

November 3, 2008

re: Margaret Shea producing seeds

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Name: Margaret Shea

Age: 46

Title: Owner/manager

Company: Dropseed Native Plant Nursery, 1205 S. Buckeye Lane, Goshen.

Online: www.dropseednursery.com

Phone: (502) 439-9033

Education: B.A. in biology, Xavier University, Cincinnati; master's in ecology and evolutionary biology, Indiana University, Bloomington.



By Bill Luster, The Courier-Journal

Margaret Shea worked in the garden on her Oldham County farm. She runs Dropseed Native Plant Nursery, producing seeds and plants native to Kentucky.

My job is: "Producing seeds and plants that are native to Kentucky. ... Some of the native plants are edible and/or have medicinal uses. I am mostly growing plants for restoration projects -- replanting a prairie or wetland, for example -- or for gardens. ... I have plant sales in the spring and fall and the nursery is open by appointment. ... I also do landscape installations and meet with people at their homes."

Working evolution: "Dave and I met four years ago, so I wasn't in on the early scheming. ... I worked for a number of different conservation agencies. I worked for Bernheim Arboretum and before that the Nature Conservancy." ... (Dave:) "She was executive director of an arboretum in Connecticut

for a while, too."

Producing seeds: "The plant really does the work. ... I have a 70-foot-by-20-foot greenhouse to start plants early, but most of the year the plants are outside. ... I just plant large plots with a single species -- 5 feet wide by 50 feet long. That makes it easier and more efficient to collect the seeds. Then the seeds need to be dried, cleaned -- the seeds separated from the chaff -- and stored."

I got into this line of work because: "My mom was a gardener. She let me work with her and eventually gave me my own area to work on. I've been hooked on playing in the dirt ever since."

Evolutionary biology: "It's the study of how plants and animals change over time, how they adapt to their environment. ... I don't experiment with splicing or genetic engineering. I am very low-tech and grow everything either from seed or from cuttings."

Personal favorites: "I love grasses and sedges. They are tough but graceful. ... Sedges are like a grass, sort of -- closely related to the grasses. Like grass, it doesn't have a really showy flower. There are a lot of them in wetlands."

The one thing I can't live without at work: "Friends and family because you need all the help you can get starting a small business! ... I don't have any other employees. ... Dave helps a lot, my sister, Mary, comes in town from Seattle twice a year and helps with the nursery, (and) other friends have been great about helping out."

People are surprised that I: "Work out of the little shed behind our house. It doesn't look like much on the outside, but it's great inside -- complete with high-speed Internet! No one thinks to look for me there, so it's a great place to hide out and catch up on office work."

What I love the most about this job: "I spend most of my time outdoors and I meet so many interesting people."

The best advice anyone ever gave me about work: "Keep trying new things, keep learning."

-- Paula Burba

Want to suggest someone to profile in this column? E-mail businessnews@courier-journal.com.
