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Fresh organic flowers bloom at customer's touch

[Email To A Friend](#)[Printer Friendly](#)[Comments](#)By Ashley Trospen
July 23, 2008*Photo By State Journal/Hilly Schiffer*

Teresa Biagi cuts liatris on her 160-acre farm called Hazelfield Farm in Owen County. Biagi works on the farm with her husband, Raphe Ellis, her daughter, Esmee McKee, and her daughter's fiancée, Todd Elliott. The group grows around 178 different flowers, several vegetables and raises about 15-20 cattle. Biagi has been selling at the Franklin County Farmers Market for nine years. She also sells to restaurants and provides floral arrangements for weddings.



Lilies grow at Hazelfield Farm in Wheatley, Ky.

Almost 178 different annual and perennial flowers blanket the fields at Hazelfield Farm in Owen County, and many end up in buckets at the Franklin County Farmers Market.

Owner Teresa Biagi grows tulips, lilies, sunflowers, vitex, liatris, celosia, statice and peonies among others.

"I have a few orchids, but those are really hard for me," Biagi said. "Some people can grow them well. Each flower is different."

She says she cuts anywhere from 3,000 to 6,000 stems per week.

"I cut most flowers in a stage where they are not fully open so that they open for the customer," Biagi said. "It's important that I sell them fresh. I want them to last the customers as long as they can."

The peonies, Biagi says, can be stored for up to six weeks.

"It's one of the most popular sellers," Biagi said. "I have anywhere from 900 to 1,000. The pinks, reds, and whites are really beautiful."

Each annual flower is started in a greenhouse and transplanted into a field mixed with vegetables. Biagi says she uses a tobacco setter to plant everything.

"The flowers and vegetables have replaced tobacco in a way," Biagi said.

Along with being a regular vendor at the Farmers Market "this is her ninth year" and selling to restaurants, Biagi stays busy providing floral arrangements for weddings.

She says it's important for people use Kentucky-grown flowers for Kentucky events. Biagi and her daughter, Esmee McKee, stay booked on Saturdays with different nuptials. They travel to

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"Flowers ordered from South America contain a lot of chemicals," Biagi said. "Plus they are traveling far distances and using a lot of energy."

Her flower farm, which Biagi says follows all the same guidelines of a certified organic farm only without the paperwork, also invites brides-to-be to pick their flowers on site.

"We have bridal parties come out and pick their own bouquets," Biagi said. "It's a neat thing to do. They usually all do a really good job and create bouquets I would have never thought of."

For Biagi, who says her family always had a farm, her love for growing and raising flowers and other plants has been instilled since birth.

"My great-grandfather was an estate gardener in Italy," Biagi said. "My grandfather learned from him. He called me bird dog because I was always following him around."

Along with selling fresh flowers and potted plants, Biagi says they also do a lot of dried flower work.

"I try and figure out what cuts and what doesn't," Biagi said. "I like different things and I try to push the limits."

And she has some help from her family. Along with her daughter, Biagi's husband, Raphe Ellis, and future son-in-law, Todd Elliott, contribute to their 160-acre farm in Wheatley.

Hazelfield also grows several vegetables and raises about 15-20 cattle including a Jersey milk cow that provides fresh milk.

McKee, and Elliott operate 20 acres of the land as a part of Community Supported Agriculture, according to Biagi.

"They deliver baskets of produce and flowers to participants every week," Biagi said. "It runs for about 22 weeks. We have about 800 tomato plants along with herbs, lavender, sage, garlic and peppers."

CSA connects local farmers with local consumers, according to localharvest.com. The supporters are known as "share holders" or "subscribers" of CSA and help cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest.

Regardless of what work they are doing, Biagi emphasized the fact that her family uses neither extra energy nor harmful chemicals. Biagi says they do not spray for weeds.

"They don't seem to affect my produce a whole lot," Biagi said. "I couldn't think about it (using pesticides) and stay organic. If I wanted to use round up I would. I don't."

There's not a day, Biagi says, that she and her family are not out picking or planting.

"I certainly enjoy it," she said. "It provides a living for the four of us."

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