



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

The Plant Work Shop: a place to explore the art and craft of plants

"You have to ask for help and it's really hard to do that. It is a humbling experience recognizing that you can't do it all."

Milisa Moses
Owner, The Plant Work Shop



Milisa Moses' face lights up when she talks about plants. Whether it's flowers or herbs, she is always thinking about the creative and medicinal uses of the various plants she grows.

What began as a small stand at local farmers' markets has blossomed into a visually inviting retail store with a creative space where Milisa hosts workshops on Wednesdays throughout the summer.

Milisa moved to Cape Cod five years ago and settled in Eastham where she and her husband Thomas, who is a carpenter, bought a little house...as she describes it "by way of magic." She began making her own plant and herbal salves because "I wanted to know what was going on and into my body and knowing what was in my salves gave me peace of mind."

Working under the name of the Salt Cellar Shop, Milisa was a regular at the Orleans and Wellfleet farmers' markets and had a pop-up store at Halcyon Farm in Brewster called the "Door Yard," a centuries old reference to the congregating space between the house and the farm. To make ends meet she worked five other jobs. It was at this time she first encountered the CDP, taking out a micro-loan to purchase inventory.

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It was her neighbor, Alison Supple Evans, who runs Supple Apothecary, who told Milisa about a retail space located on 6A in Orleans behind the apothecary. After creating a pop-up shop for the holidays, Melisa decided to move forward with opening a year-round shop, the Plant Work Shop, in the same space. She secured a second CDP micro-loan for \$13,000 to build out the retail space, buy inventory and cover initial marketing costs. “It was a nice escape,” she says, “and it would not have happened without the CDP, friends, and family. The community was so supportive.”

There is a lot of creativity and experimentation involved in the making of herbal salves and “people love making their own herbal blends,” says Milisa. This has led to an expanding repertoire of plant-based workshops that range from paper marbling to exploring the myriad of uses for Reishi mushrooms to one of her favorites, an ink and paint workshop that involves grinding and cooking beach rose petals to make natural dyes. “I will pretty much try anything that is plant-based,” says Milisa. This has also led to her teaming up with people with complementary interests. In July, for example, Milisa partnered with a friend who is an art therapist and co-led a workshop on making mandala prints from plants.



A group participates in the “Inks & Plants” workshop earlier this summer.

Milisa also points out that retail has undergone dramatic changes. Her weekly workshops are filled and from people across the Cape. “Workshops and online purchases are now a big part of the retail business. People are coming in for an experience and a way to connect with people.”

As any small business owner will tell you, a major challenge is trying to think big but also running the day-to-day, which is where the CDP works with its business clients to help them maintain a focus on long-term strategy. In addition to managing the store, scheduling and hosting workshops, she is growing her own plants, purchasing additional inventory from local farmers, developing the business’ social media strategy, writing the newsletter and managing the website.

“There is a tremendous learning curve,” she says. “You have to ask for help and it’s really hard to do that. It is a humbling experience recognizing that you can’t do it all.” Milisa has been working with the CDP’s Director of Business and Credit Programs, Pam Andersen, on being strategic about how she scales her business and the importance of planning ahead. “It has been great to be able to sit and talk with Pam about that,” she says.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to work with business owners like Milisa and look forward to seeing her business grow and flourish.

If you would like to learn more about the Plant Work Shop, visit Milisa’s website www.plantworkshop.co which is a blend of practicality, creativity and self-reflection.