



## Garden Centers of America: Together We're Better!

### GCA's Key Connections: Member Profile

**John Lamm, Founder & CEO**

**Lamm Gardens/Lammscapes!, Jackson, WI**

### Lamm Gardens Is A Family-Oriented Garden 'Park' Steeped In History & Fun



For the father-daughter team behind Lamm Gardens, serving the customers in the Jackson, WI, community is the heart and soul of the operation, bringing the business' motto, "Beautify today for tomorrow," coined by Founder & CEO John Lamm in 1970, to life. Lamm Gardens, the retail arm of the Lammscapes! landscape design, installation and maintenance division, is headed up by John's daughter, Executive Vice President Laurie Lamm McGraw. John's son John Jr., or "Hunts" as he likes to go by, is the President of Lammscapes!, which is the whole company's main brand and marketing logo.

There's so much to do at Lamm Gardens, John has dubbed it "a family-oriented park," boasting farm fields, woodlands, creeks, historic bridges and a retail garden center sprawled across an expansive 160 acres. Just as John envisioned it, there's something for the whole family, transforming Lamm Gardens into a "park-like" destination.

With so much to offer, including a full gamut of plants, trees, shrubs, garden supplies and one-of-a-kind art and gifts from local artisans, green goods are the retailer's main focus. Annuals and perennials are the store's best-sellers, with trees and shrubs close behind. The retailer is so confident of the quality of the offerings, they insure their plants with a lifetime guarantee.

Educating the customer on how to properly care for their gardens is also a huge focus for Lamm Gardens. The large amount of retail property allows them to feature demo gardens full of mature plants. "We host a lot of seminars, workshops and educational sessions to help customers with design and selecting the right plants, so they're successful," says Laurie.



Taking that extra step, the retailer researches certain varieties ahead of time to make sure they're bringing in the plants that will thrive in the area.

"People have come to trust us, they know we take care of the plants that are here, we have the plants that will work for them, and we help them place them in the right spots," says Laurie.

That attention to detail has helped foster everlasting relationships with customers. "We're not just selling plants, we're building relationships with customers so they come back each season or they tell their neighbors," she says. "We've had people go through multiple houses, and each time, they come to us to do the landscaping."



The team at Lamm Gardens have made it their purpose to make gardening and going outside fun, especially to shoppers with young children. The store's calendar is always jam-packed with family-oriented events, educational seminars and make-and-take workshops.

"We try to host different events for different ages and interests, with the idea of drawing in people to see all we have to offer in-store," says Laurie.

Their most recent Garden of Readin' event drew 75 kids and their parents who were new to the garden center for storytime under the shade trees and potting a small plant. The Garden Concert, featuring Big Cedar Bluegrass Band, always attracts crowds of families to the property for the day to enjoy some live tunes.

Showing their support for the community, Lamm Gardens hosts Girls Night Out, complete with food, music, prizes and outside vendors, to benefit a charitable organization in the area. The upcoming Girls Night Out will benefit Pink Pumpkin Run, which helps local families affected by breast cancer by providing basic daily needs and services.

The site is popular for field trips from local schools and scout groups, especially during fall with the hayrides around the farm. They take the opportunity to teach children where their food comes from and show them how much fun gardening can be. Children especially love the several model train gardens on-site, too.



The retailer's beautiful, expansive property is the perfect venue for special events. They have several gardens that serve as the perfect backdrop to weddings – both Laurie and Hunts said their nuptials to their respective spouses on-site. They provide wedding florals for events held on their property and off-site as well.

To stay on top of upcoming trends in the home and garden industry, John and his wife, Pat, traveled to Seattle, WA, for the 2018 GCA Summer Tour this past June. "I found it a privilege to go," John says. "And I told Jeff Morey [Director of GCA], by day one I already got my money's worth. I am so glad I signed up."

Upon returning home from the tour and an extended trip to the U.S. Naval base in Bremerton, WA, to see his old stomping grounds, John felt so inspired by the garden center stops and the hundreds of photos that they took, that he spent a couple hours cleaning up around Lamm Gardens.



"We saw such beautiful garden centers," he says. "We interacted and networked with many garden center operators from around the country. I met every owner I could, especially at the stops we visited. Just beautiful gardens, beautiful displays, beautiful colors. The Pacific Northwest was one of the best areas they could pick for a summer garden tour."

Lamm Gardens, a featured destination during the 2015 GCA Summer Tour, as well as a multiple Best Garden Center Bathroom award winner, is a very active member of Garden Centers of America. John points to the benefits of the membership that encouraged him get out to the Pacific Northwest, in addition to the savings and discounts he received on the trip.

## Where They've Been & Where They're Going

The landscaping side of the business was the first to spring up in 1960. Then, after attending college and serving in the Navy, John moved his business to Jackson. As the years came and went, the need for retail slowly kept growing, especially since some customers wanted to handle the plantings themselves.

Soon, a room in the lower barn, dubbed the “room of the seasons,” started offering plants for retail. And as the community developed and more residents moved in, the garden center grew with it.

Most of the buildings on the property are more than 100 years old. They have been renovated and are all used as part of the landscape business.

There are two historic bridges on the garden center’s property. The Great Bridge of 1883 was originally built in Des Plaines, IL, as a railroad bridge but then moved to be a roadway bridge in the Town of Lebanon in Dodge County in the 1920s. In 1996, Lamm Gardens offered to reconstruct this historic bridge over Cedar Creek, when the State of Wisconsin had plans to destroy and replace it. The bridge was brought to the retailer’s property and after much restoration, was dedicated in May 1998. It is used daily to cross Cedar Creek and has become an attraction for the community, especially during the fall hayrides.



The second historic bridge was constructed in 1928, then dedicated in September 2006, and it also crosses Cedar Creek. It will help the landscape expansion area grow, as well as provide a connection to “Lammscapeland” - a future dream to preserve farmland, woodlands and natural landscapes for all to enjoy at this family-oriented park.

To improve upon the in-store experience, Lamm Gardens is currently in the process of redesigning the main retail building to include a design studio, office space and a larger workshop area for seminars.

“Right now, we have our offices in another building [a 150-year-old barn], so our designers are away from our customers,” Laurie says. “So, in creating more of a design/landscape showroom, we can show people more of what we do.”



Design vignettes showcasing patios, fire pits, fireplaces and waterfalls give customers an idea of all that they can create in their garden oasis at home.

As the years toil on and the next generation of the Lamm family lends a helping hand at the business, Lamm Gardens and Lammscapes! continue to provide the residents of Jackson with all their gardening needs and family fun.

John says, “This property is a place to share with people. That’s what I’ve always wanted. For this to become an oasis for the ever-growing Jackson community around us.”