



Green comes naturally to Teresa Carleo of Plant Fantasies

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Since founding Plant Fantasies 21 years ago, Teresa Carleo, president and owner of the full-service Manhattan-based landscape contractor, has continued to serve an ever-growing roster of prestigious clients that reads like a Who's Who in real estate development including: Macklowe Properties; The Trump Organization; Spitzer Engineering LLC; Jack Resnick & Sons; O'Connor Capital Partners; Manhattan Skyline; Craven Management Corp.; Moody's Investments; Millennium Partners; Rose Associates, Inc.; Brown Harris Stevens, and many more. The firm is now a certified woman-owned business enterprise (WBE) serving such A-list properties as the Corinthian condominium; Manhattan House (once home to Grace Kelly); the Renaissance New York Hotel Times Square and Bentley Hotel; Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue; and Battery Park City.

Plant Fantasies is also becoming known for its green roof installations. Following successful work at Millennium Tower Residences in Battery Park City, it recently completed work for two green roofs at Mount Hope Community Center in a disadvantaged section of the Bronx - "green is for everyone, not just for the affluent" said Carleo - and will begin working with FXFOWLE Architects on the design and installation of its next green roof project in the fall at 250 Hudson St.

Plant Fantasies is, explains Carleo, a single source that handles all facets of plant and lawn care "from street level to the rooftops:" landscape design, installation and year-round maintenance of interiors and exteriors, penthouse and terrace landscapes, floral arrangements, courtyard garden design.Â

For years, Carleo's botanical interest remained an avocation as she worked in the garment center, then as a photographers' representative. "I had no idea that I could parlay my passion into a business," she says.

It all began with a job watering plants in some of Manhattan's most upscale, high-profile office buildings. As clients recognized her horticultural savvy Carleo was quickly "promoted" to floral arrangements. "I saw the more ambitious assignments as challenges and knew I could meet them," she says.

Projects grew in size and scope. Bernard Spitzer, father of the governor, was one early customer who helped Carleo build the fledgling business through a widening circle of contacts.

In 1987, Carleo rented an 11th floor loft on 27th St. and Seventh Ave. Five years later she moved to 224 West 29th St., first occupying a single floor, then adding a second full floor in 1997 - the year she incorporated Plant Fantasies. Shortly after, Carleo became a member of Professional Women in Construction (PWC).

Stephen Chapman, president of Craven Management Corp., was an early client who remains a major customer, as do virtually all the original clients.Â

"We saw Teresa's talent and put the company in charge of several class A buildings, including 45 Broadway, 126 East 56th St., and Broad Financial Center," he said.

Chapman continues, "We were impressed by her ideas. She didn't give us the mundane arrangements we'd seen before. She brought variety, color, creativity. To Teresa it wasn't about putting plants in a pot and walking away. She had vision."

He notes too that being a hands-on, boutique firm is a major plus. "Teresa doesn't supervise from afar - she's here, she pulls it all together and does much of the work herself," he said.

Andy Atkinson, principal with O'Connor Capital Partners, owners of Manhattan House, notes the positive effects of Plant Fantasies' work on the courtyard and rooftop garden at Manhattan House: "In contrast to a city's hard edge, residents value anything green that softens the urban environment and provides a daily reminder of nature's beauty. From a quiet garden to a scenic rooftop terrace, good landscape design is good business in today's challenging marketplace."

Plant Fantasies also creates a vast array of festive and original holiday themes throughout Manhattan including the 25 foot high tree at the Atrium of Trump Tower.

Steve Martucci, the company's sales director, notes that Plant Fantasies' staff is always sensitive to clients' wishes and tailors each project accordingly. "First we listen - very carefully. We hear what the customer has to say. Then we use our experience to create the look they want."

"It's all about image building," said account executive Aniko Nemeth.

Chapman agrees: "The goal is to make buildings attractive to tenants and potential tenants. The first impression you get is of the lobby. The right floral arrangement can do wonders in enhancing and brightening a space."

Plant Fantasies is continuing to brighten an ever-expanding number of interiors, courtyards, entrances and rooftops throughout Manhattan. In other words, the firm that blossomed from Carleo's private passion is growing greater and greener than ever.