

Features

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Full Service, Year-Round

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Cornfields and a rural road surround Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses. When I visited Ashcombe in February, it was bustling with folks coming in to take advantage of the end-of-winter sales and pick up fresh baked goods, houseplants and potting soil.

The blue skies and bright sunshine perked up customers leaving the parking lot and crossing over West Grantham Road in rural Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

Pictured: The entrance to Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

Humble Beginnings

Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses (Ashcombe.com) started as Ashcombe Vegetable Farm in 1956 as a wholesale vegetable farm. The vegetable farm sold asparagus, strawberries, sweet corn and other produce. In 1961, Ashcombe set up a roadside stand to sell the produce that was growing at the farm.

Glen and Mary Ellen Gross rented the land from Henry Thornton and started propagating spring bedding plants. Glen and Mary Ellen also farmed 25 acres of vegetables with two or three greenhouses on the farm, which later became Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses 63 years later. The Gross family continued to work the land and the farm stand. They hired a couple of helpers and seasonal workers to plant flowers and vegetables, trim blueberries and harvest asparagus among other tasks.



Glen and Mary Ellen undertook a major building expansion in 1970 that continued for several years. Tragedy struck in 1974 when a fire damaged many buildings on the property. Then, in 1975, the Gross family rebuilt the product (their greenhouse) department and installed a fire warning system.

Pictured: Fresh herbs are grown in the greenhouses year-round.

The Evolution of a Full-Service Independent Garden Center

Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses continued to grow despite recovering from a building fire. Glen and Mary Ellen purchased land and buildings at Sherman's Dale, about 13 miles from the business' headquarters in 1977. Ashcombe has since sold this property.

Glen's father owned one of the greenhouses on the newly purchased property, which was redesigned to grow spring bedding plants. The Ashcombe facility also grew foliage and flowering plants. Since Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses sold retail and wholesale plants, the business continued growing, and filling up the new land purchase and greenhouses.

The independent garden center continued to grow in the 1970s, and the garden center started to sell garden supplies and dried flowers and added a gift shop. Glen and Mary Ellen eventually added a small bakery in the main store's produce department in 1983.

Pictured: Nedra has been creating floral designs and wreaths since she started at Ashcombe in 1993.

Unfortunately, the Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses suffered from another fire that destroyed the retail store in 1989. While a new, larger main store was being built after the fire, the employees operated the business on a reduced scale.



The newly architecturally designed facility that replaced the one burned in the fire came with enlarged departments, enabling Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses to provide more products and services. Today, Ashcombe Farm and Greenhouses thrive with a detailed growth pattern that includes a full bakery, deli, gourmet foods, expanded garden center, perennials and a well-stocked nursery from spring through fall. **GP**

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