

## Features

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## Engaging Via Education

*Wendy Komancheck*

My usual garden center interviews in Pennsylvania and New Jersey took an unexpected turn when I eagerly headed to the charming Bloomers Home & Garden Center in Sewell, New Jersey.

I first needed to stop by a Philadelphia radio station where Bloomers in the Garden was set to record their weekly podcast and radio show.

As Len Schroeder and Julio Zamora from Bloomers Home & Garden Center introduced the show, I sat in the third seat with headphones on. Throughout the hour, they discussed plants, soil and other gardening topics. Len and Julio answered a gardener's question about grocery store-bought soil and Len introduced the audience to Firefly Petunias that glow in the dark. Len was lucky to get his hands on one of these petunias. He verifies on radio and YouTube that these plants really do glow in the dark.

Between commercial breaks, Len and Julio explained how the Bloomers in the Garden radio show and podcast are marketing and educating tools for their audience. Indeed, the podcast is on Spotify, Google Podcasts and Apple Podcasts, as well as radio stations in Philadelphia, New Jersey and New York.

Do you prefer to watch Len, Julio and their guests discuss plant matters? Then you can find them on YouTube using the handle @BloomersHomeGarden.

### **Bloomers Focuses on Consumer Education**

Leonard Schroeder founded Bloomers Home & Garden Center in 1988 with his late wife, Debra, however, this wasn't Len's first foray into the garden business. Indeed, his family has horticultural roots that date back to the Depression.

Len and his team of experts provide the knowledge DIYers want from their garden center. The garden center is also divided into the following rooms that serve as part of a department store set-up:

- Greenhouse
- Home services
- Nursery
- Water gardening
- Wild birds

## Engaging With an App

In addition to a podcast, radio show and YouTube channel, the garden center offers a free app for their customers to download.

When they download the app, customers are automatically subscribed to Bloomers' loyalty program with the option for push notifications. The app keeps customers connected to the store and its marketing efforts, such as podcasts and informational blog posts. Customers can also earn Bloomers Bucks.

"The Bloomers app is another method I use to keep customers engaged and connected," said Aaron Thompson, Bloomers' marketing director. "Having an app can have several benefits, including enhancing customer engagement, growing your loyalty program, sharing sales/circulars, in-app shopping, checking availability, getting customer feedback and more."

Take a look through the photos for a quick "tour" of Bloomers.



- The team at Bloomers Home & Garden Center in Sewell, New Jersey. From left to right: Abbey McCloud (greenhouse manager), Sandy Martino (store manager), Len Schroeder (owner) and Aaron Thompson (marketing director).

- Jonathan Green is one of the radio show's sponsors and has a prominent display in the garden center's hard goods department. Bloomers also has its own grass seed blend from Jonathan Green, perfect for Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania lawns.



- Plants for sale in the glass greenhouse. In addition to beautiful plants, Bloomers offers containers, soils and other plant-growing products. Sandy Martino, store manager, assists customers with plant choices and care questions.
- Bloomers provides free pH soil testing for lawns and gardens. Customers bring in soil samples for testing. The staff tests the soil in house and can recommend the right products, such as combinations of lime,



magnesium, sulfur and more to balance the soil's pH problem.

- The bird department at Bloomers, called the Bird Sanctuary, is filled with different displays of feeders, bird food and other birding attractions.
- Bloomers Home & Garden Center has a department store feel. The main room has various home goods—plant pots, aprons, gardening hats, wreaths and other wares for sale. At Christmastime, the main showroom transforms into a Winter Wonderland with Christmas gifts, artificial trees and other seasonal décor.

- Bloomers is located along a busy crossroads, Hurffville-Crosskeys Road at Fish Pond Road, Washington Township, New Jersey. This spring, drivers and pedestrians were in for a treat with the blooms of 7,000 tulips and daffodils planted by the Bloomers team under the direction of their landscape and nursery manager Carl Schroeder. **GP**

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