



For the Love of a Barn: A Farmwoman's Story

By Evangeline Doyle

One of the first buildings built in 1900 in the Vernonia area has had Lorna Poetter's attention since 1977. That's about the time she fell in love with the old red barn that sits on Hwy 47 just North of Vernonia.

Of course this romance with all-things-old has a happy ending. Lorna was so smitten with the barn; it was barn first...house later, when she and her husband Steve purchased the property. Lorna had been running Farm Woman's Nursery from their farm on Keasey Road in Vernonia. Once they purchase the property, the barn and nursery were first priority, as they lived on-site in a trailer until their house was built in 2006.

Lorna speaks of the old barn like it's part of her family, "It's such a great space, white barn owls live in the cupola – and have been there for years. The barn feels good...you feel good being in there...and it has great old barn smells."

Originally built by the Malmstein family, it was used as a dairy farm. But even aside from its color, the barn has a colorful past. In the 50's it was a gathering place for young people, there were dances upstairs, and there was even a wedding in the barn.

"The barn has been kept historically correct, everything is still intact and original – save some needed repairs," said Lorna. "All the timbers were hand-hewn by the pioneers...it's incredible to be a part of this history."

Sadly though, it had seen some neglect before Lorna and her husband Steve purchased the property. It wasn't evident that it had any repairs since the Malmsteins built it, it hadn't even been painted. Lorna explains, "these old buildings need stewards...we must keep these buildings alive for future generations to enjoy."

Though Lorna runs her nursery out of the barn, the barn attracts both gardeners and non-gardeners alike. People just stop to see the barn.

The barn has to share Lorna though, as she appears to have equal passion for her nursery...especially the succulents and trees which are her specialty. When Lorna was a child her grandma had succulents on a rock wall behind her house, Lorna said "it reminds me of grandma ever time I see them."

And she must remember grandma a lot, because Lorna has over one

hundred different kinds of succulents growing at Farm Woman's Nursery. Lorna says "these are popular with gardeners due to the variety, and their being a no-fuss plant – essentially they grow themselves." She goes on to say, "and the dew on the sedums beads up and sits there like little diamonds." The best part is people with little-to-no gardening experience can grow them.

Lorna also specializes in fruit and shade trees. She's often asked "when's the best time to plant a tree?" She replies, "The best time to plant was ten years ago, and the second best time to plant is today." People often put off planting tree's thinking they will take time to mature or bear fruit, but Lorna says they quickly bear fruit – in fact she has many that are already bearing fruit for sale at the nursery.

Another common misconception is that it's better to plant in the Spring. This is not true for berries, fruit trees, shrubs and bulbs – in the Fall the ground is still warm and roots take off.

Lorna began preparing herself to own a garden nursery in 1997 when she enrolled in a Master Gardener program through OSU. After attaining her master

gardener status, she then took three years of landscape design and horticulture classes through PCC. She opened Farm Woman's Nursery in 2000.

Lorna does all of her planting in the Fall and her plants are acclimated to Vernonia's weather – making it easy for plants to be hardy here – or in the valley. "Vernonia's climate is colder – something newcomer's to Vernonia aren't always aware of" says Lorna. "If it doesn't grow here, we don't carry it."

Farm Woman's Nursery is open Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



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Saturday, October 6th, 2007
10am - 6pm