


suburban life



After decades of success, **Bucks Country Gardens** has a bright future under the leadership of a new generation. page 22

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"Ever since I was young—I think maybe kindergarten—I had a connection to the outdoors," says Tom Hebel, proprietor of Bucks Country Gardens in Doylestown. "I was always making little towns and villages. I had that creative gene, but it was more than playing for me. I wanted to create something."

Established in 1961 as Royer Nurseries, this garden center and landscape design-build company has been helping residents of Bucks County and beyond beautify their outdoor spaces for more than 60 years. Hebel joined the team in 1981, and from the outset it seemed a perfect match for both him and then-owner Dick Royer.

AS OWNER TOM HEBEL
REFLECTS ON **BUCKS
COUNTRY GARDENS'**
DECADES OF SUCCESS,
HE BEAMS AT THE
PROSPECT OF A BRIGHT
FUTURE UNDER THE
LEADERSHIP OF A
NEW GENERATION.

"I was an unemployed landscape designer and [Royer] asked me during our first meeting if I'd be interested in owning the business one day," Hebel recalls. "I said, 'Who knows? Maybe?' But it turns out that's exactly what happened. We worked together for about 10 years before he retired, then I took sole ownership."

While the enterprise's name changed from Royer Nurseries to Bucks Country Gardens, much about the beloved business's DNA has stayed the same over the years.

"We've always had two parts to the business—a retail garden center and a landscape



design-build firm,” Hebel says. “On the retail side, we have a garden center where people come to us for information and inspiration, and a landscape contracting company where our clients have invited us to share the same for their properties.”

Bucks Country Gardens’ myriad retail departments include outdoor furniture, greenhouse and nursery, lawn and garden, and a boutique that offers apparel, handbags, fine jewelry, bath and body products, and more. The selection of furniture features well-known names including Castelle, Hanamint, Gensun, Telescope, Jensen Outdoor, Erwin, and Alfresco. Options include Adirondack chairs to couches, tables, and more—everything a homeowner would need to bring the best of indoor living to their outdoor spaces.

Recognizable favorites such as croton, dieffenbachia, palms, and philodendron populate the greenhouse, while the nursery’s selection includes a bevy of varieties of plants and flowers with characteristics such as “shade loving,” “native” and “deer resistant.”

On the design-build side, the company performs work for homeowners who have properties ranging from townhouses to estate homes, from Doylestown to Bethlehem to Princeton to Newtown and the Main Line.

“We do an awful lot of outdoor living spaces,” says Hebel, who holds a degree in landscape architecture from Penn State. “Terraces, patios, pool yards, fenced-in raised vegetable gardens, walkways, water gardens—we help clients from the initial design to implementation, creating personalized spaces that reflect their lifestyle, taste, and budget.”

Projects can range from a small terrace for a café set and a grill to an entire outdoor kitchen and dining space with seating for 20.

“We want to know how a client is going

to use their space and the types of furniture they want to use so we can design the right space to fit your lifestyle and property,” Hebel says. “If we have a choice, we’re going to help you decide it all.

“A swimming pool is an investment, from the pool to the patio to the fence and garden,” he continues. “It used to be a \$100,000 investment; now, it’s a multi-hundred-thousand-dollar investment. When the cost is that high, guidance from a qualified designer is invaluable ... and that’s exactly what we provide.”

Creativity is a central strength at Bucks Country Gardens, as is an eye toward value. Hebel describes the company as “quality conscious and budget conscious.” Some landscape installations have topped \$600,000, even without hardscaping. Others involve something as basic as planting a single tree. Most clients, Hebel notes, fall somewhere in the middle.

“We look at landscaping as an investment in a home,” he says. “There are two kinds of investments in a property: one, monetary; two, lifestyle and enjoying the space that you’re in. Each person has to determine that on their own, but we ask this: ‘Is this a forever house?’ If it is, you really want to think long-term and financial return may not be all that important.”

While Bucks Country Gardens has gained renown for its ability to transform outdoor spaces into oases, Hebel sees the company’s greatest strength as its ability to build and maintain relationships.

“We pride ourselves on working with customers for a lifetime,” Hebel says. “We have a lot of customers who started with us when we were Royer Nurseries, and they’re still with us today. Those relationships are the most fulfilling. They’re with people who

enjoy the same things we do, which are beautiful gardens and functional spaces—areas that inspire you, keep you healthier and happier, and enable you to enjoy life a little more.”

With the future in mind, Hebel now looks to his two sons—Gregory, 39, who celebrates 24 years at Bucks Country Gardens this year, and Ryan, 35, who celebrates 16 years after rejoining the company in 2020—to steer the business going forward. Each son owns a 25 percent stake in Bucks Country Gardens, and Hebel has the fullest faith in them to lead the business in the years ahead. At present, Ryan manages the garden center and Gregory, who studied landscape contracting, leads design-build operations.

“People always ask me, especially my best friends from the ’70s from college, when I’m retiring,” Hebel says. “I’ve been practicing for a few years, and I think I’ll have it down by next year. I have mixed feelings about that. Like any parent, I want my kids to find something that they’re passionate about, and they certainly have. I didn’t plan on it being the same thing that’s fueled me for the last 43 years. I’ll always feel inclined to stay connected, especially if they need a hand.”

As long as Bucks Country Gardens continues to best serve the needs of an ever-evolving community, Hebel says its future will be bright. ■



Bucks Country Gardens’ owners (from left) Gregory Hebel, Tom Hebel, and Ryan Hebel at their restored 1738 spring house.

Bucks Country Gardens

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