

GROWERTALKS

Front Lines

10/1/2018

Bower & Branch Buys Organic Plant Magic

Chris Beytes

The consolidation continues ... and this time at the hands of one of our industries newest entities, which is also one of our first online and mobile shopping brands.

Bower & Branch announced that it has acquired the organic fertilizer company Organic Plant Magic. If you aren't yet familiar with Bower & Branch, they do online sales of trees, shrubs, perennials and other plants (an ever-increasing line) online, but fulfill them through partner growers and independent retailers.

Sid Raisch, President and CEO of Bower & Branch, said in the press release, "This acquisition has been in the works for a while. Aligning Organic Plant Magic within Bower & Branch is a strategic opportunity that ensures our supply chain will grow seamlessly as our online sales continue to grow."

Organic Plant Magic Founder Kerry Richardson will continue to serve on the Bower & Branch Board of Directors and co-founder Kevin Richardson will join the Bower & Branch product development team.

I asked Sid, via email, my usual "Why?" question. I got one hint when I looked at the packaging of Organic Plant Magic and Bower & Branch's Elements Fertilizer—it was clear the former manufactures the latter. Sid confirmed that.

"We were becoming the majority of the sales of Organic Plant Magic, which left both of us vulnerable to the other," he offered as one of three reasons for the acquisition. "Bower & Branch needed to secure the future availability of the Elements Fertilizer and some other products we were working together on to bring to market, and the Richardsons had nearly all their eggs in one basket, so they put the rest in."

The other two reasons focus on the success of the customer.

"In brick-&-mortar garden centers, only around 10% to 15% of customers who buy plants leave with fertilizer, which I think we all agree is essential for the establishment and health of our plants," Sid said. "We've found that online, we get well over 60% to buy Elements Fertilizer and at a much higher average price point than most stores offer. This tells us there is growth potential, but most importantly, there is success potential for more consumers."

To help ensure that customers actually make use of the fertilizer, it's a required part of Bower & Branch's three-year plant guarantee. **GP**