

# Meet the Farmers: Cindy Paine

## Oliver B. Paine Greenhouses

### Fulton N.Y.

The same greenhouse company, Oliver B. Paine Greenhouses, that is responsible for the hanging flower baskets that dress the streets of Downtown Syracuse, helps bring beauty to the North Salina Street entrance to the Downtown Farmers Market every Tuesday.

The roots of Paine Greenhouses at the Downtown Farmers Market go deep - it has had a presence at the Market since the mid-1970s. Every season, visitors recognize the Supertunias in Cindy Paine's booth as the same iconic flowers that line streets throughout five Downtown neighborhoods.

"We have people stop here, and ask if we grow them, which of course, we do," says Cindy, who owns the business with her husband, Oliver.

She laughs when she talks about the wide scope of people her flowers have reached. She fielded a phone call from a woman from New York City, who saw the flowers when she was in Syracuse for a relative's graduation. "She asked me what the flowers were, and what she should be looking for in New York," Cindy recalls.

She thinks one of the reasons the flowers stir such a buzz is because they blossom in the beginning of May, and flourish through October.

"Supertunias are our most popular product," she smiles. "And that color," Cindy pauses to point to a hanging flower basket filled with a rich purple color, "is our number one seller. It's called Bordeaux."



**Cindy at her booth at the Downtown Farmers Market. Look for her at the North Salina Street entrance.**



Though Oliver B. Paine Greenhouses may be best known for its hanging baskets, perennials, and combination planters, it also grows herbs, ferns and garden mums. Come fall, visitors will see pumpkins, corn stalks and mini straw bales at the Market booth, and the Paine Greenhouses on South Granby Road in Fulton.

Cindy's husband, Oliver, is a fifth-generation farmer. His great-great-grandfather was a veteran of the War of 1812. He was given land for his service. For decades, Oliver's family grew crops such as potatoes, corn, tomatoes and broccoli. Oliver and Cindy followed the pattern they established, planting crops in small greenhouses. Then, they started to add a few flowers into the mix.

"Every year, we added a few more flowers, so there'd be a few less vegetables," she says. Eventually, they transitioned completely to ornamentals. "And the rest is history," Cindy laughs.

According to their website ([www.oliverpainegreenhouses.com](http://www.oliverpainegreenhouses.com)), the couple built their first greenhouse in 1975, and added a new greenhouse each year for the next six years. They continued to grow the family business with the help of their two sons through the 1980s.

Today, the Paine family uses 65,000 square feet of interconnected greenhouse space to grow their varieties of vibrancy. To provide a visual comparison, this measures the equivalent of 1.1 football fields.

"It's like one giant greenhouse, but really, it's a series of greenhouses that connect," Cindy explains.

For Cindy and Oliver, this is a full time, year-round job and a labor of love. They start planning what to grow right after Christmas.

"Right after our poinsettia crop is done, we're right back to working in the greenhouse, starting things for the spring," she says. They plant several crops of perennials and herbs, to ensure there is a fresh variety of plants to choose from throughout the season. "That way, we have fresh crops all of the time, not just things that are grown once and left over at the end."

It's all part of their mission to make sure each customer receives friendly one-on-one service. In fact, interacting with the customers is what Cindy says makes it all worthwhile.

"They're a lot of fun, they're very nice people. It's nice to connect with everyone," she says.



**Make sure to say hello to Cindy at the Downtown Farmers Market every Tuesday!**