



SECOND NATURE AT READS CREEK

Stop for the Plants, Stay for the Experience

Jennifer and David Tubbin's passion has always been about building something special and creating experiences that bring ideas to life.

"Second Nature at Reads Creek was born out of that drive — to create a space where people not only enjoy the beauty of nature but also connect with it in meaningful ways," she said. Their business includes a nursery, greenhouse, gift shop, and landscape design center.

It is located in southwestern Wisconsin's Driftless Area, near the small village of Readstown. "In 2014, we fell in love with the property and decided to make it our own," Jen said. "By 2015, Second Nature at Reads Creek opened its gift shop and greenhouse doors, welcoming the community to experience the beauty of our valley."

Their property's history encompasses science and serenity. "The Driftless Area itself is unique, as it

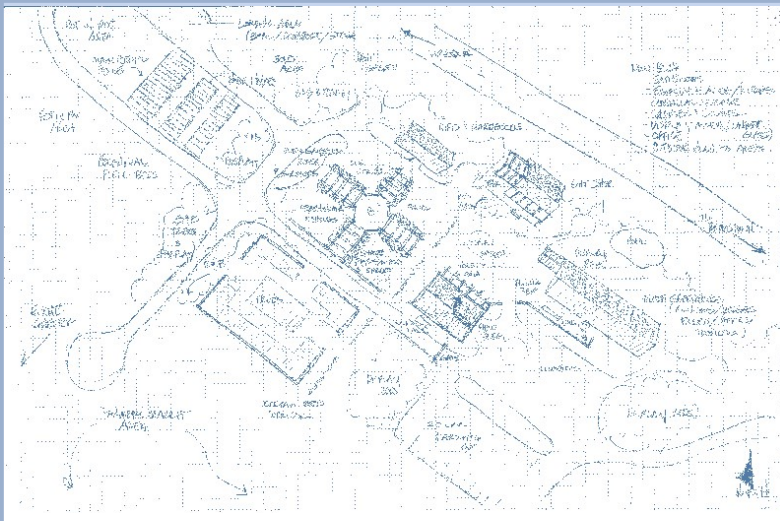


Jen and Dave Tubbin.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SECOND NATURE AT READS CREEK

"We believe that by actively engaging with our customers, we can create a shopping experience that feels personal and meaningful."



Inspiration for gardens is on display.



was untouched by the last glaciers, leaving behind a landscape of rugged terrain and natural splendor that contrasts with the flatter areas of the Midwest,” she said.

This region is known for its rolling hills, deep valleys, and scenic beauty. Located along the Kickapoo River, Readstown is a rural community with a rich history and a deep connection to the land.

Jen described Readstown as a “peaceful, off-the-beaten-path destination where people enjoy the simplicity of small-town life while connecting with nature.” The area is a silent sports mecca, offering opportunities for outdoor activities like fishing, hiking, and exploring.

“Our business’s location along Reads Creek adds to its charm,” she said. “Our setting is a perfect blend of the natural beauty and the serenity that defines the Driftless Area, making it an ideal spot for a garden center and nursery that encourages visitors to slow down and connect with nature.”

Choosing a name for their business came to them naturally — literally. “Before we started the nursery, Dave and I had already founded another business called Second Nature by Hand, where we designed and produced American-made home décor.

Designing, creating, and transforming spaces has always felt instinctive — like second nature,” Jen said. “When we started the journey of opening our nursery and garden center, it seemed fitting to carry that theme into this new venture.”

They decided to include Reads Creek in the name as a tribute to the beautiful, serene feature that runs through their property. “The idyllic setting along Reads Creek is such a central part of what makes our space special, so it felt only right to honor it in the name,” she said.

Their Early Years

Dave and Jen were not the first to be inspired to start a garden center there. She said a nuclear scientist who once worked on the Manhattan Project sought refuge in the Driftless Area to retire. “He constructed a garden center along with an armillary sundial that has become known as an area landmark to the Driftless,” Jen said.

Unfortunately, the sundial was toppled in 2016 during a devastating flood that wiped out much of their property. She said they were just finding their stride when that flood, which was not covered by insurance, wiped their slate clean.



The sandbox is a hit with children who visit the nursery.



"Instead of closing, with the unwavering support of our incredible team, we picked up the pieces and began again," Jen said. "The flood changed the landscape but deepened our resolve to create a space that celebrates resilience, growth, and the enduring beauty of nature."

While they have rebuilt and restored much since then, she said the sundial remains down for now. "One day, we hope to right it again, restoring not just a piece of history but also the deeper message it represents — of resilience, balance, and renewal," Jen said.

She said the sundial is more than just a beautiful relic, as "its craftsmanship and symbolism remind us to take our time, recalibrate when needed, and continually strive to find our own true north. It's a piece of history that reflects not only the scientist's quest for balance but also the deep-rooted connection to nature that we hope to share with everyone who visits."

Since opening Second Nature at Reads Creek, the property has been a continuous work in progress, she said. "We've made steady improvements, from adding new garden areas to fixing structures and maintaining the systems that keep everything running smoothly. There's always something in the works — whether it's a new project or simply nurturing what's already here," Jen said.

dZi Handmade

Holiday, Home & Garden



Use Code
SR-25
for FREE
Shipping*



AmericasMart • Atlanta ~ 2 Locations

Jan 14 - 20 ~ GRAND OPENING!

• ArtisanCollectiveShowroom.com

Bldg. 2, Floor 10, #1027-C

Jan 15 - 19 • Temporaries

• Global Design, Bldg. 3, Floor 2, #1402

Vegas World Market • Jan 26 - 29

- In the Gifts of Nature Showroom, #C-806

NYNOW • Feb 2 - 4

- Home, Booth #541

dZi.com
800-318-5857
info@dZi.com



Find Us On
FAIRE



*Limited time offer. Call for details.



Garden, home décor, and vintage items are found inside the gift shop.

She said they have no shortage of ideas to make the place even more beautiful. However, as is often the case with small family-owned businesses, the challenge is finding the cash to bring the dreams to life. “Still, each season brings something new, and we’re proud of the progress we’ve made to create a destination that feels special to everyone who visits,” Jen said.

They have faced challenges typical of building a business from the ground up. These include attracting customers to their location, navigating the growing pains of establishing a new company, managing wages, and adapting to the seasonality of their business.

“One of the most critical lessons we’ve learned is the importance of timing — knowing when to act, how to respond to changes, and, just as importantly, when to avoid overreacting,” Jen said. “This mindset is something that we are constantly working on because it is shaped by each one of our experiences, good and bad. Dave is a master at this and I’m still working on it.”

She said through it all, they have maintained a steadfast focus on what matters most, and that is the relationships they build. “We believe that nurturing our connections with our customers, colleagues, and visitors is what will help us overcome challenges and continue to grow,” Jen said.

In 2019, they decided to sell their product development company, allowing them to shift their focus and fully dedicate themselves to the vision behind Second Nature at Reads Creek.

“We’ve poured our hearts and efforts into creating a place that aligns with our core values and are proud of creating a unique destination garden center,” she said.

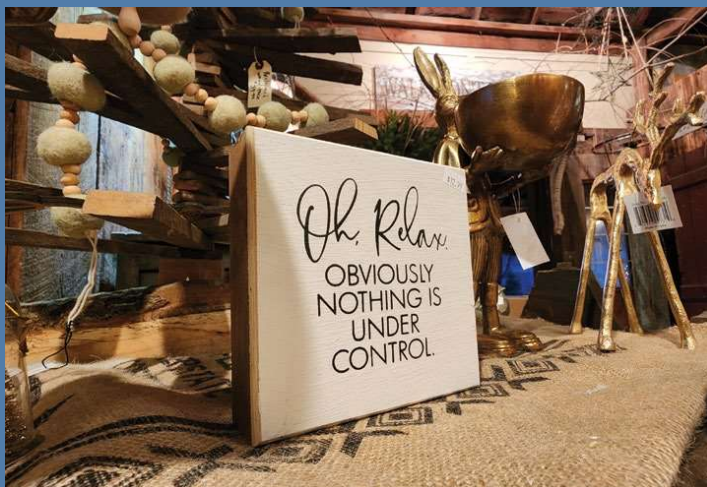
Jen shared that her background includes a past career teaching young children. During that career, she learned the importance of developing lesson plans and a learning environment that engaged her students.

“Later, in our role designing home décor products for Main Street and big-box retailers, I found it was the same idea — creating something that would foster a meaningful experience for customers,” she said. “Now, as we work to design outdoor living spaces for people, it’s still about that same goal: building something that people can connect with on a personal level, a space that brings them joy, peace, and a sense of belonging.”

Products, Events, Classes

Second Nature at Reads Creek is known for its unique home décor and garden accessories, diverse plant selection, and outdoor living design installations. “What we offer is always based on the evolving needs and desires of our customers. Listening to their feedback has been key,” Jen said.

They take pride in sourcing unique garden items, like high-quality planters. One-of-a-kind or vintage pieces are popular. “Some of our bestselling products include reclaimed wood items



The porch is inviting and provides a glimpse of what is inside.



The gift shop is ready for Christmas.

from our previous business, which have consistently resonated with customers for years,” she said.

Jen said, “If you were a customer of ours from years ago, we may have some hand-carved book letters or reclaimed wood products that may be of interest. You can reach out to us via our website to inquire about specific products. Dave has a few nostalgic favorites he’d love to clear out from the warehouse.”

They hold a variety of events and classes to engage their community and customers. She said their educational events include specialized events like their Gem and Fossil Event that focuses on the natural beauty of their area while educating participants about the local geology.

“We’ve created a monthly summer market that features live music, young vendors, and educational opportunities that encourage community engagement,” Jen said. “During the holiday season, we offer workshops and events designed to foster creativity and bring families or colleagues together. These gatherings not only provide valuable learning experiences but also strengthen our community ties and celebrate creativity.”

Their typical customers include individuals and families looking for a memorable destination day out, tourists exploring the scenic Driftless Area, and gardening enthusiasts seeking unique plants and gardening supplies. “We also attract people in search of gifts and those who want to create unique outdoor spaces,” Jen said.

What do customers say about the business? “Our gift shop is open-air. Customers often get a kick out of our little feathered visitors and will joke, ‘What’s that bird doing in here?!’ It adds a fun, unexpected touch to their experience, reminding everyone that our shop is more than just a nursery — it’s a lively, creative sanctuary where nature truly comes to life!” she said.

Customer Care

Regarding customer service, Jen said, “At Second Nature at Reads Creek, we prioritize building genuine connections with our customers, making them feel valued and appreciated. This family-oriented approach means that our employees not only connect with each other but also extend that energy and enthusiasm to our customers.”

She said what sets their customer service apart is their first-hand experience as customers themselves. “Having served both wholesale and face-to-face retail environments, we understand the importance of truly listening to our customers,” Jen said. “We believe that by actively engaging with our customers, we can create a shopping experience that feels personal and meaningful. It’s not just about selling products; it’s about building relationships and ensuring our customers feel valued every time they visit us.”

Jen shared what contributes to their success. “We’ve got amazing employees, a good eye for design, and the drive to



Jen Tubbin and her daughter, Siri, handpick the perfect plants — making it a family affair at Second Nature at Reads Creek.



The Birds of Prey educational event draws a large crowd each year to see nature's power and beauty up close.



The property includes a koi pond.



A fire and holiday lights add ambiance.

continuously make our business better," she said. "Dave and I have very opposite personalities, but we work together really well when it comes to running a business."

Marketing and Connections


Dave and Jen have found word of mouth to be their most powerful marketing tool. "When people trust us and have a great experience, they can't help but share it with their friends and family," she said. "That kind of organic promotion is invaluable!"

They connect with their community by creating a welcoming space that brings people together, she said. "Through initiatives like our monthly market and collaborations with local artisans and businesses, we've created opportunities for everyone to come together. Our events provide a platform for connections and sharing, making our nursery a true hub for the community," Jen said.

She said it is important to know running a small business sometimes means taking scary steps toward improvement. "We focus on meeting our customers' needs while keeping our values front and center," Jen said. "It's not about getting bigger; it's about growing in ways that make sense for us and our wonderful team. And we make sure to have a little fun while doing it!"

Jen has advice for those who recently opened a gift shop. "Starting a business is an adventure, but let's be real — it's never easy," she said. "Buckle in and embrace the bumps in the road as

opportunities to learn, stay adaptable, and grow. Listen to your customers, your employees, and your heart."

What Dave and Jen love most about what they do is the constant opportunity for learning, creating, and growing. "Every day brings new challenges and ideas that inspire us to innovate. It's incredibly fulfilling to see our ideas take shape," she said. "Our motto is 'Come for the Plants. Stay for the Experience.' It couldn't be more true." 

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Business Name: Second Nature at Reads Creek

Location: S7301 U.S. 14, Readstown, WI 54652

Website: secondnatureatreads creek.com

Email: info@SecondNatureAtReadsCreek.com

Phone: 608-629-5975

Employees: 6-10

Size: 1,500 sq. ft.

Trade Shows Attended: Atlanta, Las Vegas

Product Categories: Garden, home décor, handmade, vintage, one of a kind

Social Media: facebook.com/SecondNatureAtReadsCreek/
instagram.com/secondnatureatreads creek/

POS System: QuickBooks