 84' long. This allows her to expand into different varieties of flowers that aren't as well known and are unique. It also allows Lisa to extend her growing season by a couple of months. Eventually, she plans to grow larger and be able to sell to local florists. She also purchased a large walk-in cooler to keep the flowers cool, so customers are getting fresh and healthy flowers.

Lisa begins starting seeds around January or February in a room inside her garage. It's heated by a furnace and is the perfect area. Once they get a certain size and depending on the variety, they will be transferred to the tunnel and finished there. All of Lisa's flowers are started from seed or tubers/bulbs.

And how has this growing season been? Well, she said it's certainly been a learning experience. She completed an on-line workshop that took about six weeks. She did learn tons, but putting that into practice took a little trial and error.

"I made a few mistakes, but certainly learned from it and will make a few changes next time. The weather was a little tricky this year, and put a lot of flower growers off about three weeks behind, but things are finally taking off!" she said.

Lisa's main focus will be on Dahlias - with over 100 varieties - but she has also planted Zinnias, Cosmos, Verbascum, Lisianthus, Aster, Daisy, Bells of Ireland, Sunflowers, Snapdragons, Stock, Statice, Sweet Peas, Larkspur, Sweet Annie, Anise Hyssop, Delphinium, Eucalyptus, Lupine, and Lace Flower. This is a mix of annuals, perennials, and biennials.

Lisa said it's always busy at Dahlia Valley Ranch. Winter may seem a little slower, but there is still a lot of time and patience taking care of the little seedlings. Once they are in the tunnel, it's more or less watering, pulling weeds, and tying up plants daily. Cutting the flowers is not that bad, and cur-

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Fireworks Display Planned at Old Mill Park

The public is invited to come out and enjoy the annual 4th of July fireworks display at Old Mill Park starting at dusk. Gunther Fireworks will be setting off the fireworks, with music provided by Westbrook Audio. The Legion and V.F.W. Color Guard will start the patriotic show.

The fireworks are part of Chamber's regular scheduled events.

Donation Bucket Will Be Passed Around

The SORC sponsors the fireworks, but due to this year's high cost, donations are needed. Residents are reminded ahead of time that someone will be walking around with a donation can the night of the fireworks at Old Mill Park to help cover the cost of this year's show. If there is leftover money, it will be used for next year.

Teen Has Too Close Of Call With Rattlesnake

On the evening of the Summer Solstice, a beautiful sunset began to emerge. Sixteen-year-old Trey Connell, who was sitting around the fire pit with his family, including parents Casey and Leta Connell, jumped up and headed north in his vehicle to the Devil's Den look-out to get the best view possible - something he has done many times before.

At the look-out, Trey was just walking around in his jeans and tennis shoes, watching the sun set. He took a step and heard a rattle. At the same time, the startled snake struck. Thankfully the strike was to the right and Trey was to the snake's left.

Leta said, "The snake curled up, still rattling, right on the path Trey had just walked. He couldn't go back the same way and was not going to move in case there were more snakes around. He called me to have Casey bring a shovel. When Casey got up there, it was pretty hard to see, so he had Trey turn on his phone flashlight to know for sure where he was standing. Casey had a spotlight with him and then they walked back together. They never saw the snake again, thank goodness."

Leta said God was definitely watching out for Trey that night. He could have left his phone in the vehicle, but luckily had it on him so he could call for help.

"If he would have been bitten up there all alone, we wouldn't have thought a thing about it if he hadn't returned home for a while because he could have ran into a friend and went driving around. It was nerve-racking for him (and for mom), and we are so thankful," she said.

Leta said it's a cautionary tale. Many people are reporting that there are more rattlesnakes this year, so keep a watchful eye.

Foundation Announces Spring Grant Awards

Custer County, NE - The Custer County Foundation reviewed grant requests for the period ending April 30, 2022 and they are awarding a total of \$49,125 to 12 Custer County organizations.

"It's always an exciting time when we get to announce our grant recipients," said Lindsay Cook, Executive Director of the Foundation. "The generous support we receive from our donors through our annual Gala & Auction in December enables the Foundation to con-

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Courtesy photo

Horseshoe Pitching Tournament Set for the 4th

Todd Phelps (far right) and Terry Mills (far left, with Luke Tullis standing by) pitch horseshoes last Saturday night at Old Mill Park. Every Saturday night at 7:00 p.m. during the months of June through August, many people enjoy throwing shoes at the well-maintained pits and some just enjoy watching under the now mature shade trees that were purchased by the village and planted several years ago. Ryan Tullis and Gene Tullis organize the season, and Gene waters and helps the Village mow on occasion. Scotty McDowell and Gene are credited with building the pits. Everyone is always welcome to join in the fun, but on the 4th of July a special invitation has been extended to the community to participate in or sit back and watch a tournament that will start at 6:00 p.m.