

## Features

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# From Brews to Garden Views

*Jennifer Zurko*

André Dion was tired of selling beer.

Owner of the Unibroue brewery located near Montréal since 1991, André's company produced many local favorites, including Blanche de Chambly. In 2004, André decided to sell the brewery and fulfill his life-long dream of building a destination garden center "where people could spend the day." Along with his sons, Sébastien and Jean-François, André began construction on 35 acres of vacant land that he had previously purchased in the town of Chambly—a prime location right off of Autoroute 10, 30 minutes outside of Montréal.

Finally in June 2010, Ferme Guyon ("ferme" means "farm" in French) officially opened. André and his sons decided to use the original name of their ancestor Jean Guyon, who emigrated from France in 1634. Through the years, "Guyon" turned into "Dion," explained Sébastien, but they thought it would be nice to tie in the name of their garden center with their family history.

In the short time Ferme Guyon has been open, it has been constantly changing, adding new attractions and growing more and more of its own product. When Green Profit visited Ferme Guyon this past June, Sébastien said they were growing about 40% of their own plants, but his plan is to increase it to 55% in the coming years.

Like a true destination store, they have more than plants—there's a florist area selling fresh cut flowers and potted plants; a bakery and fromagerie (cheese shop) on site where they make fresh bread and cheese; a petting zoo where they hold classes for children; a café that serves homemade soups and omelettes; shelves and shelves of locally produced jams, honeys, syrups and, of course, beer (including ones from their old company); and a papillonnerie (butterfly house) where visitors can mingle with hundreds of butterflies. This year, they also added an area where customers can purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables. Future plans include building upon the community garden that Ferme Guyon started to bring in more customers and create more awareness in the community, said Sébastien.

Sébastien wasn't kidding when he said, "We have everything."



1. You enter this enormous red barn first, where the giftware, bakery, café, florist, cheese shop and farmer's market is. Using local materials is very important to the Dions; Sébastien said the barn was made entirely of Quebec Spruce.

2&3. Sébastien Dion, owner of Ferme Guyon, stands in the papillonnerie (butterfly house), which houses 85 different species of butterflies—more than 600 total. All of the plants in the greenhouse are butterfly-friendly and special trays holding rotting fruit keep them fed and happy. Sébastien imports the cocoons from all over the world, like this Giant Owl Butterfly just emerging from its cocoon, which is native to Mexico, and Central and South America.

4. Sébastien calls this area the “farmer’s market.” They added this section earlier this year and get all of the fruits and vegetables from local producers.



5. This old barn was originally built in 1860 in another part of Chambly. When Sébastien heard that it was going to be torn down, he bought it and commissioned workers to take it down piece by piece and re-build it next to the petting zoo at Ferme Guyon. Benches from an old church were placed inside. Sébastien said they hold many classes there and every Friday morning the staff gathers to say a prayer for good weather for the weekend. Sébastien initially tried for three years to sell the barn, but is now glad he never did. “Good thing I’m not a good seller,” he joked.

6. This gigantic spider can be seen from the highway and serves as a great attraction for passers by.

7. Most of the plants are retailed outside. Ferme Guyon sells a wide range of annuals, perennials and shrubs. Sébastien said that their biggest growth as been in perennials—about 25 to 30%—and vegetables.



8. Your humble writer joins local schoolchildren in the petting zoo and gets to feed some of the animals. A little goat slobber never hurt anyone.

9. Ferme Guyon sells everything from patio furniture and décor to decorative pots and scented candles.