

# suburban life

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A photograph of three people standing in front of a large, decorated Christmas tree in a store. The man on the left is bald with glasses, wearing a dark jacket and blue jeans. The woman in the middle has long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket, a patterned scarf, and black pants. The man on the right has a beard and is wearing a dark jacket and blue jeans. The background is filled with Christmas decorations, including a sign that says "FARM FRESH Christmas Trees FINE - SPRUCE - FIR" and another that says "Merry Christmas".

Doylestown's Bucks Country Gardens undergoes a miraculous transformation in the runup to Christmas, all to make the season more enjoyable and meaningful for local families.

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# The Magic of Christmas at BCG

Doylestown's **Bucks Country Gardens** undergoes a miraculous transformation in the runup to Christmas, all to make the season more enjoyable and meaningful for local families.

As the last few pieces of Halloween candy disappear and the ghostly, ghastly decorations make their way back to the attic, most people begin to get excited about the winter holidays—Christmas in particular.

Tom Hebel, the president of Bucks Country Gardens in Doylestown, is well ahead of them. In fact, he admits that Christmas never wanders too far from his mind. In the runup to the winter holidays, Bucks Country Gardens receives an elegant and expansive makeover, infused with the magic of Christmas both indoors and out.

"Christmas is a year-round business for us," he says. "We are not retailing around Christmas all year long, but we're always



thinking about it; we'll begin planning for next Christmas in the middle of December this year. We're going to trade shows, lining up vendors, and purchasing products throughout the year. We'll start building the display around Labor Day and finish up in the middle of October."

The space comes alive with fresh-cut trees, poinsettias, and cyclamens—the tradi-

tional holiday-themed botanicals one might find at any reputable garden center. Even so, Hebel says people are most drawn to the indoor display, which includes an array of artificial trees and wreaths, including many that are unique to Bucks Country Gardens.

"No one else has trees like us," he adds. "They were created just for us, and our talented design team puts it all together in a



way that's nothing short of inspiring."

This year, Bucks Country Gardens offers nine themed trees: "Chocolate and Bourbon," which conjures a wintertime scene of sitting in a high-backed leather chair in the glow of a roaring fire; "Wintergreen," a more pastoral selection featuring varied hues of green with white highlights; a traditional Yuletide option called "Holly and Poinsettia"; "Peppermint," for those who appreciate candy canes, gingerbread, and other Christmastime goodies; "Pine Woods," made with wisps of pine branches reminiscent of winter in the deep woods; "Sangria Sunset," a popular option featuring a warm and rich palette of reds, oranges, and blues; "Silver and Gold," for a touch of traditional elegance; "Snowy Owl," which features all sorts of woodland critters; and "Wine and Rosé," a more collectible type of tree featuring colors such as mint green, mauve, and burgundy.

The Christmas Shop at Bucks Country Gardens abounds with ornaments and collectibles, including Byers' Choice Carolers, which are manufactured right here in Bucks County. Collectors will be happy to hear that Bucks Country Gardens is offering a Bucks County-themed ornament that has been custom-made for the Hebels by Joy to the World Collectibles. It's something of a BCG tradition; past iterations of the ornament have paid homage to the Bucks Country Gardens farm property, the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle, Bucks County's famed covered bridges, and the historic mills of Bucks County. A new ornament will be added to the collection in 2024.

"We also do some custom home decorating by appointment only, where we go to people's homes and make them magical," says Hebel. "We offer something we call 'porch planters,' which are more like small designer gardens with fresh-cut greens and décor that we create for commercial businesses and homeowners. It's quite a production organized by our very talented design team."

As the son of a Lutheran minister, Hebel cherishes the Christmas season and what it represents. A large collection of nativities, from miniature to life size, is an inspiring feature of the Christmas display. "It's the reason for the season," he says. "Everyone needs a special nativity, or two or three or more. We display ours at home all year long."

"Christmas is not just fancy decorations at Bucks Country Gardens," he continues. "It is also about giving, and we emphasize that with our Holiday Giving Campaign. We match dollar for dollar the donations of our customers and distribute them to local charities. Last year the campaign totaled almost \$8,000.



Bucks Country Gardens also offers porch planters and custom home decorating by appointment only. "We go to people's homes and make them magical," says BCG President Tom Hebel.

This year's recipients are Peace Valley Nature Center, Coalition to Shelter and Support the Homeless, and The Garden of Health."

"Ask any of our team members, and they will likely all say the same thing—that what we're doing here for people is creating memories and traditions," adds Ryan Hebel, Garden Center Manager. "We help create those fond memories through the joy of spending time with their families. That's what Christmas is all about here."

The festivities begin in earnest the first Friday of November, with a Christmas Open House from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., and a special invitation-only preview for VIP clients. Other special events for the season: pet photos with Santa on Nov. 12, with proceeds benefiting the Delaware Valley Siberian Husky Rescue; Visiting Reindeer on Nov. 18; Barnyard Animals of What Knott Farm from Nov. 20 through Dec. 11; and numerous holiday-themed workshops (winter planters on Nov. 30, wreath decorating on Dec. 2, and holiday centerpieces on Dec. 9).

The Hebels say none of it would be possible without the efforts of the designers, the merchandising team, the cashiers—every member of the team. They give particular mention to Donna Dentner, Lifestyle Manager at Bucks Country Gardens for the past 19 years.

"It takes our entire team to make Christmas successful," says Tom Hebel. "Our team is what makes everything run so smoothly here at the garden center all year long, but



Bucks Country Gardens hosts a sprawling indoor Christmas display, which includes an array of artificial trees and wreaths, as well as ornaments, collectibles, and more.

especially during Christmas, which is our busiest season."

Anyone who has ever visited Bucks Country Gardens from October to December can understand how much time, effort, and imagination go into making the space "Christmas ready." For anyone who has not yet made the pilgrimage ... well, Tom Hebel and the BCG family extend a personal invitation to stop by, view the displays, and make new memories and traditions.

"Christmas has been part of our business for 35 years," he says. "We're not big on the whole Christmas shopping craze, but the season is very important to us. What we're doing here is simple: We want to make the season more enjoyable and meaningful for people and their families." ■

## Bucks Country Gardens

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