

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

10/1/2022

A Grand Expand

Jennifer Zurko & Chris Beytes

Two years ago, Johannes “JP” Pieterse and Brent Troost made the switch from wholesale only to grower-retailer when they purchased Countryside Flower Shop & Nursery in Crystal Lake, Illinois (we wrote about that in [the May 2021 GrowerTalks](#)). They must have really enjoyed the past two years because they’ve purchased a second retail location, Shady Hill Gardens in Elburn. They officially kicked off the fall season of the new Countryside Elburn with a grand opening and ribbon cutting on September 1.

JP (holding the ribbon on the right) and Brent (left) became friends when they worked together at ColorPoint, a big-box grower in Granville, Illinois. ColorPoint was sold to a Canadian cannabis firm in 2019. Not wanting to work in that field, JP and Brent started exploring other options. (Which turned out to be a good decision, because the cannabis firm closed that greenhouse within a year. It was sold to Altman Plants earlier this year.) That led to the purchase of Countryside Crystal Lake.

With two years of retail growing under their belts, JP and Brent wanted to expand the growing side of the business. When they heard that Matt and Joe Heidgen were looking to sell Shady Hill, which has 45,000 sq. ft. of greenhouses, JP and Brent first visited to discuss renting some space. After seeing the impressive, all-glass facility, they expanded their thinking and made an offer to buy the business. The Heidgens agreed, finished out the spring season, and JP and Brent took over in June.

At the new location, they’ve been able to produce 30,000 mums along with other fall plants like kale, pansies and ornamental peppers. There were some poinsettias started in the greenhouses. JP said they’ll also be expanding into houseplants, perennials and shrubs. It will remain primarily a plant nursery, without the garden accessory and gift components of the Crystal Lake shop.

“We wanted to switch to retail, even though we had no idea what it was,” JP said, which got chuckles from the crowd during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. “We’ve made some mistakes with our wholesale mindset, but it’s been an amazing journey during the last two years.”

In the photo, JP and Brent are surrounded by their staff. JP was quick to acknowledge how helpful and hard-working the staff at both locations have been. Having good employees they could count on at the Crystal Lake location allowed them to open the new one in Elburn. And while they’ve only known the Elburn team for a short time, “we’ve had so much support from them.”

Said JP, “Growing quality plants and providing good customer service—that’s how we’ll survive in this business.”

GT

