When you arrive at Red Granite Farm in Boone, Iowa, it does not take long to realize you are stepping into something special. It is not just one kind of farm. It is a colorful mix of gardens, fruit trees, and a cheerful flock of hens that create a peaceful and welcoming atmosphere. That blend of beauty and purpose is exactly what owner Nicole Jonas and her husband, Steve, always hoped for.

“Red Granite Farm is really several businesses in one,” Nicole says with a smile. “We have our garden center and landscape design consulting. Then we grow fruits and vegetables on five acres for the farmers market, and we also have a flock of laying hens. Every piece supports the others, and together they keep us busy all year.”



Some visitors come looking for plants and garden advice. Others know the farm from the Ames Main Street Farmers Market, where the Jonas family brings fresh produce and eggs throughout the season. “Many people enjoy everything we offer,” Nicole says. “Others only know us from the market or only from the farm. That variety keeps things fun because we get to meet people in so many different ways.”

The business has grown steadily over time. What started in 2007 as a simple vegetable growing operation has slowly expanded into a vibrant and diverse farm. In 2011, Nicole and Steve added perennials at the farmers market to stretch their season. A few years later in 2014, they opened their garden center right on the farm so customers could experience the place firsthand. When the pandemic arrived in 2020, Nicole adapted again by launching an online ordering and pickup system that kept local food available when it mattered most. “We never rushed the process,” Nicole says. “We just grew into who we are now.”

Horticulture is deeply rooted in both Nicole and Steve. They met at Iowa State University in the Department of Horticulture, combining his interest in food production with her passion for perennial plants. “We both grew up on traditional farms,” Nicole says. “But we wanted to give our kids a farm life that reflected what we loved most.”



Nicole fills many roles at Red Granite Farm. She handles everything from marketing to accounting, but she lights up most when she talks about her customers. “I love doing the landscape design consultations and ordering plants for the garden center,” she says. Connecting with people and helping them succeed brings her

joy every single day.

Spring is an especially magical time on the farm. “That is when everything is coming alive,” Nicole says. “Our display gardens are always changing through the season, and there is something new to see each time you visit. And if you come to the Ames Main Street Farmers Market in mid to late summer, that is when the harvest is at its peak.”

For Nicole, the best part of being involved in Iowa agriculture is the sense of community. “We love knowing our work supports our neighbors, our friends, and our local area,” she says. “There is space for every size of farm in Iowa, and we are lucky to live in a place where people truly support local food.”

Education is another part of the farm’s mission. Nicole is passionate about helping people understand seasonal eating. “Local food tastes better,” she says simply. “When a melon is picked at the perfect moment instead of being shipped across the country, you can taste the difference. That is true for everything we grow.”

That same philosophy guides the garden center. “We only sell plants we have grown and tested here,” she explains. “We want our customers to succeed, so we do not offer anything we cannot stand behind.”

One thing Nicole wishes more shoppers understood is the importance of timing. “People are used to waiting for sales at the end of the season, but our inventory is limited. If you wait, you might miss out,” she says with a laugh. “The same is true for fresh produce. If you wait too long, the season passes, and you are back to the grocery store.”

Looking ahead, Nicole does not feel the need for a larger operation. She is focused on improving what they already do well. A new high tunnel will be added in the spring to help extend the growing season. “We like our size and the team we have,” she says. “Now we want to find smarter ways to move product, maybe through wholesale or bulk sales.”

For her, the importance of Choose Iowa comes down to believing in local food and its impact. “It is about helping the local economy grow,” she says. “And we hope customers feel the difference in the quality of what they buy. It is the kind of food you miss when it is no longer in season.”

She is also excited about how the Choose Iowa brand is growing. “It is becoming more recognizable, and I love that,” she says. “It represents farmers, producers, chefs, restaurants, and all the businesses that work together to create our local food community.”

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