

# ALCHEMY: LOCAL GARDEN STORE AND MUCH MORE

*"Alchemy is a sanctuary for those seeking to embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and metaphysical exploration. Here, we provide a treasure trove of enchanting tools, immersive classes and one-of-a-kind custom crystal jewelry, all designed to help you align with your highest self." – Alchemy Mission Statement*

**A**nnndrea Johnson held onto the same dream for years; having a permanent space for her creative muse. To say that she and her husband Mark are more than excited about Alchemy, their new retail space, would do a disservice to their dream. Annndrea absolutely loves showing up to work each day. Their mission is to foster deep connections among individuals with the natural and metaphysical world.

"Alchemy is my passion; being able to help people connect to themselves and use tools that maybe they haven't used before. That's the metaphysical part, the part we can't see, but we can feel and use to heal."

Alchemy is located at 2724 North 21st Street, in the Billings Park neighborhood of Superior. The quarter city block enterprise consists of the Alchemy retail store, which Annndrea oversees, and the garden center/nursery managed by her husband Mark.

Annndrea's curated product offerings include health plants, metaphysical items, crystals, books, custom and permanent jewelry. Alchemy also hosts special events, such as monthly crystal and plant bingo nights held at the Spirit Room in Superior's historic city hall. "A lot of those folks get to have an experience at the Spirit Room and play some bingo, and meet other people who like crystals and plants."

As a retail store and a nursery/greenhouse, Alchemy focuses on the useful and unique, a criteria defined with a simple litmus test.

"Is this useful? Yes or no. Is this unique? Yes or no. That's kind of how we've rebuilt that part of the business," explains Annndrea, who has transformed the inside of the former garden center store. "It's going to be new for a lot of people when they walk in. I've made it look kind of like a living room as soon as you walk







in, hoping that you get comfortable. In the wintertime, we've got the fireplace going. We want people to come in just to explore."

Permanent jewelry is one of Alchemy's most core offerings. The gold-filled or sterling silver chains, characterized as "sparkly, dainty, weightless jewelry" are custom designed and individually fit. You can even add your favorite gemstone, connecting you to your inner self.

If you've always been curious about tarot, Johnson can explain more about "how you can use your own intuition to read the cards. It's just a new place to learn more about things and maybe more about yourself." She is excited for customers to experience their store.

Alchemy offers events and classes that bring people together to share how they're feeling, or just to meet other like-minded people. It wasn't long ago that the nation was in the depths of the COVID epidemic, and Johnson felt the collective pain of people living in isolation. The pandemic helped in-

spire the concept of what Alchemy could be in the community, something much more than just another small business.

"I want to bring people together. Since COVID, there have been a lot of people who are kind of stuck in their houses, or don't know how to meet people. That's why we have events and classes, to bring people together so we can share how we're feeling, or talk about what coping tools we use."

As humans, we all sense other people's energy, the so-called good or bad vibes we intuitively note; the energy we put into the world around us. One of the more unique offerings at Alchemy are their Aura Photos, a uniquely human-computer process that creates a visual representation of the colors associated with an individual's energy.

"I have a computer and a TV monitor set up," explains Johnson. "They put their hand on a sensor that goes into my computer, that's the biometric part, and it picks up their energy. Then, when we start to see their colors on the TV screen, I explain to them what the colors mean, as far as their subconscious energy or the conscious energy."



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— ANNDREA JOHNSON, ALCHEMY RETAIL STORE

Having her own personal Aura photo created when she was 16 years old was the catalyst that led Johnson into the world of metaphysics.

"My parents, for my birthday, took me to the shop of enlightenment in Stillwater, Minnesota. They bought me an aura photo for my birthday, and after getting that done I had a reading of what the colors means. After seeing the energy around me I was just amazed that how we feel, or our thoughts can be projected outwards and how somebody else's energy can affect you. That really left me wanting to learn about crystals and energy, and things that I can't see but I can feel. I think aura photography is a really good way to check in with yourself."

Aura readings at Alchemy need to be scheduled in advance. Along with the photo of your energy colors, an individual's aura, participants also receive a 23-page report with more detail on your chakras and spiritual essence.

## MOM AND POP CONCEPT

Mark Johnson stepped aside from his job as a teacher to reshape the former Good Garden Company to align with the Alchemy concept; plant products that are both useful and unique. Special varieties of shrubs, roses and trees that will nurture your connection to nature, and thrive in the Northwoods environment, you know, "cooler near the lake."

For the Johnsons, and Alchemy, they don't want to be the mega store garden provider. Their business ideal is the mom-and-pop neighborhood store, where you shop local, build community and become neighbors. That's the Alchemy approach.

"We're trying to recreate some of the atmosphere that I remember growing up in the '90s. As a kid, I remember there were all sorts of different mom and pop stores around." Johnson says that while they took





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notice of the impact the pandemic had on the community he focuses on the positive lessons learned in its aftermath.

"People are starting to rely more on local goods and local people they know; they can come in and know who I am. They know me by name," says Mark, "and I know most of them by name. They trust that I've taken care of things and they can trust that I'm going to take care of them in the long run."

Like the retail Alchemy experience, the outside garden center portion of the

business complements the unique and useful gifts found inside with similar products for the outdoors.

"It takes us back to what is Alchemy, and the mission statement we have on our website; bringing combinations of things together, making something new; having diversity in our availability, whether it's unique and useful gifts inside or the unique useful gifts on the outside, or whether we're selling you vegetables, annuals or perennials shrubs and trees are going to last a life-

time. We really enjoy the combination of finding things and growing things together," says Mark. "That part has been a lot of fun, seeing people's faces when they walk inside and say, 'Oh my gosh, this is so cool. Wow, look at all these cool things. Look at all these unique things inside. Wow.' People will come for flowers, not knowing what's inside, and then they start shopping and they'll say, 'Oh my gosh, I'm gonna have to bring my daughter, or I'm gonna have to bring my son back to see all of this cool





stuff. We've done a really good job of complementing each other in ways that other greenhouses/nurseries just can't offer, because we have something so unique in the combination of things that we have here."

The Alchemy mission is to foster deep connections among individuals with the natural and metaphysical world. As a

seasonal greenhouse with great inventory and a retail space, Alchemy focuses on sustainable, useful and unique items made in the USA.

"We've created a lot of space for folks to sit down, so that they can get some plant therapy, enjoy the space, attend some events or take a class."

Anndrea and Mark encourage their neighbors, friends and fellow Superiorites to check out Alchemy, a truly unique and useful Superior business. 📍

Patrick Lapinski is a freelance writer who grew up in Superior.

