

LGBT PRIDE MONTH



Ardelia Farm

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Established by Bailey Hale and Thomas McCurdy in 2011, Ardelia Farm & Co. is a highly dedicated, multi-functional agro-business, that specializes in cut flower farming, grocery delivery services and a farm-to-table bakery. The property is located on 50 acres in the northeast corner of Vermont, about 25 miles south of the Quebec border. Thomas bakes using local, organic, farm fresh ingredients to produce various delicacies, from chocolate chip cookies to opulent wedding cakes. Bailey raises specialty cut flowers, supplying florists and floral wholesalers. The partners purchased the property in Spring 2014 and after almost three years of farming on rented land in central New York, they were ready to pursue their own enterprise. Among the various crops produced on the farm, sweet peas are leading the pack by far. Quality seed sources and suitable climate, forged with pristine soil conditions, Ardelia Farm & Co. has grown to be one of the largest sweet pea operations in the nation. The partners plan to expand the operation by planting over 25,000 sweet pea plants in 2020.



Upon developing the business, Bailey reached out to his local USDA service center in efforts to enroll in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program for support with seasonal high tunnels and secondary conservation practices. After years of collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ardelia Farm & Co. has implemented five seasonal high tunnels, which

has augmented the growing season for the floral operation. Soil health is undoubtedly an integral part of the company's foundation, and as such, the high tunnels' soils are tested through UVM Extension Services on an annual basis. In addition, NRCS addressed livestock concerns by developing a grazing plan, including fencing, livestock watering facilities and grazing rotations. Ardelia Farm & Co. is currently still making strides to advance and improve with plans to continue working with NRCS and managing the health and vigor of their crops and animals.

It's clear that Ardelia Farm and Co. has certainly secured its roots and provides incomparable services to the community and beyond. Furthermore, the company also has



employed students from Sterling College to assist with day to day operations, in conjunction with allowing the students to obtain beneficial skills which range from crop production to business management. When asked... *"What advice would you give a young queer farmer, who may have reservations about farming in this current climate?"*, Bailey replied, *"Be bold and just do it!"*. He expressed that Vermont's rural community is very inviting and you can only fail when you choose not to try. Also, taking advantage of the available resources such as USDA service centers,

university extension services, non-profit and environmental organizations, provide great sources of technical knowledge and potential cost assistances programs.

All in all, Ardelia, Farm & Co. is an awesome example of how ingenuity paired with perseverance can result in unimaginable growth. I'd like to thank, Bailey and Thomas for their time, service and candor. For anyone interested in pursuing more information about Ardelia Farm & Co., a link to their website has been provided below.

"You cannot have a happy, healthy and peaceful continent without food!"

- John Muhaise-Bikalemesa

<https://www.ardeliafarm.com/>