

ART IN BLOOM UNFURLS FOR A NEW SEASON

Visitors to the Schenectady Greenmarket often add another tent stop to their typical market stroll of buying fruits, veggies and prepared lunches to eat there or dinners to take home: Art in Bloom. Art in Bloom brings a free artmaking activity — such as painting, weaving, and steel-pan drumming — to the market every week this summer.

All supplies are free, and artists receive stipends for their time, thanks to funding from the New York State Council on the Arts and The Schenectady Foundation.

“How many wins do we get out of adding an art-making activity weekly to our market? At least five,” said Mary Jane Shave, who chairs the Schenectady Greenmarket team. “We’ve heard from families how much they or their kids look forward to doing something in addition to shopping. It’s a win for people of all ages who learn something about painting or sculpting or music. It’s a win for the local artists who get a chance to teach about their craft. During the community art activities, a non-profit organization has benefitted as the recipient of the creation. Lastly, Art in Bloom brings community engagement to downtown Schenectady every Sunday for four hours. We love it.”

The activities are organized by the ElectriCity Arts and Entertainment District, which also plans the annual Kids Arts Festival in Schenectady, which is how the seed for Art in Bloom was planted.

“Every year in our surveys of our festival the biggest question was always, ‘Why can’t this happen more often?’ and the answer was always funding,” said Betsy Sandberg, who chairs the Art in Bloom planning committee. “When NYSCA provided a special collaboration grant in 2023, we realized we don’t need to try to recreate our festival, let’s just bring one free art activity a week to something that happens in our footprint every Sunday during the summer.”



St. George's Greek Festival took over Jay Square in late August, 2024

AND IT HAS BLOSSOMED!

“We see Art in Bloom as such an important way to add creativity to the Schenectady Greenmarket and are excited for this third year,” said McCauley Cannizzo, who directs Membership & Operations at The Electric City Barn on Craig Street. The Electric City Barn (of Albany Barn, Inc.) in Schenectady will host five different Art in Bloom dates. A large Community Zine highlighting the non-profit’s history opened the series in May.

“Our dates will offer projects that connect our makerspace and artists with fun projects for the community,” Cannizzo said.

Another frequent contributor is Bianca DiLella, who goes by The Painting B in her visual artwork. She will seek help in creating “The Mule Named Sal” on May 18 and begin a horse mural on June 1, which ties into the “Horsing Around” theme for the 31st anniversary of Kids Arts Festival.

“The Mule Named Sal” will be the third selfie station created at the festival. Kids will help Bianca paint a mule, lumber, “coal and hay and the background of the Erie Canal.” The final product will be given to miSci to bring to their community outreach events this summer and fall as a celebration of the Erie Canal bicentennial.



Mallory Zondag demonstrated wet felting techniques at a September, 2024 Art in Bloom.

“The Mule Named Sal is a great example of STEAM and the intersection between art and science,” said Chris Hunter, interim executive director of miSci. “Creativity and the curiosity that feeds new discoveries are essential components of both cultural and technological innovation. miSci will pair the selfie station with its Erie Canal science and engineering program to help show how the Erie Canal transformed the Capital Region and New York State.”

This activity as well as the rest of the program aims to foster collaboration between participants and add to the sense of community that, according to Bianca DiLella, is already so prevalent at the Schenectady Greenmarket.

“Art doesn’t have a language. Art doesn’t care about how old you are or what your background is,” DiLella said. In addition to “The Mule Named Sal,” she will also work with community members on a piece of community art that will be displayed at the Hamilton Hill Arts Center’s Juneteenth celebration at Central Park on June 21.

As Art in Bloom continues through the summer, music will get the spotlight with the Smoke House Dancers, as well as sessions focusing on songwriting and steel pan drumming. Events with textile artist Sarah Boink, visual artist Keisha Renee Stovall, and CREATE Community Studios mean participants will be able to take home their own artistic works, materials, and inspiration.

“One week it’s patriotic streamers, another week it’s something woven, another they might actually be able to go home with a puppet if they want to be more involved with puppetry,” Sandberg said. “But in general, our hope is that participants walk away with either a new understanding, or a deeper appreciation, for the art form we will feature that week.”

Art in Bloom began May 4 and will continue through Nov. 2 with a special celebration of the Day of the Dead run by New York Folklore.



Josh Nelson teaches youngsters how to play the recorder at the June 4, 2023 Art in Bloom at the Schenectady Greenmarket.



Look for the Art in Bloom tent at Jay Square.

THE SCHENECTADY GREENMARKET TAKES PLACE EVERY SUNDAY FROM 10 A.M. TO 2 P.M. OUTSIDE CITY HALL THROUGH NOV. 23.