

One of Pittsboro's Hidden Gems: Trespassers Welcome at The Plant

By Deborah Repplier

What do axe throwing, a native plant nursery, farm-to-fork meats, an art gallery, and NC spirits have in common? They're just a handful of the establishments found at the vibrant community that is The Plant. Located on Lorax Lane (off 64 East Business), the space was originally cultivated as a flower farm in the early 1960s, and then transformed into an aluminum manufacturer for the military and aerospace. At some point the area was abandoned, covered in poison ivy, and home to various critters. In 2005, Tami Schwerin and Lyle Estill bought The Plant for Piedmont Biofuels, which pioneered the sustainable use of biodiesel made from cooking waste. Currently, The Plant is an eclectic collection of food and beverage enterprises, along with craft manufacturers.

[Insert The Plant Signage within this section or here]

Perhaps best known as the home of Chatham Beverage District, this diverse community includes such venues as Fair Game Beverage Company distillery, taproom, and NC pantry, Starrlight Meadery wine made from honey and ciders, Chatham Cider Works hard apple cider made from NC and the Piedmont apples, and BMC Brewing (that's "Bite My Cookie" for those in the know—and yes, they sell outrageously good cookies!). There's also Vortex Roasters coffee, and a considerable number of other businesses.

The thing about The Plant is that there's something new to explore each time you visit. For three weekends this spring, in preparation for writing this article, I spent some time doing just that. The first weekend in late May just happened to be the one-year-anniversary event of Lilly Den Farm's food truck (permanently parked there) and their marketplace, the Den. [Insert The Den within top part of this section.] There was live music, a crowd of people dancing, kids on scooters and in strollers, a vintage mobile beverage cart with champagne on tap (Vita Miele), food and drink. People were laughing and eating and playing. I poked about in most all of the businesses open that day, and one of my favorite discoveries was the little purple A-frame behind Fair Game. This charming boutique is Essence 4 You Candles. Shop-owner Michelle Thomas welcomed me and encouraged sniffing of all her soy-made candles and body butters. As it turns out, the following weekend, Michelle was holding the first of her monthly candle-making workshops, which I attended along with about nine other industrious individuals—spoiler: it was so much fun with delicious scents from which to choose. [Insert Michelle Thomas Essence Candles]

Yesterday I visited The Plant again, this time to attend an artists' reception at [The Smelt Art Gallery](#) adjacent to BMC Brewing. The *Let Freedom Ring* exhibit by the Chatham Artists Guild runs through July 25, and it's curated by Ferrington Village's own Leslie Palmer. A number of the gallery pieces include work by Ferrington residents Jim Aiken, Daphne Boder, Vidabeth Bensen, Forrest Greenslade, Lee Kazanas, and Eric Saunders. The gallery is a project of the Chatham Artists Guild, managed by Ferrington artists Leslie Palmer and Karen West. You'll find watercolor, oil, and acrylic paintings, pastel drawings, ceramics, and photography. [Insert Kathy Flood Sailboats]

After the reception, I stopped by Chatham Axes, which also offers Carolina Hemp Tours and CBD products. The former features axe throwing for adults, which is actually a super fun and safe activity despite what the name may suggest.

To learn more about The Plant, the local businesses and their hours, please visit www.theplantnc.com.

Originally from Massachusetts, Deborah Repplier moved to Chatham County in 2007—for the past 5 years, she's called the Historic District of Fearington Village home. She is the food truck coordinator and an occasional contributing writer for The Belted Gazette. You've likely seen her walking the trails with her two black Standard Poodles.