



Connie Siebert and Debi Orr

MID-SOUTH NURSERY AND GREENHOUSES

Growing for Generations

BY AUDREY HANES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAYLA BROADWAY

For more than six decades, Mid-South Nursery and Greenhouses has offered Jonesboro and the surrounding area a diverse variety of ornamentals, perennials, grasses, groundcovers, annuals, shrubbery, trees, mulch and sod, as well as landscape needs. The longtime local family business was recently named the 2020 Friend of Master Gardener Organization for the state of Arkansas, an honor well-earned by the tri-state region's top provider for retail and wholesale garden center needs.

The nursery was founded in 1957 by George and Faye Siebert. George was an expert horticulturist of plants and trees; he started out on the road selling and planting shrubs and trees and offering maintenance services. At the same time, Faye started the business' greenhouses, planting each seed and nourishing it until it could be transplanted and sold to customers. Mid-South Nursery and Greenhouses (Mid-South Nursery) has since grown to include 20 acres of nursery and 21 greenhouses that grow just about any plant their customers could ever request.

The couple instilled their love of growing things in their children. Faye and her late husband have since passed the torch to two of their daughters, Debi Orr and Connie Siebert, who grew up in the business and each have more than 30 years of experience in the industry.

"Their patience in allowing their children to think they were helping while playing in the dirt made the job appear a lot easier than what it is," said Siebert, who co-manages the nursery with Orr and also manages the garden center and nursery operation. "To us, the nursery was our playground."

"The first greenhouse was constructed in 1968," added Orr. "I was fascinated watching mom propagate and sow the seeds and watching them germinate. I joined the team from part-time to full-time in 1975, and Connie followed suit. There was a lot of blood, sweat and tears, but (I now have) 13 greenhouses, and Connie fills the rest with shrubs and trees.

"There is not a place at the nursery, that if I'm quiet, that I will

BEYOND BUSINESS

"There is not a place at the nursery, that if I'm quiet, that I will not hear mom, dad or one of my sisters ... It's nice to just be out in the greenhouses early in the morning and reflect on the love for my family, as just the little things bring back so many memories."

-Debi Orr

Memorial tribute to George Siebert



Debi Orr, Faye Siebert, Connie Siebert



not hear mom, dad or one of my sisters. The memories are priceless. I hear the children, both mine and Connie's, as well as other nephews and nieces playing and laughing. It's nice to just be out in the greenhouses early in the morning and reflect on the love for my family, as just the little things bring back so many memories."

Orr serves as Mid-South Nursery's head grower and manages all of the greenhouses, where she helps grow more than 90 percent of all the nursery's annuals, perennials, vegetables and herbs. Her passion is designing unique baskets and containers for her clients to showcase by using different colors and textures to last all summer.

Siebert says that while the focus in Mid-South Nursery's early years was on fruit and pecan orchards, large home gardens and truck patches, there has been a shift over the years to home landscaping. This has allowed the nursery to really connect with its customers.

"Mid-South Nursery specializes in customer service," said Siebert. "When customers need assistance in plant selection, we are happy to advise and take into consideration soil composition, lighting, drainage and maintenance requirements. We try to choose plants that will be a good fit for our customers.

"Likewise, you can get a full selection of plants that were grown in this area, which means they are already acclimated to our climate. We also offer customer service that the big box stores are

unable to give by providing free consultation on which chemicals would best supplement their yard or help with disease and pests."

While Mid-South Nursery has adapted to the recent COVID-19 pandemic by taking proper safety precautions for customers who shop on-site, as well as by offering curbside service and local deliveries, the virus has had a positive side effect on the nursery business.

"Possibly due to the pandemic and economic hardship, family gardens have exploded," said Siebert. "Also, since travel was curtailed, many families have found solace and joy in their own backyard."

Because of that increased home gardening interest, Orr says the nursery is going to bring in local farmers and gardeners to share their wisdom.

"With the pandemic, there has been a renewed interest in planting a family vegetable or herb garden," said Orr. "We think it is important to share the knowledge of our grandparents. Also, since families are spending more time at home, they want to color up their part of the world. We can help you make your home your dream oasis."

That local support and community-minded attitude is something else that Mid-South has greatly emphasized in the 63 years since its start.

"When you buy local, you know your plants are acclimated to our weather," said Orr. "You know you are keeping your hard-



earned money here and will be keeping the cycle going as we buy our products from you. You keep the big box stores from closing down another family livelihood. When you buy local, you are buying from someone you trust and have known most of your life; someone who will be there for you, your schools and your churches. It's hard to know what's wrong with a plant when you don't know what growing conditions that plant has known or what it has endured during transit.

"Connie is a sweet person who answers questions effortlessly. She orders the trees and shrubs and makes you want to come back. Everyone loves her."

Mid-South Nursery works with local sports teams, Blessed Sacrament Catholic School and The Learning Center for mum and poinsettia fundraisers. Schools, boy scouts and other groups visit the nursery, and the sisters speak at different gardening clubs, as well. The nursery also supports the Master Gardeners, an organization that recently recognized Mid-South Nursery as the 2020 Friend of Master Gardener Organization for the state of Arkansas.

"We were humbled and honored this year to be chosen the 2020 Friend of Master Gardener Organization for the state of Arkansas, as well as Best Nursery by Jonesboro Radio Group and Best Nursery and Garden Center in *Occasions* Magazine's Readers' Choice Awards," said Orr. "We appreciate the vote of confidence

and the opportunity to continue to serve the people of Northeast Arkansas. We love getting our hands dirty with you."

Siebert says the award means so much to the entire Siebert family because those who nominated Mid-South Nursery are their friends and supporters locally.

"We are humbled to be acknowledged in the company of great nurseries throughout Arkansas," she said. "We cherish this award because the nomination was the effort of Craighead County Master Gardeners – our neighbors and friends. They are a pleasure to work with and a dedicated group of volunteers who share their knowledge and countless hours beautifying our community. ... We are thrilled to stand in their company."

The sisters have a big fall planned for the nursery. In addition to expanding the garden and herb selections, Mid-South Nursery will be introducing Proven Winner, Southern Living and Garden Debut selections.

"We are planning on a fantastic fall," said Siebert. "The mums, pansies, ornamental cabbage, grasses and pumpkins are looking great. We look forward to seeing everyone soon."

For more information about Mid-South Nursery and Greenhouses, located at 3321 Dan Ave., call (870) 932-2036, visitmidsouthnursery-ar.com or find Mid-South Nursery and Greenhouses on Facebook.