



CALL TO ADVERTISE!

**SPACE RESERVATION
DEADLINE FOR PRINT ISSUE:
August 27**

PLEASE CONTACT:
Joe Chiodo, Publisher
916-224-5677
joec@newsreview.com

Rosemarie Messina,
Senior Account Executive
916 498 1234, ext. 1310
rosemariam@newsreview.com

SN&R



Going to seed

The nation's largest organic garden supply company tries to keep with pandemic-fueled demand

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

Patricia Boudier realized early on that 2020 would be a year like no other.

"We knew in the very beginning of March that we were running out of seed," said the owner of Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply. "That seed should have lasted us all year."

Headquartered in Grass Valley, Peaceful Valley ranks as the nation's largest organic farm and garden supply company, with tens of thousands of customers nationwide.

"We started to see a huge surge in seed sales in February," when people heard the early reports about COVID-19, Boudier said.

She recalls other news-driven boons in seed sales. There was a spike in advance of Y2K and another right after 9/11. "People worry about food sources," she said, "and they start to garden."

Founded in 1976, Peaceful Valley has withstood many challenges during its long run as the go-to source for everything organic. But nothing could prepare Boudier and her 60-person staff for this pandemic-fueled demand. Even putting a \$100 minimum on new orders didn't stop the surge.

"We couldn't deal with thousands and thousands of orders at one time," she said. "We couldn't get our seed packets printed fast enough. We worked all night to fill orders. We sent out seeds in plain brown wrappers."

Peaceful Valley's best sellers of 2020: Scarlet Nantes carrots, Genovese basil, cilantro, Bloomsdale spinach and Calabrese broccoli. Apple and pear trees were popular, too.

When California declared a statewide stay-at-home order March 19, Peaceful Valley's whirlwind business came to a sudden halt.

"We closed completely for one day so I could gather my thoughts and do some research," Boudier said.

"As a farm supply, we're an essential business, so we could stay open. We closed our [Grass Valley] store and nursery until we could be sure we could open safely.

"Then, we had all these employees who couldn't come to work because they have little kids and needed to stay at home," she added. "We still did online orders, but we had to close that down for a week just so we could catch up."

Peaceful Valley gradually reopened its store and nursery. Only five or six people are allowed inside

Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply, the nation's largest organic supplier of its kind, reopened its Grass Valley headquarters with plenty of COVID-19 precautions.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PEACEFUL VALLEY FARM & GARDEN SUPPLY

at a time. Masks are required. Plexiglas and plastic shields shroud the counters.

"We fully reopened our call center, but we still didn't have enough people," Boudier said. Some employees took a leave because they didn't want to risk exposure."

Four months into the pandemic, Peaceful Valley has found some peace. "This has actually helped us be more efficient," said Boudier, adding that her company put its online business on a new web platform.

This summer, business has remained strong. Sales for July are up about 22% compared to last year.

"Anything edible is flying off the shelves," she said. "Even sprouting seeds; I was surprised by how many people wanted to do their own sprouts. Even if they have no room for a garden, they can grow their own microgreens."

Boudier expects this boon in organic gardening interest to outlast the pandemic.

"I've talked to so many people who put in their first garden ever; they're so excited," she said. "People are gravitating towards keeping their food sources protected. They want to grow their own food."

**"We
couldn't deal
with thousands and
thousands of orders at
one time."**

**Patricia Boudier, owner of
Peaceful Valley Farm &
Garden Supply**

Debbie Arrington, an award-winning garden writer and lifelong gardener, is co-creator of the Sacramento Digs Gardening blog and website.