

## Features

9/30/2025

# On The Road: Plants as Far as the Eye Can See

*Denise Schreiber*



Over the years movies like “Witness” have created an almost idyllic existence of the Amish and Mennonite people in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and the spectacular beauty of the area. No one from around that area would believe that a dairy farmer would eventually give up his herd to start a greenhouse and garden center, but that’s exactly what Harvey Zimmerman did.

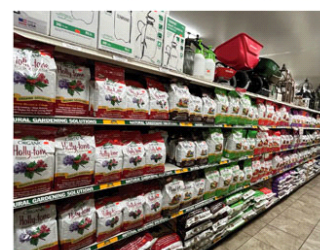
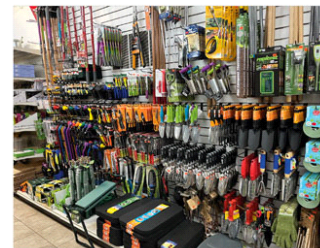
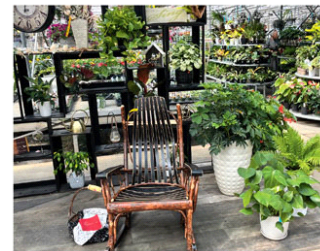
Left: Black Creek offers a wide selection of gloves, either for yourself or as gifts.

Black Creek Greenhouses began in 1980 when Harvey's wife Irene asked him to build a hot bed to start some seeds and, instead, he built her a small greenhouse. It piqued their interest even more into growing plants. In 2005, Irene's "little" greenhouse officially became a 90,000-sq. ft greenhouse and independent garden center complex in East Earl, a little town that draws shoppers from as far as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, as well as shoppers from Maryland and even parts of New York.

Pictured right: Take a rest and sit a spell among the beauty (and still peruse the goods).

They offer a large assortment of gardening tools in an organized, eye-catching and colorful display.

They're all in on Espoma products, offering a big selection of fertilizers and amendments.



Black Creek still grows corn and soybeans on 60 acres, but for a local dairy farm instead of their own herd. Harvey and Irene are now retired, but still keep an "eye" on the business, which is now run by their children, Lewis, Ruth and Emma. There are 13 full-time workers and 35 to 40 during the busy season to help customers with whatever they need.

Left top: They're known for their multitude of hanging baskets, including these large ones.

These houses are perfect for solitary bees like mason bees and leafcutter bees, which don't live in hives. Fun fact: These bees are far more efficient than honeybees, pollinating more plants faster.

Open from March 1 to Christmas Eve, shoppers always find something to fill their carts, like branded fertilizers, seeds and seed starting supplies, gardening tools, decorative pots, a variety of bird feeders and supplies, watering cans—including those for the young gardener—and more. Then they head into the greenhouse filled with plants as far as the eye can see. In the spring when shoppers come from near and far, their carts are filled with a vast variety of plants, including some of the latest introductions from breeders that you see at trade shows, including annuals, perennials, vegetables and houseplants.

Hundreds of hanging baskets abound above their heads and there are always helpful workers to help customers get them down. There are about 50 kinds of tomato plants, and a few dozen kinds of peppers, eggplants, cabbages and other vegetables that could find their way into a cart. There are several tables of herbs, including half of a very large table of culinary thymes, as well as floral thymes such as rose and orange thyme.



They even offer an LED growing kit for small spaces to let customers grow herbs and veggies in their kitchens.

As summer comes to end, the fall season of pumpkins, gourds, corn stalks, mums and other autumnal decorations are on full display ready for the cool weather. And to finish out the year there are hundreds of poinsettias in colors galore for the holiday season. **GP**

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