

Blooming art

The Shed Row Market Art Fair

Saturday, July 9, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Fields & Flowers Farm, 900 232 St.

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Times Reporter

Despite the sign, the sheltered driveway is easy to miss.

In that respect, Fields & Flowers, Barb Beaton's South Langley farm, certainly qualifies as one of Langley's hidden treasures.

Turning off 232 Street onto the property, visitors enter a winding lane, lined on one side by a thick grove of trees, and on the other, a grassy paddock, bending gently under a light breeze.

It's a pleasant early summer day, as sunshine streams through the windows of the little farm gate shop at the end of the drive. It's quiet now, but when the weather heats up in earnest, young equestrians from around the neighbourhood will break their rides to stop and cool off with a scoop of ice cream from the chest freezer in Beaton's small shop.

And if Saturday, July 9 is equally fair, Beaton will be a happy woman. That's the day she will welcome 16 artists and hundreds of visitors to her small farm, as she hosts the Shed Row Market Art Fair. Beginning at 10 a.m., the artists will set up their easels inside the shed row — a long horse barn — where they will spend the day working in front of the stalls to a captive equine audience.

Visitors meanwhile, are free to roam the property, visiting with the artists and watching them work, or perhaps sampling a bit of crabapple jam and grabbing a few carrots to entice a horse or two to poke its nose out for a quick hello.

This pastoral property is more than just a tourist attraction — it's a working farm. Beaton is quick to point out. Inside her greenhouses located just over the hill from the barn, she grows both sweet and savoury edible flowers, for sale as well as for use in a range of items, including jelly confits, cheeses, chocolate and artisan breads sold in the farm gate store.

Placed throughout the shop are framed drawings and paintings — florals, landscapes and still life — as well as jewelry, pottery and wood art done by local artists and sold on their behalf by Beaton.

"(Fields & Flowers) is like a country store, in some respects," said Deborah Strong, one of four Langley artists who will be participating in the July 9 event. "It's a really interesting little place and it's become part of the South Langley community and a part of the



Garrett JAMES/Langley Times

Deborah Strong has company as she sketches in the shed row at Fields & Flowers in South Langley. On July 9, the farm on 232 Street will host an art fair, featuring 16 artists from around the Lower Mainland, including four from Langley.

artist community as well.

"Barb is very supportive of the arts community and really feels this (art fair) is something she can do (to help)."

It's not only the artists who benefit from the fairs. Since 2009, Beaton has hosted a similar event in the fall as well. The Harvest Shed Row Market, held on the first weekend in October, is a fundraiser for the charity which finds homes for noncompetitive and injured Thoroughbred racehorses. Although it is not technically a fundraising event, donations to New Stride will be accepted during the July art fair as well.

The irresistible combination of original art and horses draws people to the rural property from as far afield as West Vancouver.

"It's a real country experience for people coming from the city," said Strong.

"They enjoy the opportunity to see the art in a bit of an unusual environment.

For Strong, who works both in silk and coloured pencil, animals — horses included — are a regular subject and a natural fit for the Shed Row event.

Another participant, South Langley artist Vivian Harder, who often collaborates with Strong, specializes in equine art, so it's no surprise perhaps, that she works out of Thunderfoot Studios.

Joining them will be Lalita Hamill and Bryan Robberts.

Hamill, a Walnut Grove artist who works in oil, pastel, watercolour and graphite, started drawing during the snowstorm of 1996 and has not looked back.

She became a full-time artist after her husband was involved in a severe car accident. The crash served as a wake up call to the then-aspiring artist that life was too short to put off her dream.

Robberts, meanwhile, is a water colourist

from Zambia who now makes his home in Langley City.

For him, part of the allure of water colour is its unpredictability. Using different techniques — flicking and splashing — and tools — sponges and anything else that will hold paint — the possibilities are endless.

"You can get some pretty happy accidents," he said.

The Shed Row Market Art Fair will run rain or shine but, weather permitting, the artists will set up outdoors as well as inside the barn.

To learn more about any of the four Langley artists, go to their websites:

- Hamill - www.hamillstudios.ca
- Harder - www.thunderfootstudio.com
- Robberts - www.bryanrobberts.com
- Strong - www.catmousedesigns.com

To learn more about Beaton's farm gate store, go to www.fieldsandflowers.com.