

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Sidhu Nursery Buys Briggs

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In March, *GrowerTalks* reported that Briggs Nursery of Elma, Washington, was in receivership. Looks like they've got a new owner now: Sidhu & Sons Nursery Ltd., of Mission, British Columbia. Purchase price: \$12 million. Sidhu is a 600-acre producer of broadleaf evergreens, conifers, deciduous shrubs, trees and perennials, including blueberry plants.

Details on Briggs' troubles were vague back in March, with the only news coming from a couple of local newspapers, the Daily World and The Vidette. They wrote that Bank of the West had foreclosed against the nursery in January, with Briggs owing the bank more than \$10 million. A bankruptcy court appointed TurningPoint LLC to find a buyer.

Two companies bid on Briggs, including Mountain Top Holdings of Lynden, Washington, which The Vidette says has "potential ties to a larger Canadian company known as J.R.T. Nurseries." Mountain Top Holdings bid \$8.5 million, but in a second round of bidding, Sidhu's offer of \$12.05 million was accepted on June 21. That includes 400 acres near Elma and all of Briggs' trademarks.

To learn more about the deal, we spoke to Jas Ghuman. She's daughter of founder Gurdev Sidhu, and head of Sales & Marketing for the second-generation family business.

"[Briggs] has had an excellent name for decades," said Jas. "Bruce Briggs, the founder, has an excellent reputation. They've been really good for the broadleaf business and tissue culture research. The product has always been so top-notch ... we just wanted to be part of that. It was a great opportunity, perfect for us."

The two businesses have been competitors for years, she continued, with similar product lines and overlapping customers. Both businesses have tissue culture labs. But there are differences, too, with Sidhu doing more high-volume production and Briggs focusing on lower volume and wider variety. The deal also opens up more U.S. sales to Sidhu.

As for the Briggs reputation, Sidhu Nursery will honor it by keeping the family name on the business.

"We want to carry on the Briggs' tradition," Jas says. "They struggled financially, but we're here to take care of that. We'll see what changes need to be made, without changing the essence of Briggs." **GT**