

Ashbrook Nursery - Through the Years

1987 - 2000

Having recently started a family and with a shared love for gardening, Anne & Joe Webster (Anne with a degree in botany, and Joe looking to escape a career in accounting) decided to establish 'Magungie Market' - a market garden enterprise - from their home on the outskirts of Arbroath.

With two part-time employees, the business centred predominantly around the growing of cut flowers and bedding plants for wholesale to shops and garden centres in the local area, supplanted in winter with homemade wreaths and festive arrangements, which we still do.

Did you know...?

Anne is a trained horticulturalist with a degree in botany from Oxford and a PhD from Aberdeen where she her research was on Club Root - a disease primarily affecting brassicas. Anne also worked in the gardens at Windsor Great Park and Oxford Botanic Garden.

Joe was a chartered accountant – while not horticulturally trained he has harboured a lifelong interest in gardening.

2000

Anne and Joe had moved home, and a new base was required for the business. Joe's brother Francis joined the business having recently sold his farm at Milton Haugh in Carmyllie. Francis kept an area of land which is where Ashbrook Nursery was established. At the time, it was nothing but an empty field with the first pieces of infrastructure being a borehole for our water supply and a few polytunnels.

Did you know...?

The reason the business is called Ashbrook is because Joe & Francis' grandparents had lived in a house of the same name which sat directly across the road from our entrance. The house was acquired by the MoD during WWII and was eventually demolished in the early 1990's. The gates as you enter the carpark were the gates to that house – Francis acquired these gates from RM Condor in 2010 when they were re-built at Ashbrook.

2000-2005

The nursery continued selling wholesale but started to grow more herbaceous and alpine plants. Anne and Francis (usually dressed in his plus fours!) also became regular stallholders at the Angus Farmers markets where we would sell plants and flowers directly to the public.

The farmers markets brought an increased public awareness of Ashbrook with many customers encouraging us to open as a garden centre.

2005 – 2020

Our 'garden centre' started with just a small stand outside our shed and the intention was that we would only sell what we grew. It didn't take long to acknowledge that while there was a keen interest in our plants, there was also a demand for shrubs and trees – plants we didn't really grow ourselves, never mind all the other gardening supplies.

Since 2005, our retail business has gradually evolved. Our multi-span polytunnel, which was initially built for growing purposes, steadily became more selling space and less for growing. Our nursery operations still expanded with additional greenhouses, polytunnels and laydown areas constructed 'behind the scenes' as we established ourselves as the place to go for quality homegrown plants.

2020

Everything seemed to happen in 2020. More peer pressure from our customers had led to the construction of our café, but the arrival of Covid-19 delayed the completion slightly. With abnormally good weather during lockdown, our nursery and garden centre team were kept manically busy trying to keep up with orders and deliveries.

Sadly, Francis passed away suddenly in May of 2020, but with the unprecedented number of deliveries on his agenda had managed to see and speak to a remarkable number of customers/friends in his last few weeks, despite the lockdown restrictions.

Our café opened in July 2020 with all the challenges of track and trace etc, but with freshly prepared food and cakes, and a friendly team, it quickly became a favourite place to eat for many.

2020-2024

Since the passing of Francis, and the opening of the café, Anne and Joe's 3 children became more firmly involved in the business as we look towards the future and the staff roll has increased to over 30.

We developed a Woodland Wander next to the café ahead of our 'Tree Day' in 2021, and it offers a nice place to explore for our visitors.

The impact of the café has been significant bringing a new influx of visitors – both foodies and plant enthusiasts. The introduction of our loyalty scheme in 2021 has also been a great success, and we now have over 11,000 loyalty card holders.

Did you know...?

By having an Ashbrook loyalty card, you can earn back 2% of your spend on every shop. Your loyalty card works in both our café and garden centre, and there is no charge for the privilege. The 2% goes onto your loyalty card and can be redeemed on any future purchases

2024

We had long desired a 'proper' indoor space for our garden centre - while it worked, our multi-span polytunnel wasn't the ideal place for dry goods.

In 2024 we opened a new purpose-built shop for our garden centre. This has allowed us to stock a much wider range of gifts, books, houseplant, garden care products and more. This also allowed us to open up our outdoor plant area to make a more accessible and pleasant environment for our customers.

Despite all the changes over the years, we have remained true to our 'roots' as a nursery, growing as much of our own plant stock as possible.

2025

After 25 years of Ashbrook, it is nice to take the time to look back at what we have achieved in that time. We have been lucky to have had such enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and friendly staff who have helped shape Ashbrook.

The support and encouragement from you, our customers, and the local community has helped drive the business forward. These connections with our customer base are what makes Ashbrook a special place to work. Our 'Live on the Lawn' event was great opportunity to celebrate 25 years with some of our customers.