

## Just the facts

### Vermont Wildflower Farm

P.O. Box 6

3488 Ethan Allen Highway (Rt. 7)

Charlotte, VT 05445

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vermontwildflowerfarm.com

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**Shop:** Open 7 days,  
10 a.m.–5 p.m.  
early April to mid-  
October.

**Gardens:** May to  
mid-October (free,  
self-guided tour).  
Bring a picnic!



The farm's gardens and woodlands are open to the public from May through mid-October, and visitors are welcome to stroll the 1/4-mile gravel path that winds through the property, where there are more than 350 species of flowers. Visitors are also welcome to picnic on the farm store's patio.



Mostly they're 95 percent." She also emphasizes that their seed is 99.95 pure, with no inert matter in it; the mixes are designed with the help of horticultural experts. "And we don't use fillers like baby's breath or lots of annuals that will look good for the first year or two but then decline," she adds.

Since Chris and Diana purchased the farm in 2005, the business has grown like a giant sunflower. Now the largest wildflower seed center in the Northeast, Vermont Wildflower Farm has customers all over the U.S. They've also sold seed and other products to tourists from the Caribbean, South America, Europe, and a huge influx from Asia—especially Japan, China, and Korea.

While flowers are their main business, Diana and Chris also sell vegetable and herb seed (all non-GMO and open pollinated, suitable for organic gardens), berries, ornamental grasses, perennial plants, and bulbs. As large and multifaceted as Vermont Wildflower Farm has become, the couple has kept one finger in all aspects of the business. "We're hands-on because we want to be up front with customers—and because we like doing it," Diana says. Perhaps that's one reason they still maintain the gardens behind the retail store. "We have local customers who come here five to eight times a year—to see the changing bloom," she says.

On the day I visit, a yellow theme predominates. Countless small blossoms of plains coreopsis, a North American native, wave on tall stems among black-eyed Susans and Queen Anne's lace. Butterflies dance among wild sunflowers, no taller

than four feet. Reading the signs along the well-groomed gravel path, I learn that "bachelor buttons" were named after young English ladies who wore the flower to signal their availability. Another sign dispels the myth that goldenrod causes hay fever. And another says common cat-tails are one of the most useful plants on earth. Their seed heads dipped in fat become useful as torches, and their down can be used as stuffing in quilts and pillows. Their roots have the same food value as rice or corn, and the young shoots may be eaten like asparagus.

Birds chirp from the meadow edges, and I follow the path past a pond dotted with water lilies into the woods. Trees bear wood plaques with names burned into them: shagbark hickory, American ash, white oak, red maple, and American beech. Another marker cites the red "cardinal flower" as one of America's most prized native plants. I search among the plants on the forest floor—the lacy maidenhair fern, Solomon's seal, and honeysuckle—thinking I've missed it. Then, yes! Here! The brilliant, scarlet cardinal flower appears in an open spot along a little brook.

The traffic of Route 7 may drone in the near distance, but here in this little patch, I've found the prized flower and head back to my car feeling richer. I vow to come back in the spring to see the Jack-in-the-pulpit and great white trillium, bloodroot and adder's tongue, a miniature lily. Then again, maybe come next May, I'll be busy starting my own wildflower meadow. **F**

Nancy Humphrey Case lives and writes in Hyde Park, VT.